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John Byddell, "Truth, the daughter of time." English Woodcuts 1480-1535
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–The Conference Planning Committee:

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Defining Debates and Declaring Victors: Analyzing Speech Acts in *Wynnere and Wastoure*

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Because *Wynnere and Wastoure* is "the first of the three Middle English alliterative debates, and is also one of the earliest works of the Alliterative Revival," it tends to receive quite a bit of scholarly attention (Conlee 61). And, naturally, with this scholarly attention comes an array of debates. Such debates about *Wynnere and Wastoure* range from topics of editorial concern like dating the poem and amending lines, to overall content concerns such as arguments on the possibility of biased narration and declaring a winner of the verbal contest.[1] This paper will focus largely on the later. While most critics of the poem seem apprehensive to declare an outright winner of the debate between the allegorical figures of Wynnere and Wastoure (due to the fact that the poem is incomplete and ends without the king actually declaring a victor), scholars nevertheless continue to speculate on various aspects of the poem which could point to a theoretical champion.[2] What is interesting about these various speculations is the amount of attention critics place on the narrative level in declaring a winner rather than on the debate itself. Even when scholars do discuss the debate, they tend to focus on the historical accuracy of the contestants' claims and their relation to Edward III.[3] While historical accuracy is important for evaluating the truth behind the claims that the contestants make, it alone is not the key to

[1] For a closer look at the debates concerning dating and amending the lines of the poem see Michael S. Nagy's section on *Wynnere and Wastoure* in "'The Song of the Husbandman': Social Complaint and Social Analysis in the Alliterative Tradition before 'Piers Plowman.'"

[2] Jerry D. James spends much of his essay "The Undercutting of Conventions in *Wynnere and Wastoure*," examining what he considered to be the biased narration of the poem and speculates on how that might influence the winner of the debate.

[3] For an in depth analysis of the allegorical figures relation to Edward III, see John Scattergood's essay on *Wynnere and Wastoure* in *The Lost Tradition: Essays on Middle English Alliterative Poetry*.

unlocking the debate between Wynnere and Wastoure. This is due largely to the type of debate that we are dealing with in the poem. Ward Parks points out the difference between intellectual debates and non-intellectual debates in the Middle Ages. The former were debates modeled after those found in medieval universities which were "conducted in a non-martial environment that centered on some issue with intellectual content apart from the personalities of the contestants, and that did so with no further end in mind than to arrive at the truth concerning an issue"(433).[4] Non-intellectual debate on the other hand was a label "which in some contexts might even be attached to flyting or sounding exchanges" which were not always aimed at discovering truth and often focused more on the contestants hurling insults back and forth (443). Because these two classes of debate use different means to arrive at different ends, they logically cannot be judged in the same manner. While looking at the historical accuracy, or truth, behind the contestants' claims may be appropriate in determining a winner of an intellectual debate, which is largely concerned with arriving at some form of truth, the same cannot be said for non-intellectual debates. Here contestants often use what critics would consider violations of typical principles of communication to push their arguments forward and their opponent's back. In these debates, the ability to flout the traditional rules of communication becomes a desired skill that the contestants must posses to win the verbal contest. As many critics have previously postulated, judging the contest between Wynnere and Wastoure based on the evaluation of the accuracy of their claims becomes almost impossible (they are both guilty of stretching or misrepresenting the truth throughout the poem), but, as this essay will argue, by looking at the contest as a type of non-intellectual debate (almost a flyting), and judging the contestants not on

[4] Both Charles Homer Haskin's *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* and Robert Lambdin's *The Debate as a Feature of Middle English Literature* describe the traditional verbal exercises underwent at universities and their probable influence on the debate tradition in question.

how well they uphold the principles of communication, but on how well they can manipulate them to their advantage, the reader can come to a conclusion about the winner of the poem.[5]

As mentioned previously, the skill that both Wynnere and Wastoure use to hurl insults and personal attacks at one another is at times quite ingenious and is indeed the key to unlocking the troublesome debate that ensues. But, in order to truly appreciate the artistry involved, it is essential to examine their various verbal assaults, not based on mere truth or as violations and abuses of traditional principles of communication, but as skilled manipulations constructed in attempts to achieve personal victory in the contest. Therefore, to fully realize the skill that these contestants utilize in advantageously exploiting the rules typically associated with constructive communication, it is necessary to have an understanding of some of the basic principles of such communication as outlined in Brown and Levinson's description of face threatening acts and in Grice's explanation of The Cooperative Principles of Communication.

The first major tenant of productive communication that both Wynnere and Wastoure violate deals with a destruction of what is known as "face." According to Brown and Levinson, the concept of "face" refers to:

> the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for himself, consisting of two related aspects: negative face—the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—[and] positive face—the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' claimed by interactants." (61)

In simple terms, "face" refers to the way that we see ourselves and wish to be seen by others. Because this idea of "face" is so vulnerable, we are aware of how easily it can be lost or damaged, and, as a result, we do not challenge the "face" of others on a regular basis. Any act that seeks to

[5] Conlee's work *Middle English Debate Poetry* provides an explanation of the similarities between flytings and the debates common in poems belonging to the Medieval Debate tradition.

destroy, rather than maintain someone's "face" can therefore be seen as a face threatening act, which is no doubt what we get in both Wynnere and Wastoure's opening remarks. In the initial speeches of both characters, they take time to not only construct their own faces, but to also destroy that of their opponent. Wynnere, who begins the debate, is quick to define his own positive face as he says:

> I hatt Wynnere, a wy that alle this werlde helpis,
> For I lordes cane lere thurgh ledyng of witt.
> Thoo that spedfully will spare and spende not to grete,
> Lyve appone littill-whattes, I lufe hym the bettir. (222-25)[6]

Allan Westphall notes how "Wynnere's personality can easily be reduced to what is essentially a function and a particular code of behavior—a code which is conservative and moderate and in Wynnere's account, sensible and inherently rational" (294). The face that Wynnere sets up for himself is one of reason, wit, moderation and sensibility.

Like Wynnere, Wastoure also defines his own face in his beginning speech. Here, he identifies himself as moral and "regards his own set of doctrines as ideal and as necessary to uphold social order. For him, wasting comes to signify, not so much pride and prodigality, as sharing and a Christian concern for the poor" (294-6). He immediately notes how "With oure festes and oure fare we feden the pore; / It es plesynge to the Prynce that Paradyse wroughte. / When Cristes peple hath parte Hym payes alle the better" (295-97). Wastoure also sees himself as essential to society. He paints a picture of himself and his spending not as wasteful, but as vital and to some extent moral. The faces that the contestants construct show the reader exactly how

[6] All quotations from *Wynnere and Wastoure* were taken from the TEAMS edition of *Wynnere and Wastoure* edited by Warren Ginsberg.

they see themselves and how they hope to be seen by others and most importantly, in this case, by the king who is judging the contest.

However, these self-defined personas are not the only descriptions that we get of these two characters. Almost immediately after they begin to define how they see themselves, they begin to lash out against each other, threatening one another's faces. Before Wastoure is even given the opportunity to present his own face, Wynnere issues a face threatening act. In his initial speech he "delivers a biting caricature of his opposite, Wastoure, whom he sees as irresponsible, careless and short-sighted. With his hedonistic predilection for wine, women and fast horses, Wastoure is presented by Wynnere as a careless spendthrift detrimental to social order" (Westphall 290). And, it does not take long for Wastoure to repay this description with his own of Wynnere. When given the chance to speak, Wastoure asserts that Wynnere's "claim to a moderate and responsible conduct is deceptive" (255). He explains that "by piling up goods with no intent on parting with them, Wynnere proves himself a selfish old miser acting contrary to the will of God" (259-60). Both characters deliver face threatening acts which describe their opponents almost completely contrary to how they had presented themselves. With the issuing of these threats at the beginning of the poem, Wynnere and Wastoure immediately throw off their gloves and prepare the reader for what will no doubt be an aggressive verbal battle. In spending many of their first allotted lines delivering jabs at their opponent's character, rather than building themselves up and presenting their own cases, Wynnere and Wastoure make it abundantly clear that this will not be an intellectual debate. What these acts do accomplish more than anything is to allow the reader to see exactly what type of verbal conflict will be taking place so that they will also be able to discern what type of criteria they will need to use in selecting a winner later on.

Once the reader discovers that this debate cannot be judged based on the contestants' ability to uphold traditional rules of communicative discourse, they are able to take note of the various ways that both Wynnere and Wastoure maneuver in the debate by twisting those rules to serve their own purposes. As a result, even though we cannot use the contestants' ability to uphold rules to judge the debate, we can use these principles as guideposts in determining how both characters manipulate the rules and whether or not they are able to do so successfully (or to their advantage). The Cooperative Principles of Communication laid out by Paul Grice can serve as extremely helpful guideposts in the analysis of verbal discourse. Grice sets forth four main principles which provide guidelines for verbal communication which is clear, concise and to a large extent non-threatening. These include the principles of Quantity (the amount of information given), Quality (the reliability of the information given), Relation (the relevance of the information) and Manner (the way that information is presented). By looking at the different instances and ways that both Wynnere and Wastoure flout these principles, the reader can gain an increased appreciation for their ability to manipulate these principles and evaluate which contestant is able to exploit them most advantageously.

One of the first cases that the reader is able to discern the difference in the ability of Wynnere and Wastoure in productively manipulating these principles occurs early on in the debate and deals mainly with the quantity principle which urges speakers to both "make your contribution as informative as is required" and to "not make your contribution more informative than is required" (Grice 26).[7] These maxims emphasize the importance of giving enough information to suit the purposes of the conversation at hand, without providing unnecessary or excessive detail which could either bog down or distract the audience. In an

[7] Both Wynnere and Wastoure exploit all four of the Cooperative Principles of Communication throughout the poem. However, for time sake, this paper will only focus on two of the most prominent examples of the ways in which they attempt to manipulate them advantageously.

attempt to manipulate the quantity principle and to highlight the extreme and utter extravagance of Wastoure and his banquets, Wynnere launches into a twenty six line description of the banquet. He tells how "The bores-hede schall be brought with plontes appon lofte, / Buk-tayles full brode in brothes there besyde, / Venyson with the frumentee, and fesanttes full rich," and details the "Tartes of ten ynche" and the "[Dario]ls and dische-metis that ful dere coste" (332-34, 341, 354). This is clearly one of the passages in which the poem really seems to come alive with description. However, the poet has composed Wynnere's sketch of the banquet so meticulously that his speech ends up having a negative effect. By including over twenty lines in his description in an attempt to show his audience just how profligate Wastoure and his banquests are, Wynnere's portrait becomes one that almost conjures up desire rather than disgust. Westphall notes that because of the amount of detail given, "The effect of Wynnere's description appears as the exact opposite of what he signifies as a personified virtue: his moral lesson comes to seem insignificant, and rather that making the audience disapprove of Wastoure's banquet they wish themselves part of it" (292). As a result, one can see that even though Wynnere may have had reasons for violating the Quantity Principle, his attempt was not wholly advantageous. This can be further highlighted by looking at an instance in which Wastoure also provides more information than is necessary (manipulating the Quantity Principle), yet does so far more successfully.

In his opening speech, after Wynnere has already hit Wastoure with a serious blow in the form of a face threatening act, Wastoure uses his entire first speech not to defend himself or try to show the truth (as he sees it) behind his own character, but instead to return the hit to Wynnere. He asks how:

> When thou haste waltered and went and wakede alle the nyghte,
>
> And iche a wy in this werlde that wonnes the abowte,

And hase werpede thy wyde howses full of wolle sakes—

The bemys benden at the rofe, siche bakone there hinges,

Stuffed are sterlynges undere stelen bowndes—

What scholde worthe of that wele if no waste come? (248-253)

Here Wastoure paints a vivid picture of what would have no doubt been seen as sinful excess. He tells of hoarded silver pennies and Wynnere's profuse stock of bacon which ends up causing his beams to bend. This detailed description not only highlights the avarice that Wastoure is trying to expose, but it also does so in a manner that almost forces the reader to envision the sheer glut of Wynnere's excess. He gives enough detail to thoroughly paint a picture in his audience's mind while at the same time managing to avoid contradicting himself as was seen in the similar attempt of Wynnere.

One can also see this inconsistency in the ability to exploit the principles of communication when looking at the characters' attempts at manipulating the Relation Principle which urges speakers to "be relevant" (Grice 27). In Wastoure's opening speech, as he paints a negative picture of Wynnere and his hoarding and asserts that he "schall be hanged in helle for that thou here spareste; / For siche a synn haste thou solde thi into helle, / And there es ever wellande woo, worlde withowtten ende," Wastoure challenges Wynnere to "Let be thy cramynge of thi kystes for Cristis lufe of heven! / Late the peple and the pore hafe parte of thi silvere" (260-62, 255-56). But, as Wastoure prompts Wynnere to stop hoarding and to share his prosperity with the poor, "it comes as no surprise that Wynnere shows himself unwilling to do so by completely ignoring Wastoure's remark, and instead launches into a long caricature of his epicurean conduct" (Westphall 293). While this manipulation of the Relevance Principle is no doubt an attempt to change the subject and divert the audience's attention away from Wastoure's call to action, it does not succeed in quite the same way as Wynnere may have

hoped. While making an effort to take the focus off of his avarice, Wynnere notes how "With thi sturte and thi stryffe thou stroyeste up my gudes /In playinge and in wakynge in wynttres nyghttis, / In owttrage, in unthrifte, in angarte pryde" (265-67). Here Wynnere redirects the attention to Wastoure's negative behavior, pride and wastefulness. However, to an audience that is paying attention, Wynnere's second speech seems oddly reminiscent of his first. Conlee notes how in lines 263-93, "Winner's second speech is almost entirely a re-statement of his initial criticism of Waster" (83). While this tactic may partially succeed in the sense that it does take the attention off of his own avarice and inability to accept Wastoure's call to action, it nevertheless leaves the audience asking themselves what more Wynnere has to say. An adept audience would have no trouble picking up on the fact that Wynnere seems to have nothing further to add than that which he already expounded upon in his first speech.

Once again, by looking at a similar case in which Wastoure attempts to exploit the same rule, we can see that Wastoure is indeed more successful at manipulating these principles to his advantage. For example, in his second speech, Wynnere issues a personal attack which focuses on the ways Wastoure abuses and neglects his land and calls for Wastoure to "Teche thy men for to tille and tynen thyn feldes; / Rayse up thi rent-houses, ryme up thi yerdes" (288-89). Just as Wynnere was quick to shift the subject after Wastoure's call to action, so too is Wynnere. Rather than address the accusations that Wynnere has made, Wastoure immediately changes the subject as he tells Wynnere "thi wordes are vayne" (294). He continues on to assert that "With oure festes and oure fare we feden the pore; / It es plesynge to the Prynce that Paradyse wroghte" (295-96). Here Wastoure attempts to manipulate the Relevance Principle by changing the subject from the issue of his land to that of his banquets. But, unlike Wynnere who completely shifts the subject to an attack on Wastoure, Wastoure changes the subject but keeps the focus on himself. This is important because it allows Wastoure to negotiate a far more subtle

shift. By keeping the attention on his actions rather than launch into an attack similar to one that he already made, Wastoure is able to change the subject without broadcasting his manipulation to the audience.

In addition to crafting his treatment of the Relevance Principle more discreetly than Wynnere, Wastoure also ensures that this exploitation will cause the conversation to flow in the direction that he desires. By bringing up his banquets (a topic that Wynnere himself has not yet addressed) Wastoure not only gets the first word on the subject, but he also increases the probability that Wynnere himself will return to the topic. Though it may seem as if Wastoure would prefer the issue of his extravagant feasts to be swept under the rug, he seems to believe that staying with this particular topic is advantageous to his side of the debate. Conlee notes how "In his second speech Waster argues that his banquets benefit the poor by keeping money in circulation; he also argues that days of fasting such as Fridays and the eves of saints' days should be abolished so that he could feast more often, thus benefiting the poor even more! (85).Many scholars find it difficult to make a final judgment on whether or not these banquets are as helpful to the poor as Wastoure would have us believe. Nicholas Jacobs notes how "It is not easy to determine how seriously we should take the expanded argument that expenditure helps the poor because it provides employment—or even directly food—for them" (490). Regardless of whether or not the audience accepts Wastoure's claims about his banquets, in trying to determine just how helpful his extravagance and spending really are, the subjects shifts in the direction Wastoure desired as the audience ultimately ends up questioning whether spending or hoarding do more for the poor. Thus the audience is left to judge between the benefits of avarice and prodigality.

This struggle between avarice and prodigality is one that was present before the composition of *Wynnere and Wastoure* and long after it. Thomas Bestul notes how "In the *Divine*

Comedy of Dante the vices of prodigality and avarice are presented in both the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. [. . .] In the *Inferno* the misers and spendthrifts are punished together, compelled to roll dead weights in opposite directions" and in the *Purgatorio*, prodigality is located in the same terrace that is devoted to the deadly sin of avarice (13-14). While Dante's portraits of the two vices seem to classify them as equals destined to the same damnation and punishment, this is not always the case in all of the philosophies common at the time. Johan Huizinga points out that "In the later Middle Ages the conditions of power had been changed by the increased circulation of money, and an illimitable field opened to whosoever was desirous of satisfying his ambitions by heaping up wealth. To this epoch cupidity becomes the predominate sin" (19). With the increase in the heaping up of wealth, "questions concerning the use of temporal goods, the lawfulness of private property and so on, were in the air through the Middle Ages" (Dunning 89). These questions regarding private property and earthly goods were not only becoming legal concerns at this time, but much of this stemmed from the established moralistic concerns on the same matter. Bede Jarrett expounds on the fact "there have always been religious teachers for whom all material creation was a thing of evil. Through the whole of the Middle Ages, under the various names of Manicheans, Albigensians, Vaudios, &c., they became exceedingly vigorous" (29). For these religious orders, man's want for property and earthly goods was directly connected with the fall. Jarrett notes how the belief was that "Created in original justice the powers of man's soul were in perfect harmony. His sensitive nature, i.e. his passions, were in subjection to his will, his will to his reason, his reason to God. Had man continued in this state of innocence, government, slavery, and private property would never have been required" (9). But as the theory goes, "Adam fell, and in his fall, said these Christian doctors, the whole conditions of his being were disturbed" (9). Writers such as Jarrett seem to stress the suspect nature that personal property would have both legally and moralistically at the time of the

composition of *Wynnere and Wastoure*. Thus, Wastoure's manipulation of the Relevance Principle in an attempt to get Wynnere to focus on the banquets and the audience to be left to determine what is worse, avarice or prodigality, seems to be an extremely advantageous ploy. Because the readers of the poem would have no doubt had some further knowledge on the sinful nature of wealth and private property that was a common belief at the time, the question of what is more sinful, Wynnere's abundance of bacon which bends the beams and will no doubt rot before he enjoys it all himself, or Wastoure's extravagant feasts which, while they may not help the poor, do ultimately feed his guests. It seems as if Wastoure realized that regardless of whether his banquets actually help everyone or ensure that the poor get a meal every night, the jobs that they do create for members of the lower social strata end up providing more help for the poor than Wynnere's hoarded wealth.

In this case, as in the previous one and throughout the poem, Wastoure seems to show a superlative ability to manipulate the traditional principles of communication. Though both Wynnere and Wastoure exploit them repeatedly throughout the debate, Wastoure's endeavors prove to be more advantageous than those of Wynnere. And, given the thoughts of the time regarding winning and wasting, avarice and prodigality, it is not that far of a stretch to declare Wastoure the champion of the debate. Though the king who is judging the debate in the poem does not officially declare either Wynnere or Wastoure the victor, given that many scholars note that the personifications of these two vices serve as commentary on Edward III (who is thought to be the king of the poem) any judgment that he makes would seem to be somewhat influenced by his own economical policies.

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Monkey's Journey West: The Trickster Goes on a Quest

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An aspect of early modern literature that continues to fascinate me and intrigue my students is the period's position in between – it is neither entirely medieval nor fully modern. This in-between-ness offers an excellent opportunity to hook students once they begin to recognize the familiar among the foreign. One way to help students make these connections is to explore literary texts in terms of their epistemic positions – in what ways are the narratives typical of a print-based culture, and in what ways do they still display residuals of an oral culture? Certain texts seem to lend themselves particularly well to discussions like these – *Don Quixote*, and *Paradise Lost*, in particular, because of their rich character development, as well as their deliberate references to generic conventions typical of oral narratives. A third text, however, from halfway around the world, has also proven to be an excellent site to explore the in-between-ness of a culture that relies on literacy, but is not entirely literate. *Hsi-yu Chi*, or *The Journey to the West*, a sixteenth-century novel from Ming China, is not only a delightful read, but raises many questions about how disparate cultures responded to their shift toward literacy.

The earliest published version of *The Journey to the West* is dated at 1592. The authorship of the novel remains disputed, but the most widely accepted candidate is Wu Ch'eng-en, a minor government official who gained a reputation as a poet and humorist (Yu 1: 16). The narrative is wildly popular in eastern Asia, and has inspired dozens of movies, T.V. shows and graphic novels. Two movies, in fact have been released just this year, and a T.V. series aired as recently as 2008 in China. There have also been, according to my students and my sister-in-law, movies and T.V. shows in South Korea and Japan. Most westerners, however, seem to be

utterly unaware of its existence. I had certainly never heard of it before running across a short excerpt in an anthology of world literature.

This is a shame, because not only is it a delightful story, it serves as an excellent contrast with European novels published during the same period. Both Chinese and European cultures occupied a cultural position in between orality and literacy, with ruling classes who valued reading and writing, and underclasses who remained largely unlettered. How creative expression responded to this cultural context is markedly different in each culture. European narrative increasingly centered on the individual ego and its internal struggles, eventually developing into the classic novel form, while *The Journey to the West* seems to have deliberately sought for ways to subsume psychological or internal struggle within a unified social fabric.

Ostensibly, *The Journey to the West* tells the story of an actual historical figure, Hsuan-tsang,[1]who travelled from Tang China in 627 AD to India to find Buddhist scriptures and bring them back to China. He went despite the fact that he had been expressly forbidden by the emperor to go, and returned with the scriptures despite the fact that it took him 17 years to do so (Yu 1: 4).

I say, "ostensibly," because the narrative in *The Journey to the West* bears very little resemblance to the historical record. There is, in the novel, a monk who travels from China to India. He finds scriptures and returns with them to China. Here is where the resemblance ends. The fictional version introduces three elaborate backstories, four mythological companions, and a host of gods, demons, and fantastical episodes.

[1] Conventions for writing out Chinese words in English have evolved, and so the spelling of character and place names varies depending on publication dates. In Anthony C. Yu's translation of 1977, the monk's name is spelled "Hsuan-tsang," while in his shorter, abridged version, the name is spelled "Xuanzang." In an earlier abridged translation by Arthur Waley, the name is given without the hyphen as, "Hsüan Tsang." These variations are typical of the scholarship, as well. In academic articles, the title of the novel is spelled *Hsi-yu Chi*, or *Xiyou ji*, depending, again, on the date of the publication in English.

For those specialists in British literature not familiar with the novel, perhaps a bit of plot summary would be helpful. The novel begins not with the monk deciding to set out on a quest, or even with the monk's birth. It starts at the beginning of time, and devotes the first seven chapters to the early life of Hsuan-tsang's most famous disciple, Sun Wukong, a.k.a. Great Sage Equal to Heaven, a.k.a. the Monkey King. Sun Wukong was not born. Instead, he hatched from a great stone egg that had been warmed by the sun for hundreds of years on a mountain top. For many years, he was perfectly content as the Monkey King doing whatever monkeys do, until he suddenly became aware of his own mortality. This new awareness prompted him to leave home in the Water-Curtain Cave of the Flower-Fruit Mountain in search of a Taoist master who could teach him the way to immortality. Here, he was given the surname, Sun, and the religious name, Wukong, which loosely means, as his master explains, "Wake-to-Vacuity" (Chen 1: 82). From this master, he not only learned the path to immortality, but learned "the 72 transformations" and how to travel by "cloud soaring." His impulsive nature, however, got him kicked out of school, so he returned home. When he returned, however, not everything was going so well, because his subjects were being bullied by a local monster. Monkey was able to defeat the monster fairly easily, but decided precautions had to be taken to ensure his subjects could no longer be threatened. He armed them, drilled them in military exercises, and decided to find himself a proper weapon. To do this, he traveled to the palace of the old Dragon King, and demanded that he be given a weapon. He bullied the dragon for so long that he finally let Sun Wukong take a magic rod that Monkey could make as big or as small as he wished. He returned home, feeling pretty pleased with himself, but the Dragon King was a bit offended by his treatment. He traveled to the Heaven to file a formal complaint with the Jade Emperor against Sun Wukong. The emperor, deciding that the best course was cooption rather than open confrontation, issued an invitation, asking Sun to accept a title and official post in heaven.

Initially, Sun thought this was a terrific idea, but things went fairly badly when he decided that he was not being treated with proper respect – his first post was as an unpaid steward of the imperial stables, and during his second post as overseer of the imperial orchard, he was not invited to the Empress's Peach Festival. He ate the Empress's Immortal Peaches, ate all of the food that had been prepared for the Peach Festival, and when the Jade Emperor tried to have him arrested, he fought back, nearly destroying the palace and half of heaven. He could only be subdued, after several extended battles, by the great Buddha, Tathāgata, who put him in a stone box and weighed it down by a mountain.

The second backstory creates a fictional history for Hsuang-tsang, the monk. The narrative tells us about his father, who was a great scholar, and was travelling with his pregnant wife to his new job as governor of a far-off province. Along the way, he is murdered by a ferryman, who forces the wife to pretend that he is her husband. They travel together to the province where the murderer assumes the position as governor, conning the populace into believing he is the man he has murdered. The young wife worries that her unborn child's life is in danger, so she contrives to give birth in secret and sends the little boy floating down the river on a raft, from which he is eventually rescued by a monk. The young boy is raised in the monastery, eventually gaining an impressive reputation for his upright character and his skills as a scholar.

The third backstory follows the Tang emperor as he travels to the underworld, where he first learns how souls must endure endless suffering because they are unable break the cycle of death and rebirth. He promises to hold a Grand Mass for the Dead that will help ease their suffering, and promises to spread the teachings of Buddhism. He appoints the now grown Hsuang-tsang to officiate at the ceremony; however the mass is interrupted by the bodhisattva

Kuan-yin,[2] who tasks the monk with a quest: he must travel to India and return with Buddhist scriptures, "which are able to send the lost to /heaven, to deliver the afflicted from their sufferings, to fashion ageless bodies, and to break the cycles of coming and going" (1: 276).[3] She then "rose up into the air, treading on hallowed clouds, and revealed her true salvific form holding the pure vase with the willow branch" (1: 277). The emperor becomes blood brothers with the monk, issues him an official passport and sends him on his way with great fanfare.

Only then, at chapter 13, does the monk finally begin his journey, along the way picking up his four companions: Sun Wukong, Pa-Chieh, Sha Monk, and a small dragon who is transformed into a white horse. Each of these had been banished from heaven for some type of transgression, but was saved by Kuan-yin to help the monk on his quest.[4] Along the way, they will endure many hardships in order to obtain merit toward the path of enlightenment – 81 hardships, to be exact, because 9 times 9 is 81, and 8+1=9, and 9 = three 3s – a particularly auspicious number. They will eventually obtain the scriptures, take them back to China, then return to Buddha's palace where Hsuang-tsang and Wu Kung will become Buddhas, Pa-chieh

[2] A bodhisattva is "the embodiment of the spiritual ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism. . . . Bodhisattva literally means 'enlightenment being' but the correct Sanskrit derivation may be 'bodhi-sakta' meaning 'a being who is orientated towards enlightenment'. . . . Many Mahāyāna sūtras state that a Bodhisattva forgoes his own final enlightenment until all other beings in saṃsāra have been liberated. . . . Earlier Mahāyāna sūtras are specific in their belief that a Bodhisattva can only be male but later texts allow the possibility of female Bodhisattvas" (Keown). Interestingly enough, Kuan-yin is predominantly represented as male, though is popularly portrayed as able to take on other forms (Keown). Perhaps the author of *The Journey West* chose to portray the bodhisatva as female because the narrative overwhelming emphasizes her compassionate and merciful nature.

[3] All quotations from *The Journey to the West* are from Anthony Yu's 4 volume translation.

[4] Pa-Chieh had been the Marshal of the Heavenly Reeds, but because he got drunk and "dallied with the Goddess of the Moon, the Jade Emperor had me beaten with a mallet two thousand times" banished him from heaven; on his way to earth, his soul got lost and "passed through the womb of an old sow." As a result, he has a pig's snout and ears (1: 192). Sha Monk, or Sha Wu-ching, had been the Jade Emperor's Curtain Raising Marshal, but had broken a crystal goblet at the Empress's Peach Festival. For his offense, he received 800 lashes and was banished from heaven to lurk as a lake demon where "every seven days [the Emperor] sends a flying sword to stab my breast and side more than a hundred times before it leaves me" (1: 189). The dragon is the son of the Dragon King of the Western Ocean. He was sentenced to be executed for accidently setting fire to his father's palace and destroying some of its pearls (1:193-94).

and Sha Monk will become arhats,[5] and the little dragon will get a big promotion in the dragon bureaucracy.

It's a Chinese quest narrative, and although it doesn't sound like it from my summary, it's pretty darn funny. Monkey is a trickster figure, and for much of the narrative, he acts like a toddler with superpowers – he has no impulse control, has no respect for authority, and loves a good laugh. It is also a bit of a Chinese Pilgrim's Progress, and much of the narrative serves as a thinly veiled allegory about following the path of the three religions toward enlightenment. In this case, the three religions are Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.[6]

Just as with early or proto- European novels, the narrative features many traits typical of stories intended to be listened to, rather than read, and other traits typical of purely oral compositions.[7]

- Each chapter ends identically, with the narrator addressing the reader: "you must listen to the explanation in the next chapter."
- As is typical of oral narratives, the narrator often inserts epithets when a character is about to do something spectacular: "dear Monkey!" is the most common, but also "clever Monkey!" or "Look at that Monkey King!" and "Dear Great Sage!" and "Dear Prince!" or "Dear Monster!"
- The novel is structured episodically, as is typical of oral-formulaic narratives.

[5] An arhat is "one who has attained the goal of enlightenment or awakening. . . . The difference between an Arhat and a Buddha is that the Buddha attains enlightenment by himself, whereas the Arhat does it by following the teachings of another. . . . As taught in early Buddhism, the Arhat attains exactly the same goal as the Buddha. Mahāyāna Buddhism, however, comes to regard Arhatship as an inferior ideal to that of Buddhahood, and portrays the Arhat (somewhat unfairly) as selfishly concerned with the goal of a 'private nirvāṇa'. In contrast, emphasis is placed on the great compassion (mahākaruṇā) of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who dedicate themselves to leading all beings to salvation" (Keown).

[6] The exact import of the allegory is still a matter of some dispute, however, as is discussed by Bantley, Shao, and in Yu's introduction to his translated editions.

[7] In this and the section that follows, I rely heavily on Walter Ong's comprehensive discussions in *Orality and Literacy*.

- Its allegorical elements resemble the unitary thematics of oral tales (see once more discussions in Bentley, Shao and Yu).
- Nearly every battle begins with a call-and-response exchange of insults, which often include a history of the fighters' weapons.
- Many of the demons cannot be defeated until the pilgrims can discover their true names, a detail which points to the way in which oral cultures connect magical power with language.
- The narrative also includes extensive repetition. Often, a character will leave the group, encounter a demon, then return to the group and describe exactly what happened – in several cases, the action is described a third or even a fourth time when the character goes to seek help from heaven or the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin.

Despite all of these residual characteristics of oral storytelling, however, the narrative is clearly the product of a literate, bureaucratic class. The book is insistently textual. Texts pervade the narrative, starting with the very reason for the quest itself – to obtain written scriptures. Yet texts figure prominently throughout the story:

- Hsuang-tsang was highly educated and literate, as was his father – who, in fact, had to take a written exam in order to qualify for his job.
- When the monk leaves on his quest, the emperor gives him a written travel rescript or passport that must be endorsed by the ruler of every kingdom he passes through.
- Everything that gets done in any palace only gets done if there is a written order signed by the appropriate official.
- All official complaints are brought to the appropriate bureaucrat as written memorials.
- Records in every government – heavenly or earthly – are meticulously kept.

It also typifies literate culture in that it is highly satirical. The story gleefully pokes fun at a Chinese bureaucracy that (1) apparently cannot get anything done unless someone has written permission to do so, and (2) refuses to believe something officially exists unless it has been inventoried in a written file. This is a problem whether one is on earth, in heaven, or in the Region of Darkness. When Sun Wukong is 342, he finds himself escorted to the afterlife, which resembles nothing if not a Kafka-esque bureaucracy. There, the judge brings out the record book that states Sun's time has come, despite the fact that he had acquired the Tao. Sun demands to see the file, and the narrator tells us:

Under the heading 'Soul 1350; he found the name Sun Wu-k'ung recorded, with the description: 'Heaven-born Stone Monkey. Age: three-hundred and forty-two years. A good end.' Wu-k'ung said, "I really don't remember my age. All I want is to erase my name. Bring me a brush" The judge hurriedly fetched the brush and soaked it in heavy ink. Wu-kung took the ledger on monkeys and crossed out all the names he could find in it. Throwing down the ledger, he said, 'That's the end of the account, the end of the account! Now I am truly not your subject.' Brandishing his rod, he fought his way out of the Region of Darkness. (1: 111).

The power of the written record is absolute. If it's written down, then it is true, if not, then it might as well not exist. This is as true for written orders as it is for ledgers. Early on in the narrative, the Dragon King of the Ching River is executed because he failed to follow written instructions precisely. He received an Imperial order from the Jade Emperor, delivered by "a golden-robed guardian." The orders were very precise, "At the hour of the Dragon the clouds will gather . . . and thunder will be heard at the hour of the Serpent. Rain will come at the hour of the Horse and reach its limit at the hour of the Sheep. There will be altogether three feet, three inches, and forty-eight drops of rain" (1. 223-24). Instead the Dragon King allowed it to

rain only three feet and 40 drops (1.225). For this, he was executed (again by official decree) "at precisely the third quarter past the noon hour" (1.229).

One of the most remarked upon hallmarks of a print culture in Europe, however, is the emergence of the psychological realism that typifies the development of western novels. Writing, as Walter Ong explains, "makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set" (104). Readers and writers are aware of a difference between their interior lives and their exterior shows, an awareness intensified by Europe's reliance on written Latin as a "Father Tongue", which magnified a writer's tendency to objectify language, and in turn, magnify the writer's awareness of a mind-body split (Ong 11-12). The effects of this result in characters like Hamlet, Don Quixote, and Milton's Satan. These are not the heroes of oral narrative: they are divided from themselves in that they recognize the existence of an interior life separate from external appearances.

In *The Journey to the West*, the main characters could be described as heroic in proportion, and in this respect, they contrast with the protagonists that begin to show up in 16th and 17th C European literature. At the same time, however, the narrator repeatedly emphasizes the fact that their success depends on their acting as one unit. If one of the group leaves, or if they continue to argue with one another, the quest will fail. The narrator emphasizes this by associating each of the characters with one of the five basic elements of Taoist alchemy: water, fire, wood or mercury, metal, and earth. According to Anthony Yu, Monkey, for instance, is often associated with metal, particularly gold. Pa-chieh is occasionally referred to as "Wood Mother," which "is a term used by alchemists to designate mercury" and is symbolized by a boar. Sha Monk "is almost always linked to the earth" and referred to as "Earth Mother," or "Yellow Hag" (1: 51). Each of these elements is, in turn, corresponds to the five "breaths," or *ch'i*,

within the human body (Yu 1: 51). Through this correlation, the characters collectively embody the psychological aspects of a Buddhist's internal struggle. Rather than portraying a single character who undergoes an internal struggle that must be resolved, *The Journey West* represents a single psyche using five separate characters. In order to succeed, they must come to function as though they were a single mind.

This divided collectivity may have something to do with a fundamental difference between how Europeans and Chinese perceive evil. For westerners, evil is seen as something to be wiped out – it exists in and of itself and the evil thing must be eliminated. When St. George battles the dragon, he just has to kill it. The idea is to get rid of it. A Laurie Cozad explains, however, evil in Chinese cosmology results when something deviates from its "category within a classificatory structure" (119). In the words of a Confucian scholar, "to say that something is evil does not mean that it is inherently so. It is merely because it goes too far or not far enough" (Ch'eng Hao, qtd in Cozad 119). Everything belongs here and has its proper place. Evil results when something steps out of its place. When the characters fight a demon, the demon's true nature must be discovered so it can be returned to its proper place in the order of things, not just eliminated. Even the adversaries that get killed must have their true natures restored to them, even if this happens through their deaths. In one instance, an evil Taoist magician turns out to have been a tiger. By revealing his true nature, even in death, cosmic balance is restored; existence begins to function once again as a harmonious whole. The five characters of the narrative need to learn how to function in the same way, as a harmonious whole, a single psychic unit, not as separate individuals. The arguments between Sun, Pa-chieh, and Hsuan-tsang externalize the internal struggles faced by one who seeks enlightenment. Pa-chieh embodies the struggle against physical desires. Hsuang-tsang embodies the self-defeating nature of a rigid adherence with doctrine that results in paralysis. Sun embodies the childish impulse

for action without reflection (beat on it first, and then ask questions later), and the child's willful refusal to kowtow to authority or follow etiquette. By the end of the quest, those tendencies that are too extreme must be tempered, and those traits that are weak must be enhanced or cultivated.

In order to achieve this harmony, it is the trickster figure – Monkey – who plays the greatest role. In his origins, he is wholly outside the cosmological system, a fact which Monkey initially does everything he can to emphasize. Even before he crosses his name out of Yama's ledger in hell, he fell outside of the established classificatory system. The narrator tells us:

You see, though this monkey resembled a human being, he was not listed under the names of men; though he resembled the short-haired creatures, he did not dwell in their kingdoms; though he resembled other animals, he was not subject to the unicorn; and though he resembled flying creatures, he was not governed by the phoenix. He had, therefor, a separate ledger. (1: 111)

There is no place for him. To avoid destruction, heaven must find a way to incorporate Monkey into the cosmos. Hsuang-tsang does this by forcibly teaching Sun impulse control, such that, by the end of the quest, his disruptive powers become a force for positive transformation, rather than chaotic destruction – his abilities benefit the community, rather than his ego.[8]By the second half of the narrative, it is Sun Wukung whose clear sightedness identifies the demons in their path, and Sun Wukung who leads the monk and his disciples over the Cloud–Transcending Stream where they finally abandon their earthly bodies and achieve enlightenment:

[8] The fact that he does this through brute force may make contemporary readers a bit uncomfortable. The monk tricks Sun Wukung into putting on a magic fillet which painfully tightens when ever Hsuang-tsang recites a spell. This has reminded some critics of colonial hegemony. However, the discipline and self-control it teaches Monkey is completely consistent with Buddhist teachings.

Delivered from their mortal flesh and bone,

A primal spirit of mutual love has grown.

Their work done, they become Buddhas this day,

Free of their former six-senses' sway. (4: 384)

This sense that a harmonious wholeness governs the cosmos may be responsible for a fundamental difference in the way Chinese creative expression was shaped by literacy. European stories focus on the development of the ego and use the individual psyche as the locus for struggle, a narrative entirely consistent with a religious world view focused on personal salvation – whether that salvation comes through works or through faith. In contract, *The Journey to the West* focuses on how many elements or egos struggle to work together. Once they reach Thunderclap Mountain, the seat of Buddha's palace, Sun Wukung acknowledges as much when he says to his master, "we two parties need not thank each other, for we are meant to support each other" (4: 385). The locus for struggle in this narrative is communal, consistent with a concept of salvation that depends on the abandonment of the ego.

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A Question of Genre: Comedy in *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda*

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My paper explores the modern reception of the comic aspect of *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda*, an anonymous play frequently attributed to Thomas Kyd. To set the stage for this discussion, I first look at three examples of the way in which a work's perceived genre can lead the reader or viewer far astray: Richard Helgerson's analysis of Dutch genre painting, Nicholas Brooke's experience in teaching Jacobean drama, and the critical reception of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. Then, after briefly recapping the plot of this relatively obscure play, I move to an examination of *Soliman and Perseda*'s comic effects. In particular, I address the question of how the author contrives to elicit a comic response out of material that might be described as violent and sensational.

I begin with Richard Helgerson's analysis of the mid-seventeenth century painting by Gerard ter Borch which came to be known as *Paternal Admonition* and which Helgerson discusses in *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting*. Helgerson quotes Goethe's description of the tableau:

> One foot thrown over the other, sits a noble knightly-looking father; his daughter stands before him, to whose conscience he seems to be addressing himself. She, a fine striking figure, in a folding drapery of white satin, is only to be seen from behind, but her whole bearing appears to signify that she is collecting herself. That the admonition is not too severe, that she is not being utterly put to shame, is to be gathered from the air and attitude of the father, while the mother seems as if she is

> trying to conceal some slight embarrassment—she is looking into a glass of wine, which she is on the point of drinking. (Goethe, qtd in Helgerson, 79)

The title *Paternal Admonition* was attached to the painting long before Goethe described it, and it remains the title by which it is known. The title no doubt influenced Goethe's description, which in fact accords with the painting's reception for several centuries. Modern scholarship, however, has come to a much different reading. We now think the man is a soldier who is offering to purchase the sexual services of the young woman. A very explicit clue, a coin in the man's hand, may have been effaced or painted over early in the painting's history. Nonetheless, the real issue is not a missing detail but that the painting was seen through the lens of the wrong genre: the everyday domestic setting found in much Dutch genre painting. There are, of course, many rollicking brothel scenes in Dutch paintings, but it would be hard to say whether this interior is that of a home or a brothel, and as Helgerson points out, it would be hard to say if the young woman is a whore or a modest wife or daughter who is being propositioned (81). There are many similar paintings, and what Helgerson goes on to identify is a new genre, or subgenre, featuring soldiers rather than fathers in these Dutch home settings. What this generic lens reveals, Helgerson suggests, is the fear of the Dutch householders in the 1650s and 1660s "that their own preeminence and authority in the affairs of the Dutch Republic—their political home—would be supplanted by a military-based monarchic regime" (84).

My second prefatory example is from the preface to Nicholas Brooke's *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy*, which opens with an anecdote about his experience of teaching the same course under two different titles:

> A few years ago I took a seminar in the University of East Anglia entitled "Jacobean Tragedy" and found that my students were unready to accept the presence of serious laughter in plays which they wanted to discuss in the pseudo-

> Aristotelian terms which have been customary with us since the nineteenth century; they either denied the laughter or, where it was patent, deplored it. The next time I taught the subject I titled the seminar "Horrid Laughter" and was taken aback by an opposite response: that time the students saw the laughter so clearly that they wanted to discuss the plays as comedies and were only with difficulty persuaded to recognize the tragic context. (vii)

In short, Brooke found that the expectations deriving from genre strongly affected what was subsequently seen in the plays that his students read. This is precisely the generic complication that I wish to examine in *Soliman and Perseda*.

The genre of *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta* has been much debated. Early criticism mirrors that of Professor Brooke's first group of students. Expecting a purer tragedy, these critics found that the play was only partially successful, its grand beginning declining after the second act into an unsatisfactory ending. For a powerful, but representative, example, consider Una Ellis-Fermor's near rapturous appreciation of Marlowe in 1927:

> The first two acts of *The Jew of Malta* contain the most strongly-imagined and sparingly-executed study that Marlowe ever made. They promise a play compact, clear and consistent, inspired by the author's intense belief in the power and significance of the mind that they gradually unfold. It is a stronger and a more bitter play than any that has gone before, though less passionate and lyrical than its predecessors. (95)

However, her assessment alters when she reaches the third act:

> The play is, as has been remarked by all of its editors, extremely difficult to describe, as the breakdown in the third and fourth acts is complete, and the recovery in the fifth only partial. Various explanations could be offered, such as

> that Marlowe lost interest after the first two acts and found his inspiration insufficient; or that he was for some reason obliged to finish hastily what he had begun carefully; or that he left the play to other hands after he had finished the first two acts, sketched the outlines of the next two, and written a rough draft of the fifth. […] It is perhaps wiser to base any opinions of Marlowe's work in this play only on Acts I and II, and, with reservations, on Act V. (97)

The perception of Ellis-Fermor and other early critics that *The Jew of Malta* is a tragedy manqué was ultimately changed by T. S. Eliot's 1920 description of *The Jew of Malta* as farce rather than tragedy, though his suggestion was resisted by most critics until the middle of the 20th century—perhaps partly because it is difficult to unpack precisely what Eliot meant by his qualification of farce as being not the "enfeebled humour" of his own day, but "the terribly serious, even savage comic humour" found in Dickens and in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (92). Nonetheless, critics have come to see that a thread of humor runs through the play. For example, in 1964 J. B. Steane urged that "in a lively and imaginative reading, *The Jew of Malta* is a very funny play" (171), and in 1993 John D. Cox described *The Jew of Malta* as "the funniest of Marlowe's plays," though he distinguishes between its irony and wit and actual comedy (64). Most recently, Sarah K. Scott has persuasively posited that The *Jew of Malta* should be considered a city comedy.

Marlowe's comic perspective is evident throughout in his characterization of Barabas, ostensibly a cunning and successful merchant, but in fact a villain who, as Robert Jones has argued, engages us through his knavery. We laugh with him as he reveals his willingness to betray the other members of his Jewish community: "Assure yourselves I'll look—(aside) unto myself" (1.1.171). We laugh when he reveals that he has secreted his wealth under the sign of a cross. We laugh as he trades lies about his wicked deeds with Ithamore, boasting of doing

everything from poisoning wells to driving bankrupts to suicide. Moreover, we laugh as he actually performs evil deeds. In performance, the deaths of an entire convent of nuns provokes laughter, we enjoy the jests exchanged by Barabas and Ithamore as they strangle Friar Barnadine, and we are amused by Barabas's impersonation of a French musician, though its purpose is the murder of three people. Similarly we are amused by the clownish Ithamore and the lecherous and hypocritical friars, and in performance, Ferneze's attribution of his victory over Barabas and Calymath to heaven invariably draws a laugh. The comic potential of these scenes now seems obvious to us, and we admire the way in which the comic threads intertwine with the play's underlying critique of Marlowe's world. We perceive them as strengths rather than defects in Marlowe's dramaturgy.

When Marlowe's protagonist boasts, "Tush, who […] knows not Barabas" (1.1.66), modern students of the drama must agree; he is well known to us. The same is not true for the characters in *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda*. The play is little studied, does not appear in modern anthologies, and is rarely performed. Many will recall that the play-within-the-play in *The Spanish Tragedy* is based on the story of Soliman and Perseda, but even if, as many think, this is Kyd taking a metadramatic wink at his own earlier play, it is little more than an allusion to the events of *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda*. Given the play's obscurity, a brief plot summary seems in order. The characters Love, Fortune, and Death serve as a chorus in *Soliman and Perseda*, opening it and appearing at the end of each act to debate which of them has the most power over human life. The action begins at Rhodes with Perseda giving a carcanet (a jeweled collar or necklace) to Erastus as a sign of her love. He promptly loses it, and it is found by another knight, Ferdinando, who gives it to his love, Lucina. Seeing Lucina wearing the carcanet, Perseda jealously concludes that Erastus gave it to her and dumps him. Knowing of Lucina's weakness for gambling, Erastus wins the carcanet back with the aid of his servant Piston's false

dice. Ferdinando then sees Erastus with the carcanet and concludes that Erastus has stolen it, and they fight. Erastus slays Ferdinando, and then flees to Constantinople, where Soliman's two brothers have just been killed in a family spat. Soliman makes Erastus one of his lieutenants. Perseda has followed Erastus to Constantinople, and Soliman promptly falls in love with her, but then learns that she and Erastus love each other. Soliman nobly yields Perseda to Erastus, and since the Turkish general Brusor has just conquered Rhodes, he sends the couple back to rule it. He immediately regrets giving up Perseda and sends Brusor and his new love Lucina to recall Erastus. Brusor accompanies Erastus back to Constantinople where Soliman executes him, followed by the execution of the executioners and the false witnesses that Soliman had recruited. Soliman and Brusor then return to Rhodes, where in short order Perseda kills Lucina and, disguised as a man, challenges Soliman to single combat. She fatally poisons Soliman, who kills her, the comic servant Piston, and the miles gloriosus Basilisco, and then orders the execution of Brusor before he dies. No one is left standing!

I first read this play knowing little about it, and found myself frequently breaking into laughter as I read. I was therefore surprised to find that in the first play review I subsequently read, a review of a 2009 performance of the play at the Rose Theatre Exhibition space, Kevin Quarmby described it as a "woeful, bloody tragedy" and praised the company's "effort to inject real horror and passion into the play" (n. p.). A later review of this same production by Peter Kirwan drew a far different conclusion. Despite its being billed as a tragedy, and despite the play's senseless violence, Kirwan perceived that "the spirit of the production was decidedly comic" (566). Clearly *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* poses the same generic problem as does *The Jew of Malta*. It is nominally a tragedy, and performance could attempt to emphasize its tragic aspects, yet its effect is far from tragic.

Each of the two major overviews of Kyd's works has noted this mixture of genres. Arthur Freeman's *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* argues that "Kyd's most important achievement in Soliman . . . is . . . bringing about a true conflation of comic and tragic themes within mixed scenes" (164-5). Lukas Erne's *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy* also discusses "Kyd's interest in achieving a new and daring effect by mixing the tragic and the comic" (197), thereby achieving comitragedy, a genre that introduces comic material into a work with a tragic outcome" (292, note). Erne illustrates the intermixture of comedy and tragedy through reference to the death of Basilisco, who is killed by Soliman while grieving for the dying Perseda. The death, he finds, is "strangely moving. The comic is subsumed within the tragic as the character is accorded tragic dignity"(197). Erne sees a parallel to Abigail's death in *The Jew of Malta*, a scene "where the playwright has the serious and the farcical boldly rub shoulders" (198):

> Abigail. Death seizeth on my heart. Ah, gentle Friar,
>
> Convert my father that he might be saved,
>
> And witness that I die a Christian
>
> *[She dies.]*
>
> Friar Barnardine. Ay, and a virgin, too; that grieves me most. (3.6.38-41)

Erne's comparison insightfully illustrates the way in which *Soliman and Perseda* manifests the same intersection of humor and seriousness that we have learned to appreciate in *The Jew of Malta*. The label comitragedy, as opposed to tragicomedy, is apt. Rather than pulling the rabbit of a happy ending out of the hat of threatened disaster, *Soliman and Perseda* concludes with the violence, loss, and death that we would anticipate in tragedy, but has left us laughing to the very end. We have dodged all of the existential considerations that a tragedy such as *Hamlet* forces us to confront.

Much of the humor derives from the comic characters Piston, a comic servant, and Basilisco, a miles gloriosus whom some have seen as a proto-Falstaff. In terms of sheer quantity they dominate the play, Piston has 103 speeches, the most in the play, and Basilisco has the second largest number of speeches (*Tragedy of Soliman*, glossary). Piston's speeches tend to be short but comic observations. A richer character, Basilisco has many long speeches filled with bombast, double entendre, vain appreciation of himself, revelations of an underlying cowardice, and mistaken perceptions. His role is not always appreciated. Flues and Brazil, for example, react negatively to Basilisco's response to Perseda's and Lucina's intertwined laments over the exile of Erastus and the death of Fernando: "…Basilisco's bizarre interruption, offering to service each lady, one by day and one by night, continues the fugue, but in a manner so incredibly objectionable that in two lines it completely alters the mood of the scene, turning an elegy into low-comedy exposures of a character alternately laughable and contemptible" (*Tragedy of Soliman*, glossary, note on 3.2). Obviously language such as "bizarrely… alters the mood" reflects an assumption that Kyd or whoever wrote this play was aiming at an elevated, tragic effect and clumsily failed to achieve it. Rather, I would argue that Basilisco's confident assumption that he would be able to simultaneously replace both Erastus and Ferdinando by serving as a lover to these two grieving women, one by day and one by night, contributes precisely to the comitragic tone for which the play aims. Basilisco's offer is not appreciated by either of the women; despite Basilisco's illusions of grandeur, neither of them has ever cared for him at all. As Perseda says, "how unpleasant is mirth to melancholy" (3.2.25). It is we in the audience who enjoy the undercutting of what in other plays might be a fully serious moment.

Many other comic scenes with Piston and Basilisco function to maintain this humorous perspective, but the comedy of the play does not stem solely from their comic actions and misunderstandings. Rather, it arises more profoundly from speed of action and a lack of

preparation for events to come, and this, I think, has not been sufficiently appreciated. *Soliman and Perseda* races along like a Marx Brothers movie. Perseda's love for Erastus succumbs almost instantly to jealousy, and Soliman's newly formed friendship for Erastus dissolves in a flash. The ending, in which Soliman slays Perseda, Basilisco, Piston, and Brusor before dying himself from having kissed Perseda's poisoned lips, is a bloodbath, but such a bloodbath as might end a Mel Brooks comedy. The speed counters the tragic potentiality of such moments. For example, in *Othello* the sight of the strawberry handkerchief causes Othollo's jealousy to flare, but unlike Perseda's carcanet, its importance has been assiduously prepared. The killings at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy* occur bang-bang-bang, just as do the deaths at the end of *Soliman and Perseda*, but the deaths in *The Spanish Tragedy* have been long prepared. Until the moment that they happen, there has been no indication that Piston, Bailisco, and Brusor would be killed, nor were we informed in advance that Perseda plans to use poison to kill Soliman.

Moreover, it is not simply at the play's end that death occurs without warning or foreshadowing. Thus, when Fernando sees Erastus with the carcanet that he has won back from Lucina, he instantly presumes it to be stolen and without pause attacks Erastus and gets killed. We had no reason to anticipate any of this. Similarly, in the scene that introduces Soliman to us, a petty argument arises and one brother slays the other only to be slain in turn by Soliman. The scene is violent and bloody, but is too unexpected and even ludicrous to be tragic. The same is true of the scene in which Erastus dies. We do know that Soliman has recalled Erastus from Rhodes to kill him, but the immediate slaying of the false witnesses and then the executioners comes totally out of the blue. People can drop like flies in a Renaissance tragedy—think of the ending of Hamlet—but in actual tragedies the deaths do not seem merely arbitrary or fail to build on events within the play. Here we have no sense of a reason for things to happen or any sense of inevitability beyond the fact that Death will always win over Fortune and Love.

Though some scholars like Erne argue for the play's importance, the play has not been popular in our day. There is no good modern edition, virtually no performances, and little criticism. The problem, I would suggest, is one of genre. As Lucy Munro has suggested in reference to Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, "Generic experimentation can … be risky, because members of the audience might fail to recognize the structures with which the dramatist is playing" (192). *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was, of course, a failure in its own time, but is a play that we now like. Its treatment of genre accords with our postmodern vision. Soliman and Perseda was a modest, not great, success in its own time, but it is much less so in ours. We do not, I think, truly know how to read its generic markers.

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Will versus Assent in the Albina and Brutus Myths of *Castleford's Chronicle*

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Throughout his *Chronicle*, Thomas Castleford uses his history to analyze the subtle ways in which the will of the ruler and the assent of the ruled combine to lead them towards mutual prosperity or destruction.[1] His focus on this conflict between the ruler's will and the assent of the governed reflects larger medieval political trends. J. P. Canning notes, "[T]he role of the will in the creation of law—either in the form of the ruler's *voluntas* ['will'] or the people's consent" was a "fundamental theme in [the] fourteenth" century (456). In particular, Castleford's consistent focus in the *Chronicle* on the problem of negotiating between a ruler's will and his subjects' assent reflects the central problem of co-rulership in medieval England: the degree to which a king rules according to his pleasure, as in the famous maxim "what pleases the prince has the force of law" (Pennington 427); or whether a king rules according to the assent of his subjects, because "what touches all must be approved by all" (449).[2] The chronicler reiterates the keyword "wyll" to show the complexity of the term as it plays out in the chronicle.[3] "Wyll" in this poem oscillates between conscious, purposeful decision-making that puts the community first and the realm of wishes or desire that places precedence on self-interest at the expense of the common good. Medieval political theory, in particular Thomas Aquinas's *De*

[1] The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that one consistent strand of meaning for "will" plays on the term's relation to intention. From its earliest appearance in the English language (c. 825), "wylle" conveys a sense of "desire, wish[ing] for, hav[ing] a mind to, want[ing] (something); sometimes implying also 'intent [or] purpose'." "Assent" likewise has an equally contradictory meaning. The *Medieval English Dictionary* (*MED*) notes that "assent" expresses "a formal endorsement" or approval, yet it also means "will" and intent."

[2] The famous Latin phrase is "Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbari debet" (Pennington 449).

[3] Castleford's *Chronicle*'s representation of "wyll" precedes William Langland's representation of "will" in *Piers Plowman* by three decades.

regno, opens hitherto unrecognized connections between Castleford's *Chronicle* and the political themes of will and assent that dominate the troubled reign of Edward II. In *De regimine principum* (*On the Government of Princes*), or *De regno* (*On Kingship*) in its abbreviated form, Thomas Aquinas alludes to the power of will and assent that both the ruler and the ruled exercise in determining the direction of the community. In this mirror for princes, Aquinas posits the "common good" as the ideal towards which a king and his followers should aspire.[4] The common good, for Aquinas, means that political relationships are only ethical if they ensure the well-being of a community (Walter and Bubacz 203).

Castleford and Aquinas approve of "the rule [that] 'one man is the best'" as long as the king treats the office with respect and can serve as a unifying force (Dyson 17).[5] Both the ruler and the ruled must be bound by a commitment to "the preservation of unity" in peace;[6] nevertheless, Aquinas recognizes the difficulty of coordinating the equally imposing wills of the ruler and of the ruled towards "the common good."[7] The "ruled" express their will through their decision to assent or to withhold assent. Throughout the *Chronicle*, Castleford represents the powerful contradictions that arise in cooperative rule when the will of the king depends on the assent of his subjects. He recognizes the threat of a powerful figure's "wille" over the king or

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[4] I take this reference from an early passage in *De regno* where Aquinas repeats Aristotelian notions of leadership: "Si … liberorum multitudo a regente ad bonum commune multitudinis ordinetur, erit regimen rectum et iustum, quale convenit liberis" ('If … a community of free men is ordered by a ruler in such a way as to secure the common good, such rule will be right and just inasmuch as it is suitable to free men') (Aquinas 258; Dyson 8).

[5] The quotation derives from part of the title for chapter seven: "… regimen unius simpliciter sit optimum" ('… the rule of one man is simply the best') (Aquinas 263; Dyson 17). Medieval theorists constructed the tyrant as the king's opposite because he unifies the community around a will that revolves around his own selfish desires. Aquinas writes, "… ita magis est nocivum si virtus operans malum sit una, quam divisa. Virtus autem iniuste praesidentis operatur ad malum multitudinis, dum commune bonum multitudinis in suis ipsius bonum tantum retorquet" ('… so it is more harmful for a power which produces evil to be united than divided. But the power of an unjust ruler produces evil for the community inasmuch as it replaces the good of the community with a good peculiar to himself') (260; Dyson 12).

[6] Aquinas writes, "Bonum autem et salus consociatae multitudinis est ut eius unitas conservetur" ('The good and wellbeing of a community united in fellowship lies in the preservation of unity') (Aquinas 259; Dyson 10).

[7] Anthony Black synthesizes frequent references to the common good succinctly: it was the "goal … of government" in many "official documents and philosophical treatises" (25).

populace and calls attention to the responsibility of the "assenter(s)" to choose wisely when granting their "assent." A community that assents to the "wille" of an immoral or unethical figure compounds the problems that result from the agreement to move forward with an unethical plan of action. Conversely, when the will and assent of a people coincide for "the common good," to use a phrase from Aquinas, the marriage of those two ideals produces prosperity and peace. In this article, I suggest that the two competing foundation myths of Albina and Brutus provide contrasting lessons on the common good of the social order. The Albina myth represents a form of rule that functions solely through the will of a ruler, while Brutus's rule serves as an exemplar of rule through assent.

Albina and the "Unsteerable" Will

Readings of the Albina myth generally stress the tale's role in the foundational myths of the nation.[8] According to Anke Bernau, the two foundational figures of British/English history, Albina and Brutus, differ in their ability to act as an origin of a "nation." Bernau reads the Prologue to Castleford's *Chronicle* as simultaneously accounting for the giants who inhabit Britain prior to the arrival of Brutus and reinforcing the authority of the foundation myth of Brutus (250). Although Albina and Brutus lead others to freedom, the former represents a freedom to be avoided, while the latter represents a freedom for the Trojans to become free Britons. Albina's sisters reinforce the importance of Brutus's reign through the misuse of their freedom. They abuse their liberty for the sole purpose of continuing their licentious behavior; in contrast, Brutus reasserts patriarchy and brings "rule, order, stability, [and] obedience" to the island (261). Bernau provides an insightful reading of the prologue that enhances the readers' understanding

[8] See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's "Monstrous Origin: Body, Nation, Family," Tamar Drukker's "Thirty-three Murderous Sisters: A Pre-Trojan Foundation Myth in the Middle English Prose *Brut* Chronicle," Lesley Johnson's "Return to Albion," and Christopher Baswell's "Albyne Sails for Albion: Gender, Motion and Foundation in the English Imperial Imagination." Although they all refer to various versions of the Albina myth, none of them includes readings of Castleford's *Chronicle*.

of the importance of Albina to fourteenth-century translations of British/English history, but she does not contextualize the new prologue to the medieval English verse *Brut* tradition in terms of Castleford's specific historical context. While I read the prologue's depiction of Albina similarly to Bernau as a negative example intended to compare unfavorably to the exemplary rule of Brutus, my interpretation contextualizes Castleford's political reading of co-rulership as it relates to the specific political concepts of will and assent. Rather than position the larger community in oppositional terms against the king, Castleford consistently recognizes the culpability of the people in the implementation of royal policy. For Castleford, assent serves as an obligation of co-rulership. The chronicler's depiction of the story of Albina and her sisters describes the destructiveness that occurs when the selfish will of a leader coincides with the irresponsible assent/consent of a community; in contrast, the story of Brutus provides an ideal of co-rulership through will and assent that leads to general prosperity for the community.

Castleford's sustained reading of "will" in his *Chronicle* exceeds simplistic top-down hierarchical notions of a king or queen exerting his or her will on a passive people. He uses the Albina story to illustrate the difficulty of "exerting [oneself] for the common good" and the danger in refusing to do so. A good king leads the people to recognize that their interests coincide with the aforementioned "preservation of unity" in peace rather than the guarded envy that derives from a preoccupation with individual self-interest:

> For it often happens that men living under a king are reluctant to exert themselves for the common good, no doubt supposing that whatever they do for the common good will not benefit them but someone else who is seen to have the goods of the community under his own power. But if no one person is seen to have such power, they no longer regard the common good as if it belonged to someone else, but each now regards it as his own.[9] (Dyson 15)

[9] Aquinas explains, "Plerumque namque contingit, ut homines sub rege viventes, segnius ad bonum commune nitantur, utpote aestimantes id quod ad commune bonum impendunt non sibi ipsis conferre sed alteri, sub cuius potestate vident esse bona communia. Cum vero bonum commune non vident esse in potestate unius, non attendunt ad bonum commune quasi ad id quod est alterius, sed quilibet attendit ad id quod est alterius, sed quilibet attendit ad illud quasi suum" (Aquinas 262).

This passage provides a rich theoretical lens for understanding the political significance of the Albina prologue to Castleford's *Chronicle*. Aquinas makes explicit the necessity for the king to ensure that his subjects recognize that he works for them as well as himself. He recognizes that coercion influences people only so far. In order for a multitude to sustain itself as a community, in essence, they must *internalize* the ideal of placing the "common good" before their own individualized desires.[10] In Castleford's version of the Albina myth, Albina models an approach to leadership that leads to the dissolution of a community into disparate individuals who follow only their own desires. He juxtaposes the thirty-three sisters' heirs, the giants, as animals acclimated to solitude against the Trojans/Britons ("political animals," to use Aquinas's Aristotelian image) to highlight the importance of maintaining a community for the greater good.

The Albina legend in Castleford's *Chronicle* along with later versions, such as the *Prose Brut*, stress the culpability of the sisters in Albina's decision-making process even as Albina takes precedence over the sisters as instigator. The tale that Castleford transposes in his prologue to the *Chronicle* underscores Albina's preeminence over her thirty-two sisters through her age and name. The oldest, "Dame Albin[a]," stands as the lone sister given a name (I. l. 52). Only her father supersedes her in hierarchical importance, yet he has little of Albina's influence over her siblings. Albina's suggestions regarding mariticide (and her naming of the island) can only be enacted with consent "freely given" from her sisters (Drukker 457). In the prologue, the mariticidal sisters declare in solidarity with one another that "þai wold nevyr obey their husbandys *wyll*" ('they would never obey their husband's will') because their husbands hold a lower place in the social order than they (as daughters of a king) do (I l. 148; my emphasis). This

[10] I use the term "internalize" advisedly to convey Aquinas's sense that "quilibet attendit ad [bonum commune] quasi suum" ('each now regards [the common good] as his own') (26).

use of "wyll" calls attention to the arbitrariness of the decision-making process. From the standpoint of gender, they are obliged to accept a man's wishes; from a class perspective, the sisters find it impossible to bend to the will of anyone from a lower social background. In their relations with their husbands, the women favor genealogy over gender norms and marital obligations (Baswell 163). Additionally, Albina reinterprets primogeniture and feudal possession of property (164). At Albina's behest, the thirty-three women agree "wyth on *assent*" ('with one assent') (I l. 153; my emphasis) and "wyth on *wyll*" ('with one will') (I l. 159; my emphasis) to end their marriages by slitting their husbands' throats. The references to "assent" and "wyll" politicize the murders as acts of political protest through assassination. The scene suggests a collective "will" to resist patriarchal domination organized through "purposeful deliberation" and "formal endorsement."[11]

Castleford highlights the political significance of the thirty-three sisters with respect to the common good in his summation of the common character trait uniting them: "They folowd their awne wyllys a[ll]waye / That þame lykyd in all maner, / þar was nothing þat þame might *ster*" ('They followed their own wills always / in all things that they liked, / There was nothing that might steer them') (I. ll. 70-72; my emphasis). The last line captures the political problem that motivates so much of Castleford's *Chronicle* in its emphasis on the blurring of will and assent in relation to the common good. Within the context of medieval political theory, "ster" evokes an important image of leadership derived from Aristotle. In the opening paragraphs of *De regno*, Aquinas emphasizes the importance to every society for its people to be "rule[d] by someone,"

[11] In *Hochon's Arrow*, Paul Strohm devotes a chapter to "Treason in the Household," which analyzes medieval interpretations of mariticide as treason. Though passed after the composition of Castleford's *Chronicle*, the 1352 Statute of Treason states, in Strohm's words, that "one must not kill a person to whom faith and obedience are owed. When one does rebel against such ties, the concept of treason is invoked" (124).

preferably a king (Dyson 5).[12] As the "guiding principle" for a united people, Aquinas compares a king to the steersman of a ship (5). Buffeted by winds from random directions, a ship only reaches its final destination in the harbor through the diligence and decision-making of one steersman (5). Like a ship, humans "need something to guide [them] towards their end" (5).[13] For Castleford, the thirty-three sisters' refusal to be "stered" calls attention to a failure of leadership on the part of their husbands as well as a failure on the part of the wives for refusing to submit. The husbands write to their father-in-law to steer their spouses back to the safer waters of patriarchal submission. From the standpoint of narrative unity, Castleford refers to the sister's refusal to be "stered" to foreshadow that they will soon be cast out of the community on a boat and set adrift to "ster" their own way towards Albion.

The image of the sisters cast adrift once again recalls Aquinas's analogy of kingship with steering. For Aquinas, the steering function of the king reminds the reader that neither the ship nor the community can "reach its final destination except by the industry of the steersman who guides it into port" (Dyson 5).[14] The guiding principle determines not only the direction but whether the destination warrants the trouble. Tellingly, Castleford omits a logical reference to "steering" when he describes the thirty-three sisters adrift at sea before landing on the island that

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[12] The reference comes from the opening chapter heading of the first part of the *De Regno*: "Quod necesse est homines simul viventes ab aliquo diligenter regi" ('That it is necessary for men who live together to be subject to diligent rule by someone" (Aquinas 257; Dyson 5).

[13] Here, I am summarizing a brief passage from Aquinas's *De regno*: "In omnibus autem quae ad finem aliquem ordinantur, in quibus contingit sic et aliter procedere, opus est aliquo dirigente, per quod directe debitum perveniatur ad finem. Non enim navis, quam secundum diversorum ventorum impulsum in diversa moveri contingit, ad destinatum finem perveniret nisi per gubernatoris industriam dirigeretur ad portum. Hominis autem est aliquis finis, ad quem tota vita eius et actio ordinatur, cum sit agens per intellectum, cuius est manifeste propter finem operari" ('Now in all cases where things are directed towards some end but it is possible to proceed in more than one way, it is necessary for there to be some guiding principle, so that the due end may be properly achieved. For example, a ship is driven in different directions according to the force of different winds, and it will not reach its final destination except by the industry of the steersman who guides it into port. Now man has a certain end towards which the whole of his life and activity is directed; for as a creature who acts by intelligence, it is clearly his nature to work towards some end" (Aquinas 257; Dyson 5).

[14] I repeat the excerpt from Aquinas: "ad destinatum finem perveniret nisi per gubernatoris industriam dirigeretur ad portum" (257).

Albina names after herself "Albion." The mariticidal sisters, who refused to be steered, drift aimlessly to Albion rather than steer a course to it. Castleford glosses over the voyage, merely stating that they "… sayled on þe see / [t]o they come to an yll" ('sailed on the sea / until they came to an isle') (I ll.179-180).[15] Viewing the un-steerable sisters through the lens of Aquinas's *De regno* clarifies Castleford's subtle reinforcement that though they may "discover" Albion, the possession of the island by them or their heirs is not meant to last. They did not work towards the "end" of discovering Albion, so their possession of it cannot last. Plato's *Republic* (Book VI) offers another reading of the importance of "steerage" to communities. Plato describes a situation where the crew knows the captain is unable to navigate the ship, yet no one has the critical capacity to identify the true navigator, whose abilities derive from the study of navigation. For the Greek philosopher, the inability to identify the navigator throws the community of shipmates into turmoil as they vie for influence over the captain, form factions to defy him, and even overthrow him. He laments that the captain and crew fail to understand that the knowledge of navigation is the key to "control[ling] a ship" (250). Ironically, the power of the most forceful members of the crew to steer the ship leaves them unable to even recognize that the profession and art of navigation exists. For Plato, this exemplum represents the absent role of the philosopher in running the state. His larger point obtains in the context of Castleford's *Chronicle*: without the proper guidance, the ship of state may continually move forward with no guarantee that it moves in the right direction.

Castleford's translation of the Albina myth continues its critique of self-interest at the expense of the common good and takes it to its logical conclusion. Without reference to the common good, the community of sisters dissipates. They "dissipate" in the sense that they

[15] Cohen notes that setting women adrift on a ship was "traditionally reserved for incestuous daughters and women who have given birth to monsters, anticipating the sisters' ultimate fate" (48).

spread out over the island and lose their sense of community, but they also "dissipate" in the sense that they morally compromise themselves further through their ungoverned desires, or "wylles."[16] While on the island, they forage and kill their own prey for food. As their health returns, they incline towards concupiscence. Despite their resentment of patriarchal submission to their husbands, the sisters miss "manys company" ('the company of men') (I l. 204). The Devil, in the form of an incubus, perceives their desire for sex, takes various men's forms, and impregnates them. The sisters birth a new species, the giants, that Brutus and his followers will later slaughter during their conquest of Albion. Castleford continues to emphasize the sisters' free choice to sleep with various incarnations of the Devil when he writes that they "*connsentyt*" ('consented') to have sex with them (I l. 214; my emphasis).[17] Castleford rigidly distinguishes the political assent he values from their consent to sin. In the context of consensual sex with an incarnation of the Devil, Castleford highlights the notion of "consent" as an "inclination or yielding to sinful desire." His reference to "consent" has a connotation distinct from the largely positive modern connotation of consent as a right to self-determination. More importantly, the word choice reveals yet another example of Castleford's disapproval of the mariticidal sisters. Castleford's interest in assent and consent within the context of defining a group's collective identity emphasizes that decisions affecting a group rarely occur in a top-down hierarchical manner; instead, they involve the agreement of a significant number of its members.

Castleford's *Chronicle* creates parallels between Albina and Brutus to illustrate the contrast between ineffective and effective rulership. Following Geoffrey of Monmouth closely, the chronicler focuses on the preordained nature of Brutus's leadership and the Trojans' right to

[16] Castleford reiterates his key word "wyll" yet again when he describes Albina's decision to name the island "Albion" after herself: "all hyr systers, with good *wyll*" agree (I l. 189; my emphasis).

[17] On occasion, Castleford's *Chronicle* refers to a variant of assent, i.e., "consent," to suggest a more emotional agreement based on sentiment. The *MED* notes a negative connotation to "consent" in that it also suggests an "inclination or yielding (to sinful desire, etc.), surrender"; as well as "connivance, abetting, [and] acquiescence."

Albion, which he will later rename Britain. Castleford conveys a marked difference in the social structures of the mariticidal sisters and the Trojans based on their different approaches to will and assent. Dunbabin notes that assent always runs the risk of "be[ing] whittled down to … mindless acquiescence" (59). The thirty-two younger sisters of Albina assent to the "wyll" of their older sister in everything, no matter how heinous the crimes or the penalties that result from committing those crimes. This tendency to "go along with the flow," to use a colloquialism, finds its counterpart in the sisters' directionless floating at sea. Albina's drifting at sea contrasts with the voyage of Brutus whom the goddess Diana "steered" to Albion in a vision. Although Diana grants the dreaming Brutus the revelation of the exact directions to Albion, he only sacrifices to the goddess at the behest of his followers. Castleford implies that Brutus's counselors have equal responsibility for the success of the Trojans' voyage from Greece because they encouraged their leader to seek out the goddess Diana to find out where they should sail. On their voyage, the Trojans stopped at an island where Diana was worshiped. Brutus's followers "counseld" (I l. 1423) him to present the goddess with gifts and sacrifices so that they could learn "[q]hat countre suld be to þame best, / [t]o haue theirin dwellyng and rest" ('what country should be to them the best / to have therein dwelling and rest') (I ll. 1429-30). The chronicler distinguishes the top-down hierarchical conception of leadership of the thirty-three sisters with the example of Brutus who rules through the counsel, that is, the common assent of his followers. The sisters and their gigantic progeny provide a rich example of the failure of a community to coalesce into something foundational and sustaining because "self-interest" supersedes the common good. The sisters unite in their self-interest, but their ties to one another will not extend into the next generation. The sisters continue to support Albina, but the simultaneity and coincidence of their choices cannot be confused with actions taken with the common good in mind.

The Political Animal (Brutus) and the Common Good

Castleford's addition of the Albina myth to the origin story of Britain enhances the political significance of the giants that the Trojans conquer. Previous scholarship on giants in the Middle Ages and the particular giants of the Albina myth emphasize a common understanding that giants heroize the Trojans, but none of the scholars explore the political concepts that distinguish the animalistic giants from the political culture of the Trojans. Lotte Motz notes that overcoming and replacing giants often features in tales that highlight the establishment and maintenance of "cosmic order" (78). Riti Kroesen repeats a common assertion that literature associates giants with chaos, particularly the chaos of "wild untamable nature" (59). Heroes often feel compelled to fight giants partly to make a name for themselves (69), but, equally importantly, because "[g]iants are dangerous to ordered life" (59). From the standpoint of narrative, giants serve a vital function of constructing the protagonist as heroic (69).[18] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen offers a psychoanalytic reading on the original Albina myth, *Des Grantz Geantz*, Castleford's source, that understands the giants as "monstrous excess" that the Trojans must eradicate in order to establish "domesticity" on the island (33-34). While these interpretations of giants in the Middle Ages are relevant for Castleford's prologue, none of them grapples with the political implications of will and assent that Castleford explores in his chronicle.

The Albina prologue allows Castleford to create a dichotomy of nature (associated with the giants who devolved from their mothers' status as royalty) versus culture (associated with the Trojans who become the founders of Britain); in particular, the solitude of the giants, or semi-

[18] In "Filling the Gap: Brutus in the *Historia Brittonum*, Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* MS F, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, " Thea Summerfield makes a similar point: Brutus's adventures on Albion/Britain "transform [him] from a man hated by all into a brave and generous leader and a worthy ancestor, a man to be proud of for himself and for all his noble offspring, a founder of a new nation. His followers, too, are transformed: from exiled Trojans on the run into Britons, the legitimate inhabitants of a new country" (95).

human animals, contrasts with the political organization of humans. This distinction between nature and culture recalls Aquinas's allusions in the opening pages of *De regno* to Aristotle's famous assertion in *Politics* that "man is a political animal."[19] This popular phrase ("man is a political animal") derives from a passage that compares animals who live in solitude to people who reside in communities. The popularity of the decontextualized phrase often omits the larger context of Aristotle's and Aquinas's arguments about kingship and community formation.[20] Following Aristotle, Aquinas worries that if humans lived like animals in solitude, then "each man would be a king unto himself."[21] This notion of a diffuse and unconnected society contradicts medieval constructions of king-centered communities that rely on a king to provide the guidance necessary to achieve "the common good." Castleford's emphasis on the consensual nature of the sisters' respective trysts with the Devil highlights the self-interest that motivates the rebellious women's actions. Because the sisters ignore the common good, according to this chronicle, they leave no culture behind them. Their progeny grow up to live in caves and hills and bear a stronger affinity with animals than with humans. They hold "all the land at their wyllys" until Brutus and the Trojans arrive to take the land (I l.222).[22] Castleford's word choice, "wyllys" in the plural, distinguishes between a singular, collective "wyll" united for a political purpose versus a plurality of "wyllys" motivated only by self-interest. The thirty-three sisters evince both types of "wyll," uniting with one "wyll" to overthrow their

[19] Aquinas derives much of the opening pages that I quote from Book I, Chapter 2 of Aristotle's *Politics*.

[20] For the remainder of this reading of Albina, I will focus on Aquinas's reading of humans as "political animals" rather than Aristotle's.

[21] The entire passage from Aquinas reads, "Et si quidem homini conveniret singulariter vivere, sicut multis animalium, nullo alio dirigente indigeret ad finem, sed ipse sibi unusquisque esset rex sub Deo summo rege, in quantum per lumen rationis divinitus datum sibi, in suis actibus se pisum dirigeret" ('If it were proper for man to live in solitude, as many animals do, he would need no other guide toward his end; for each man would then be a king unto himself, under God, the supreme King, and would direct his own actions by the light of reason divinely given to him') (257; Dyson 5).

[22] Tamar Drukker identifies parallels between Albina and Brutus: both resist thralldom (the sisters object to their marriage to men of lower social orders, while Brutus and the Trojans resent enslavement to Greeks); both leave their homelands with blood on their hands (the sisters murder their husbands and Brutus accidentally killed his father); and both sail to the same island and bequeath their names to it (Drukker 454-58).

husbands before they follow their own desires on the island of Albion. Castleford alludes to the giants' rule of Albion in terms of their plural, individualized "wyllys" to contrast with the collective efforts of their vanquishers, the Trojans, who, as this section will illustrate, act with one "wyll" towards the goal of making Albion British.

Castleford's revision to Geoffrey of Monmouth highlights the comparison between "man as a political animal" and giants (beasts of nature) as creatures of solitude. The *Chronicle* emphasizes the contrast between Trojans as founders of a culture and the cave dwelling giants. In the section of the "Prologue" devoted to Brutus, Castleford elaborates that Brutus and the Trojans "fand no men" ('found no men'), nor did they find evidence of recognizable settlements of giants (I l. 2288). Aquinas's reading of "man as a political animal" in *De regno* clarifies the distinction that Castleford makes between the giants and the Trojans. The philosopher-theologian sets up a contrast between the brutish violence of animals versus the intellectual reasoning of humans. Following Aristotle, Aquinas's definition of humans as "social animals" depends on a comparison with animals that positions reason against brute force.[23] Aquinas associates animals with solitude because nature equips them everything they need to survive in a dangerous and violent world, such as teeth, horns, and speed.[24] Humans have none of these attributes, so they rely on reason to provide for themselves[25]; however, reason alone cannot

[23] Aquinas quotes Aristotle, "Naturale autem est homini ut sit animal sociale et politicum, in multitudine vivens" ('Man is by nature a social and political animal who lives in a community') (257; Dyson 5-6).

[24] Aquinas writes, "Aliis enim animalibus natura praeparavit cibum, tegumenta pilorum, defensionem, ut dentes, cornua, ungues, vel saltem velocitatem ad fugam" ('For other animals are furnished by nature with food, with a covering of hair, and with the means of defense, such as teeth, horns, or at any rate speed in flight') (257; Dyson 6). The latter part of the quotation devoted to defense is relevant to the violence of life.

[25] Aquinas explains, "Homo autem institutus est nullo horum sibi a natura praeparato, sed loco omnium data est ei ratio, per quam sibi haec omnia officio manuum posset praeparare, ad quae omnia praeparanda unus homo non sufficit" ('But man is supplied with none of these things by nature. Rather, in place of all of them reason was given to him, by which he might be able to provide all things for himself by the work of his own hands') (257; Dyson 6).

provide for everything necessary for humans to live.[26] For Aquinas, the ability to reason defines human nature and serves as a protection against the elements, but this reliance on reason creates a need for the companionship of others because humans lack the ability to provide for themselves in every aspect of life.[27]

The comparison of political animals to animals in nature calls attention to the violence humans create through reason. Castleford's *Chronicle* draws out the connection between reason and violence. He lingers over the terror that the Trojans instill in the giants through the violent products of their reason: "alblastes, bowes, and engines" (I l. 2311). The giants "for bowes wer so adred" ('for bows were so afraid') that "[i]nto cauernys of hyllys þai fled" ('they fled into caverns in the hills') (I l. 2313-14). Castleford's emphasis on the tools of violence renders the giants as though they were animals being hunted down: the Trojans "droght þame out of euerylke holke" ('drew them out of every hole') and slew them (I l.2316). The size and strength of the giants should make them unbeatable against the Trojans, but their tendency toward individual isolation leaves them prey to the invaders because they are unaccustomed to working together towards a common goal.

Castleford implies the solitude of the individual giants through his comparison of them with the Trojans. Because of the fecundity of Albion and the giants' prodigious strength, they have no need to unite and work together towards communal goals and live in solitude as the

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[26] Aquinas elaborates, "Nam unus homo per se sufficienter vitam transigere non posset" ('One man, however, is not able to equip himself with all these things, for one man cannot live a self-sufficient life') (257; Dyson 6).

[27] Aquinas explains, "Homo autem horum, quae sunt suae vitae necessaria, naturalem cognitionem habet solum in communi, quasi eo per rationem valente ex universalibus principiis ad cognitionem singulorum, quae necessaria sunt humanae vitae, pervenire. Non est autem possibile quod unus homo ad omnia huiusmodi per suam rationem pertingat. Est igitur necessarium homini quod in multitudine vivat, ut unus ab alio adiuvetur et diversi diversis inveniendis per rationem occupentur" ('Man, however, has a natural understanding of the things necessary to his life only in a general way, and it is by the use of reason that he passes from universal principles to an understanding of the particular things which are necessary to human life. But it is not possible for one man to apprehend all such things by reason. It is therefore necessary for man to live in a community, so that each man may devote his reason to some particular branch of learning') (258; Dyson 6).

animals that Aquinas describes in *De regno*. Because they maintain little to no communal ties between one another, they make none of the concessions or negotiations that result from relationships build on assent. Castleford calls attention to this striking difference between the giants who dwell in solitude and the Trojans who thrive through cooperation for the common good. Unable to maintain themselves individually, Brutus and his followers work collectively to build houses, halls, tilling fields, and towns. They work together with such swiftness and skill that it seems as though the Trojans have always been there (I l. 2319-32). Castleford's representation of the giants' extermination by the Trojans with their tools highlights the technological sophistication of the humans and reinforces the animal-like qualities of the giants. The Trojans use reason to conquer nature and the animal-like giants. The giants' inability to create tools is an extension of the inability of the thirty-three sisters to create a lasting culture.

Conclusion—The Fruits of Assent: Founding and Apportioning Britain

Castleford's revisions to *Des Grantz Geantz* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* fit into a larger pattern of showing the difference between the sisters' and the giants' inability to produce a lasting culture and the achievement of the Trojans, who found a culture that resonates throughout the Middle Ages among the Welsh, Romans, English and Normans. Aquinas's *De regno* proffers a brief sense of the importance of the foundation of cities as opposed to simply inhabiting a location and living off of its natural resources. A king founds a kingdom simultaneously with the foundation of a city.[28] No kingdom exists without that foundational moment, and the responsibility for the city's establishment falls to the king.[29] Castleford's *Chronicle* follows Geoffrey of Monmouth in describing the foundation of London by Brutus:

[28] Aquinas writes, "Sub regis enim officio comprehenditur etiam institutio civitatis et regni" ('The founding of a city of a kingdom must therefore also be considered as falling within the duty of the king') (273; Dyson 37).

[29] Aquinas states, "… oportet civitati constituendae idoneum locum eligere" ('… it is necessary to choose a suitable place for building the city') (277-78; Dyson 47).

"Qwene all þe regne was partyd and gyfyn, / Ilke man had hys qwaron to lyffyn, / Brut affeccyon gret had he, / To edyfy a noble cite" ('When all of the kingdom was parted and given, / [and] each man had his [own] wherein to live, / Brutus had a great desire, / to build a noble city') (2469-72). Castleford's translation accords with Aquinas on the importance for Brutus to find a location "that should delight its inhabitants with its pleasantness" (Dyson 51).[30] The land surrounding the Thames fulfilled his purpose because it was "farest" ('fairest') (I l. 2481). Once Brutus founds what will one day be called "London," his story draws to a close with the creation of his own individual hearth and multi-generational family. Brutus fathers three sons, though Castleford glosses over the remaining decades of his reign until his death.

Brutus's death allows Castleford to emphasize the importance of coordinating the will and assent of a king and his subjects through his description of the king's apportioning of Albion into a Britain divided into three "porcions" ('portions'). Upon his death, his three sons receive the three "porcions" of Brutus's land. Locrine receives Loegre (England), Cambyr Wales, and Albanac Scotland (I ll. 2577-2600). The modern English word "portions" derives from the Middle English word "porcions." Although "porcions" comes to convey the modern denotations of "a section into which a thing is divided," its earliest usage in *c*.1330, according to the *Middle English Dictionary*, refers to "[t]he part of a kingdom, an inheritance, gift, etc., allotted to or due to a person or an institution."[31] The distinction between the sisters' and the giants' wild animalistic lives in the caves and mountains contrasts with the reward established among the Trojans for working towards the common good: the ability to distribute "porcions" fairly.

[30] The full passage from Aquinas reads, "Est etiam constituendis urbibus eligendus locus qui amoenitate habitatores delectet" ('The place chosen for the building of cities should delight the inhabitants with its pleasantness') (280; Dyson 51).

[31] Castleford returns to controversies surrounding the distribution of "porcions" repeatedly in the *Chronicle*.

Throughout his *Chronicle*, Castleford returns to the question of whether kings distribute the "porcions" of England fairly among their subjects. The fair and equitable distribution of these "porcions" often reflects the fair and equitable merging of the king's will with the people's assent. In Castleford's *Chronicle*, although Albina asserts her privilege as eldest sister to name the island after herself, she exerts no leadership in the building of a city, much less a kingdom. For Castleford, the ability of Britain's and England's subsequent kings to manage the "porcions" and allocate property ownership provides a major indicator of a king's mettle as a ruler. Brutus sets the standard by which the kings of Britain and England are judged to have succeeded; Albina illustrates the behavior that leads to failure. The chronicler includes the Albina myth for the purpose of abnegating her foundational role in order to support the notion that a ruler and his or her followers must place the common good before individual desires. The foundation of a community depends on its members putting the community first. The grotesquely transgressive thirty-three sisters elevate Brutus's status as a model king who rules to serve the common good rather than to gratify his "wyll."

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Elizabeth's Coronation Procession:
In which we Imagine Young Spenser Imagining

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Edmund Spenser was probably six years old when Elizabeth acceded to the throne in 1558 [fig. 1]. To draw an analogy relevant to a young boy's memory of royal events, I was just that age when Camelot fell—the Camelot of John and Jackie, of course. Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1962 (a day before my 6th birthday) is one of my most vivid early memories. What of the boy Edmund? Would he have witnessed Elizabeth's coronation passage through London on January 14th 1558? It was, we might note, an event that featured children. Why? They are cute, after all, especially when they recite Latin, and they represent the promise of the nation (did you watch the Olympic ceremonies?). In any event, during each of the planned stops or pageants along Elizabeth's course, children met her with Latin or English orations, and they served as silent "personages" (Stump and Felch 93), representing historical or allegorical figures.[1]


Fig. 1

Spenser's father was a member of the Merchant Taylor's Company. In Richard Mulcaster's account of the coronation progress, to which we will recur, mentions a portion of the route lined by members of the livery companies: They are "well appareled with many rich furs and their livery hoods upon their shoulders in comely and seemly manner" and had

[1]All references to Mulcaster's work are to the version included in Stump and Felch. At St. Paul's "a child appointed by the schoolmaster therof pronounced a certain oration in Latin and certain verses," including this peroration (translated by Mulcaster):

> And because boys are not able to perform their duty by strength, but only by prayer, we, the pupils of this school founded by Colet, once Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, raising our tender palms to heaven, prey to Christ (best and greatest) that our Highness may attain the great age of Nestor, that Christ may cause you to rule over the English with the greatest honor, and that He may make you become the blessed mother of dear children. (102)

Out of the mouth of babes, as the expression goes, comes praise and blessing, intermixed with advertisement (the Colet bit) and advice (have kids!).

decorated the route with "rich hangings and other silks, plentifully hanged all the way as the Queen's Highness passed from the Tower through the city" (99). This must have been quite a sight: did you just see Spenser, held up on his father's shoulder, taking it all in?

Elizabeth's coronation passage from the Tower to Westminster was the culminating, and best recorded, of Elizabeth's orchestrated movements around London between her accession and coronation.[2] Her reception everywhere was spirited: Somerset, quoting Strype, writes of Elizabeth's first arrival at the Tower of London, "As she made her way there, 'There was great shooting of guns, the like was never heard before,' and 'the whole of London turned out' to catch a glimpse of England's new sovereign. The crowds were delighted by what they saw" (64). Of course, though Elizabeth was adept at acting the part of a pleased and surprised participant (as when someone has been tipped off regarding a surprise birthday party: "What? For me??"), all was deliberately organized to make the most of Elizabeth's promise as queen. Could a London boy miss out?[3]

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[2]Elizabeth, a week after her accession, proceeded from Hatfield House to London. Wilson reports that this progress formed "a cavalcade of more than thousand people" (28). After residing with Lord North, "she moved in slow procession, so that as many Londoners as possible could see her" (Wilson 29) to the Tower, a symbolic act that had medieval resonances of the military possession of the city. She spent Christmas at Whitehall and returned to the Tower via the Thames (Rowse 18). Rowse reports,

> The full proceedings of a coronation in medieval times, and up to Elizabeth I's and beyond, fell into four parts. The new monarch had first to take possession of the Tower: the significance of that move is obvious enough – it was to make sure of London. And, in the English way, the tradition continued to be adhered to for some time after the necessity for the action had gone. The second stage was the sovereign's progress through the city to Westminster on the eve of the coronation. The third was the coronation itself in Westminster Abbey, with the procession to it. The fourth was the banquet in Westminster Hall after the ceremonies in the Abbey. (18)

Jenkins notes that this procession was planned as a procession as well: "At fixed stages along the route, bursts of music greeted her; choirs of children poured their sweet, shrill notes, schoolboys stood forward to make orations." As she approached the Tower, cannons fired continually until she arrived (67).

[3] There were, of course, other opportunities for Spenser to witness public pageants. *The Spenser Encyclopedia* speculates that Spenser may have witnessed the first Lord Mayor's Show in 1561: the mayor was a member of the Merchant Taylor's Company and thus may have been known to Spenser's father. Furthermore, Richard Mulcaster, Spenser's teacher at the Merchant Taylor's School wrote the speeches for a later (1568) show "just before Spenser finished" his schooling there (s.v. *pageants*).

A later, and equally renowned, set of displays took place some years later, in the summer of 1575, at Kenilworth, the home Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. It would be intriguing to imagine the Spenser had been at Kenilworth for these lavish entertainments, where he would have observed more than two weeks of banquets, pageants, and entertainments. But the timing is not right. While Spenser knew Leicester, was even employed by

Richard Mulcaster was one of the chief purveyors of Elizabeth's coronation pageants, and just ten days after the event, he had published by Richard Tottel his account, *The Passage of our most drad Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth through the citie of London to westminster the day before her coronacion* [fig. 2].

Fig. 2

There were two more editions in 1559. Now, Mulcaster was Spenser's schoolmaster at the Merchant Taylor's School from 1561 to 1569.[4] Spenser could have imbibed Mulcaster's interest in pageantry while under his tutelage, and, if we need to imagine him again, we could find him discovering Mulcaster's book on his master's shelf, kicking off his shoes, and beginning to read about his Queen.

The swiftness of the volume's publication suggests that Mulcaster based his account on his own experience of the pageant, as well as on his own and others (perhaps written) blueprints for the affair. It also points to Elizabeth's new government's urge to capitalize on the festivities. Records of the Corporation of London tell us that Mulcaster was paid for his work two months later and that a copy was "'geyven unto the Quenes grace'" (Breitenberg 1), so the book was not only a public record of the event but a commemorative volume for the Queen herself—part of the festivities, as it were. The role of the coronation procession—event, book, and theatricalized

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him in 1577, there's little reason to believe he was in his orbit earlier. But, to take another run at it, Spenser was attached to Leicester's household beginning in 1579, a connection that fostered his acquaintance with Leicester's nephew Sidney and accounts for some allusive references to Leicester in *The Shepherd's Calendar.* (Hough decodes what he calls "a very transparent substitution cypher" glossing Spenser's description of Redcrosse as "Right faithful true" as "Lord Leicester." The marginal gloss reads "yb: yrfgre." Hough suggests we count 14 letters ahead in the alphabet [2]). The accounts of the Kenilworth entertainments, by George Gascoigne and others, were published in 1576, and surely Spenser would have had access to them in Leicester's London library (but perhaps as well at Kenilworth). *The Spenser Encyclopedia* says Spenser's employment at Leicester House "gave him the chance to discuss poetry with Sidney and Dyer . . . and to have access to Leicester's fine library and his even finer paintings, tapestries, and other works of art" (s.v. *Leicester*). The same entry describes Spenser's associations with Leicester and makes suggestions about "shadowy and hard to detect" references to Leicester in *The Shepheardes Calendar*. Is too much to imagine Spenser, Gascoigne's book in hand, wandering the grounds of Kenilworth and imagining?

[4]*The Spenser Encyclopedia* notes that Spenser was given "a gown and a shilling or representing Merchant Taylors' School at the funeral of Robert Nowell, a well-to-do Londoner." It's the only record associating Spenser with the school and suggests that Spenser, as a boy, was acquainted with public ceremony (s.v. "Merchant Taylors' School"). Frye notes that Mulcaster "wrote at least one Lord Mayer's pageant, in 1568, and the court entertainments he directed featured the boys of Merchant Taylor's" (31). There's Spenser again, taking a role in a courtly performance.

space—is made clear when Breitenberg explains that "the various stages and tableaux from the entry erected in the streets" were left standing "for several days, allowing the event to imprint itself further on the minds of Londoners" (21).[5] We can imagine young Spenser climbing on the empty pageant stands, maybe even mounting the spot where there was "a convenient standing cast out for a child to stand, which did expound the said pageant unto the Queen's Majesty" (97).

You will have noticed that I cannot stop speculating about Spenser. And speculating is all we can do, yet I hope that the sort of thought experiment I am considering is useful. Certainly, Mulcaster's description of Elizabeth's coronation progress through the streets of London is interesting on its own and on a variety of levels—as evidence of its elaborate plans (two months separated Elizabeth's accession from her coronation), as part of a long tradition of city entries, as a rhetorical piece in its own right, as the beginning of a process of mythologizing Elizabeth, and as an exercise in interpretation. But the event is also interesting as a kind of window into the world where a young merchant class boy would learn his Latin in a newfangled London school, become attached to a number of persons of influence and fame, and eventually write an extended work of allegory, interpretation, and praise. It serves as a reminder, perhaps, that Spenser's world was one full of images, enactments, and, yes, allegories. I do not pretend to have discovered the sources of Spenser's complex imagery surrounding his Gloriana, but rather to suggest how the kind of public imagery available to someone like Spenser might make his use of imagery more familiar—to both his first audience and to us.[6] In addition, I hope to explore other correlative images, inviting us to see a bit of Mulcaster and Elizabeth and Spenser's world.

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[5]Kinney suggests that the piece's function as "an obvious piece of propaganda sanctioned if not directed by the Queen" is the best explanation for its being reprinted twice in 1558.

[6]In his book *Tudor Royal Iconography*, John N. King distinguishes between sources and "analogous examples" or "a common reservoir of paradigms" (10-11) as he interprets images used to depict Tudor kingship.

And implicitly, I wish to challenge the notion that Elizabeth's and Spenser's age was a verbal one while our own is a visual one.[7]

Mulcaster begins his account matter of factly, like the writer of a broadside who is reporting on the latest news: "Upon Saturday, which was the fourteenth day of January in the year of our Lord God 1558, about two of the clock at afternoon, the most noble and Christian Princess, our most dread sovereign Lad marched from the Tower to pass through the city of London toward Westminster" (91). An illustrative drawing apparently made soon after Elizabeth's coronation procession depicts her riding in a litter slung between two horses (some accounts say mules); four courtiers hold up a canopy, walking along at the corners of her litter. Robert Dudley follows her, attending a "palfrey of honor," and courtiers, bareheaded, it is noted, surround her [fig 3].


Fig. 3

Mulcaster makes clear that the entire procession acts as a symbol for the ongoing relationship between the city and its sovereign—it's rhetoric and not just description. When he describes an apparently spontaneous incident along the route in which Elizabeth "stayed her chariot" to receive flowers or requests, Mulcaster hits his most comprehensive summary statement: "So that if a man should say well, he could not / better term the city of London that time than a stage wherein was showed the wonderful spectacle of a noble-hearted princess toward her most loving people and the people's exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a

[7]We live in a visual age, we are told. Of course, it's more complicated than that, but run this argument backwards, and filter it through our experience of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Queen Elizabeth—largely a verbal experience—and we are likely to place the 16th century firmly in the verbal camp, with an emphasis on orality (think sermons and plays). But the age was also exceptionally visual. For one, language—metaphor—was regularly invoked to create visual images. More than that, a Tudor person, let's say he's illiterate, experienced the world very much through images—in pageants, in church objects and windows, through heads on pikes over the city gates, through the stage, and even in woodcuts. Experience was persistently visual as well as oral. Perhaps what the digital age misses is meaning: that allegorical/symbolic system, something we used to call, after Tillyard, "the Elizabethan World Picture." Our students are attuned to images, surely, but they are not necessarily adept at interpreting or understanding them—at making meaning with them. And our teaching of the literature of this era has been largely mediated through text, often text purged of their visual elements. So perhaps my goal in this exploration is not only to make the visual, iconic world of Spenser more familiar, but to use visual and material studies to make Spenser's verbal world more accessible to our digitally-inclined students.

sovereign . . .” (92).[8] The procession as an enactment of preordained roles, of fitting and reciprocal rituals is an idea built into the procession itself, and so it is central to the effect of both the event and its recorded account.

Fig. 4

The route of the procession was traditional—Rouse remarks that “Only twenty-five years ago . . . Elizabeth had been carried through these self-same streets in the womb of her mother to her coronation” (18), and Mary had followed same route just a few years before with young Elizabeth as part of her retinue.[9] Elizabeth must have felt a kind of déjà vu or, better, a sense of providential fulfillment as the procession unfolded along familiar paths in front of her.[10] A project connected to the online *Map of Early Modern London* (based on the Agas map) shows the route, which can be followed closely in the published account: it began at the Tower, wound its way to Fenchurch Street, then Gracechurch Street through Cornhill and Cheapside, past St. Paul’s through Ludgate and along Fleet Street, past St. Dunstan’s church and the Temple Bar, then on to Westminster [fig. 4].

If the route was traditional, so was the format—slow progress through the city from the Tower of London to Westminster, where the sovereign’s coronation took place on the next day. After an official welcome by the City (92), the parade was punctuated by five prepared stops—pageants which included elaborately contrived stages, silent child actors, allegorical action, an

[8]Earlier, he explains that she “was of the people received marvelous entirely, as appeared by the assembly, prayers, wishes, welcomings, cries, tender words, and all other signs which argue a wonderful earnest love of most obedient subjects toward their sovereign.” Emphasizing the reciprocity of good will between the Queen and her people, Mulcaster goes on to point out how “by hold up her hands and merry countenance to such as stood far off and most tender and gentle language to those that stood nigh to her Grace, [she] did declare herself no less thankfully to receive the people’s good will than they lovely offered it unto her” (91). Mulcaster’s inclusive “such as stood far off” and “those that stood nigh” (a few lines later he refers to “the people in general but also privately”) allows us to shift our perspective while suggesting that the author as eyewitness meandered from close attendance to a back row position.

[9]Her Royal Entry after her marriage to Philip hit some of the same spots (see Samson and “John Elder’s Letter”).

[10]The déjà vu was felt by the viewers and other participants as well: Rouse remarks, “Many who watched the daughter’s triumph today must have seen the spectacle of the mother [Anne Boleyn] – herself grand-daughter of a Lord Mayor; some few must have reflected on the chances and ironies of history” (18).

explanatory speech by a young person, and, usually, an opportunity for the Queen to respond. A closer look at some of the pageants will suggest how they were designed and how they were experienced. They will also suggest how their imagery is evocative of Spenser's.

The first of the pageants was dynastic and genealogical, which is unsurprising considering concerns about her succession.[11] But such a show was also typical: one depicting a genealogical tree was part of Mary and Philip's royal entry (Samson 766). Mulcaster, as he does throughout his account, locates Elizabeth's pageant precisely, on "Gracious Street, where, at the upper end before the sign of the Eagle, the City had erected a gorgeous and sumptuous ark [archway], as here followeth" (93). He goes on to describe a "stage" that spanned the street with three "ports" or passages through it and battlements on it. It contained three levels, presenting the generations leading up to, and including, Elizabeth herself, who was represented at the apex by a child. On the lowest level, Henry VII was represented by a young person, along with, it is especially noted, another Elizabeth, his wife.[12] On the next tier, Elizabeth's parents, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, sit under a single cloth of estate—a depiction which aims to rehabilitate her mother. The entire façade is covered with roses white and red since, as Mulcaster points out, "unity was the end wherat the whole device shot" (94), particularly the uniting of the Houses of York and Lancaster. It is also covered (and this is typical of the pageants) with written verses, in Latin and English: here "all empty places therof were furnished with sentences concerning unity" (93). The platform has room for musicians, and "a standing for a child, which at the

[11]Somerset writes regarding "arrangements for her coronation" that "It was necessary for Elizabeth to emphasize that the validity of her title to the throne was beyond question." She adds, "for there was a danger that the French might contend that she was illegitimate, and that Mary Queen of Scots, who had married the French King's eldest son in April 1558, was really the rightful Queen of England" (69).

[12]Indeed, Mulcaster explains that "this pageant was grounded upon the Queen's Majesty's name." He goes on, "For like as the long war between the two houses of York and Lancaster then ended when Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, matched in marriage with Henry, VII, heir to the House of Lancaster, so, since that the Queen's Majesty's name was Elizabeth . . . it was devised that like as Elizabeth was the first occasion of concord, so she, another Elizabeth, might maintain the same among her subjects" (94).

Queen's Majesty's coming declared unto her the whole meaning of the said pageant" (93). In other words, fairly obvious stuff, but effective. This is allegorical symbolism at its most blatant.


Fig. 5

What comes to mind here is a compartmented title page of the kind we find in the Great Bible of 1539, a visual cue that may make more sense when we recall that Richard Grafton, the publisher of that Bible, was one of the printers of these pageants (King 230) [fig 5]. Even more intriguing is a feature of this display I have not yet mentioned. Mulcaster describes an elaborate visual device—a vine or branch that winds its way up all three stories. It begins at the joined hands of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, on the lowest tier; then winds "upward to the second stage or degree" to King Henry VIII, "which sprung out of the former stock" (93). With those last few words, the metaphor is applied to the person. The metaphor is continued as the vine ascends from Henry and Anne's feet to the next level "wherein likewise was planted a seat royal"—in which sat Elizabeth's avatar. This twining branch has a correlative in depictions of the Jesse Tree, like the one in Day's *Booke of Christian Prayers* (1575), where Isaiah's promised branch out of the stump of Jesse culminates in the infant Jesus [fig. 6]. Traditionally, the Jesse Tree is associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus; thus this dynastic pageant has the flavor of revision: Elizabeth substitutes not only for Queen Mary but for Mary, the Mother of God.


Fig. 6


Fig. 7

As a visual aid, we might turn to painting of Henry VIII's family [fig. 7]. This painting, in the Royal Collection at Hampton , gives something of the sense of the pageant's compartments, though it works horizontally and not vertically.[13]

[13]Another useful complementary visual representation is *The Allegory of Protestant Succession* a painting attributed to Lucas de Heere from about 1570, commissioned by the Queen as gift to Walsingham (King 223-24). Here Henry VIII is at the center, as he was in the on the pageant scaffold. This painting works horizontally, not vertically, moving us from the discord (represented by Mars) of Mary and Philip, back to the source, as it were, of Henry, through his kneeling son and to Elizabeth, forward and prominent in the design, attended by Peace and

What's in this pageant for Spenser? Perhaps nothing specific other than a visual mnemonic of Elizabeth's dynastic connections. It would be interesting, however, to run those up against Arthur's learning of his own history in Book I. More generally, what impresses when we step back from the pageant is its allegorical overload—not in the direction of ambiguity as in Spenser's verse, but in the service of reinforcement. Here music; staging; costume; actors; painted symbols (roses and branches); printed titles, sentences, and verse; spoken word, and even royal participation combine to create the effect of the meaningful moment. Add Mulcaster's explanatory script,[14] and the scene truly offers, to invoke Sidney, a "speaking picture." It suggests something of how Spenser's mind may have been working when he created a scene at Error's Cave or, with opportunities for rich irony, a parade of deadly sins.

And if we understand Elizabeth as a player in this ritualized drama—Mulcaster often takes note of actions as when she quiets the crowd, asks that her chariot be repositioned, or gives and receives thanks and praise--her role is that of the romance quester: like Una or Britomart she moves from place to place confronting scenes in need of interpretation and response.[15]

Plenty. They make different points, surely, about proper succession, but the painting helps us, I think, to visualize the pageant.

[14]Mulcaster's account contains many consciously repeated elements as he moves Elizabeth, and us, from stage to stage. Those elements are part of the progress's plan, of course, but Mulcaster's handling of them seems designed to create the effect of ritual for readers—as if they had been in attendance.

[15]Here, for instance, is how Mulcaster describes the transition from the pageant we've been considering:

> When the Queen's Majesty had heard the child's oration and understood the meaning of the pageant at large, she marched forward toward Cornhill, always received with like rejoicing of the people, and there, as her Grace passed by the conduit, which was curiously trimmed against that time with rich banners adorned and a noise of loud instruments upon the top therof, she spied the second pageant. (95).

Elizabeth "heard," "understood," "marched," "received," and "spied." Like Spenser's Una, she actively seeks truth.

In the interest of time, I must pass over the next two pageants quickly, noting here that they are both rooted in the long tradition of representing the virtues requisite for kingship, a tradition—deriving from Christianized versions of Aristotle and including writers like Skelton and Hawes (and is apparently at play in the new movie *Divergent!*). In the first of these, Elizabeth is depicted as seated on a throne upheld by four virtues. The title page of a quarto edition (1569) of the Bishop's Bible, gives us a good visual context for this pageant [fig. 8]. In the next, on a three-level stage eight children (one above three above four) represented the New Testament beatitudes (97).

Fig. 8

Both pageants could be considered as contexts for Spenser's complex scheme of interrelated virtues, as he lays them out in his letter to Raleigh.

The next pageant may be the most elaborate. Following the topics ("ground" as Mulcaster would say) of the previous two pageants,[16] this one represents two hills, each with a tree and a person. One set is barren, the other fruitful; one is titled "Decayed Commonwealth"; the other "Flourishing Commonwealth." The critique of Mary's reign is implicit. That critique is extended by means of two features of the pageant: a depiction of Truth, the Daughter of Time, and Elizabeth's receiving of an English Bible—the Word of Truth.

Fig. 9

Some behind-the-scenes maneuvering had taken place at an earlier procession when Mary entered the city with her new husband Philip. Richard Grafton had apparently riffed on the title page of Great Bible [fig. 9] when he created a pageant for Mary including a mural (a version of the succession pageant in Elizabeth's progress) that depicted King Henry VIII with a Bible in his

[16]Mulcaster explains how this pageant "dependeth of them that went before" (101).

hand. At the last minute, the painting was censored—and a pair of gloves replaced the Bible in Henry's hands (see King 102).[17] Depictions of monarchs participating in the dissemination of God's Word were a standard and urgent Protestant trope (Grafton's Protestant commitments were clear). So was the use the emblem of Truth, the Daughter of Time. The image appeared in a woodcut prefacing William Marshall's *Goodly Prymer in English* (1535), [Fig 10] where, coupled with a verse based on Matthew 10:26, the frontispiece proclaimed the God-ordained inevitability of the coming of His Kingdom in the Reformation (see King 189-93). When Mary took the Latin version of the phrase as her motto [Fig. 11], she was co-opting the story of the progress of the gospel, inserting herself as the restorer of true Christianity.

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Surely Grafton understood this, as well as the import of the censoring of his mural in the earlier entrance. He must have understood, too, that he was pushing the limits by attempting to place Mary's rule into an implied Protestant line. All of this comes into play, then, when Grafton has a hand in preparing Elizabeth's pageants. And judging by Elizabeth's participation in it, she understood the political and religious implications of the scene as well. In the presented scene, between the two hills, one "cragged, barren, and stony" (99) and the other "fair, fresh, green and beautiful" was a "hollow place or cave" (100), out of which

> issued one personage whose name was Time, appareled as an old man with a scythe in his hand, having wings artificially made, leading a personage of lesser

[17]King quotes from B.L. MS Harley 419:

> This yeare the ix worthies, at graces church was paynted, and the king henry the eight emonsgt them w[i]th a bible in his hand, written upon it Verbu[m] dei. but com[m]andement was geven ym[m]ediately that [it] should be put out, and so it was, and a paier of gloves put in the place. (102)

King cites Stephen Gardiner as ordering the change.

> stature than himself, which was finely and well appareled, all clad in white silk, and directly over her head was set her name and title in Latin and English, *Temporis filia*, the Daughter of Time. (100) [compare fig. 10]

There's more. On the second person's breast was inscribed the name "*Veritas*, Truth; she held a book in her hand upon which was written, '*Verbum Veritas*,' the Word of Truth" (100). The accompanying oration pulls the various aspects of the scene together, making clear that Elizabeth's embracing (his word!) of truth will effect a transformation of the kingdom from barrenness to flourishing. While the child spoke, young Truth lowered the book, the "Bible in English," Mulcaster points out (98), on a "silken lace" (99) to him so that as soon as the orator asks Elizabeth to receive the book, he can hand it over to her (or to a middleman who presents it to her 99). Elizabeth was either prepared for this, or (which comes to the same thing), she easily interpreted the import, being acquainted with the uses of these emblems. This is clear from an earlier portion of Mulcaster's account. When Elizabeth, on approaching the scene, asked what it meant, she was told it had to do with Time. "'Time?' quoth she, 'And Time hath brought me hither'" (98). She knows what's coming.

Or she was a quick study, for she "received her book, kissed it and with both her hands held up the same, and so laid it upon her breast, with great thanks to the City therefore" (102). As he introduces this part of the progress, Mulcaster adds that she "said that she would oftentimes read over that book" (98).[18] What King calls her histrionic gesture (104; see 229) is formulated by Mulcaster in terms of her appealing to those both near and far: she speaks to those near and offers large, visible gestures to those further off.[19] Both groups were invited to

[18]This incident is highlighted as well in Mulcaster's conclusion, where he rehearses her gestures which were "to the great comfort of the looker's-on" and expands on Elizabeth's promise to attend to the Bible: she "promised the reading thereof most diligently" (108).

[19]See note 16 above.

look forward to Elizabeth's embracing not just the Bible in English but the Protestantism for which it was a central symbol.

So we're back to Spenser again. This pageant offers an interesting correlative for some of Spenser's imagery. We might notice first that landscape in the pageant is read emblematically. That's a habit we might take to places in which Spenser's characters find themselves. More specifically, it is interesting to run Redcrosse's first encounter—at the Cave of Error—past this scene. If we use the publisher John Byddell's frontispiece to represent the pageant, we recognize immediately that the figures in this scene need to be rearranged: for Spenser, it is Error who emerges from the cave, not Truth (an conscious inversion?)—but Spenser's Truth—Una—is present, her color white (though veiled in black) like the "white silk" of the pageant (or the lovely purity of the woodcut figure). Hypocrisy in the woodcut (not an element of the coronation pageant), with his bats' wings, ill breath, and handful of snakes, who King suggests "personifies the Roman church, from whose concealments and disguisings Protestants believed they were unveiling true belief" (191), has his parallel in Error, "half like a serpent" (1.14.7) and breeding generations of error on account of her filthy vomiting fleshly poison. Spenser links Error directly with Hypocrisy (Archimago) in his epigraph to Book I:

The Patron of true Holiness,
Foule Errour doth defeate:
Hypocrisie him to entrappe,
Doth to his home entreate.

Thus pageant, woodcut, and poem all allegorize the Protestant Reformation. And in a broader sense, Time (old, winged, with a scythe in the pageant) is Spenser's concern throughout his work, as Redcrosse and Una, in different ways, must bide their time, and Arthur, particularly, carries the burden of having to wait for the future he has been promised but which is distant.

The coronation passage is not yet over, but time and space do not allow us to treat the oration she was entertained with by the boys of St. Paul's (101-12) nor the final pageant depicting Elizabeth in front of a large palm tree as Deborah, judge of Israel. Upon leaving the City, she also encountered two ancient giants holding up verses that summarize the whole course of Elizabeth's progress. Where are those large explanatory tables in Spenser's world? My goal here has been to be speculative and suggestive—and in a way that could engage students who are confronting the world of the *Fairie Queene* for the first time. Perhaps Elizabeth's Coronation Passage, an early text in the mythologizing of Gloriana, of which Spenser's poem is the crowning achievement, can form a kind of prolegomena. Perhaps as well it can suggest ways in which reading words, images, and actions as allegory would have been familiar to Spenser and his readers. They were "speaking pictures," all. And perhaps it can remind them, and us, of the visual and theatrical underpinnings of Spenser's imagination.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1. *The Coronation Portrait*, c. 1600. Copy of 1559 lost original. Artist Unknown. Previously attr. to William Stretes. © National Portrait Gallery. Retrieved from http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm.

Fig. 2. Title Page from [Mulcaster, Richard]. *The Passage of our most drad Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth through the citie of London to westminster the day before her coronacion.* 1558. STC-7590-287_02. Retrieved from EEBO.

Fig. 3. Queen Elizabeth's Coronation Procession, 1559. Artist Unknown. College of Arms. Retrieved from http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm

Fig. 4. Map from "The Queen's Majesty's Passage" Part of *The Map of Early Modern London.* Ed. Janelle Jenstad. Victoria: University of Victoria. *Web. 13 March 2014.* http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/QMPS1.htm

Fig. 5. Title Page from the Great Bible (1539). Retrieved from sacred-texts.com: http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/biob/biob06.htm

Fig. 6. Title Page from *Day's Book of Christian Prayers*. 1578. Retrieved from a blog post by Andrew C. Thompson, "Richard Day and 'A Book of Christian Prayers'" (posted 30 Jan 2014): http://www.andrewthompson.com/2014/01/30/richard-day-and-a-booke-of-christian-prayers

Fig. 7. *Family of Henry* VIII (ca 1545). Retrieved from http://hoocher.com/Portraits_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England/Portraiture_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England.htm

Fig 8. Title Page of the Bishop's Bible. 1573. Retrieved from the website of the Museum of Biblical Art: http://rarebiblesatmobia.org/curators-choice-2/bible-portrait-gallery/bible-portrait-gallery-bible-in-english-1573

Fig. 9. Detail of Fig. 5 above.

Fig. 10. Truth the Daughter of Time. From Wikicommons: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Bydell_-_Engraving_from_the_Goodly_Primer.png

Fig. 11. *Maria Henr VIII F Dei Gratia Regina Angliae . . .* Retrieved from the British Museum Collection online and used according to their policy: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3053013&partId=1&people=120259&peoA=120259-2-60&page=1

At Play with Sonnets in *Love's Labour's Lost*

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Readers who admire Shakespeare not only for his dramas but also for his teasingly dramatic *Sonnets* (1609) may be tempted to seek or invent contexts for the wistful speaker's relationships with his mysterious young man and worldly lady. Repeatedly Shakespeare offers concrete contextualizations for sonnets, partial sonnets, and Petrarchan sonnet conventions within specific dramatic moments of his plays. In *Much Ado*, for example, Beatrice bursts into a quatrain and couplet on overhearing reports of Benedick's love. In *Henry V*, the busy Chorus caps Henry's long, prosaic wooing of the French Princess with a sonnet that succinctly announces the young king's imminent death. Romeo and Juliet love and die in the sonnet and partial sonnets they build together.

Chronologically ahead of all these plays, *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594-1595) contextualize the sonnet's dramatic conventions in a game of wit in which incautious participants, by feigning love in poetry, persuade themselves that their love is genuine, only to discover that it unrequited. Mary Ellen Lamb finds the play's "at times mannered" language comparable to that "of the early Romeo" (50), whose agony at Rosaline's rejection drives him to catalogue definitions of love as "Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" (1.1.168) and half a dozen more widely used paradoxes until Benvolio interrupts him with a snicker. Quatrains, couplets, Petrarchan tropes, and sonnet role-playing inform *Love's Labour's* slight dramatic structure, its witty dialogue, and even much of its low humor.

At vowed academic leisure from martial duties, the King of Navarre and his attendants discover poetic language and rhyme themselves into love. Courtship by sonnet proves an

entertaining but futile competition wherein a mess of giddy males share hyperboles with one another after they erect a moral barrier to isolate themselves from the women they address. The visiting Princess of France and her attendant ladies escape these wooers by reading their contrived Petrarchan exercises plainly as a joke. The men themselves, however, along with directors and audiences, crave to fulfill the expectations of romantic comedy with the earnest concluding promise of multiple marriages. Ironically, they have chosen the wrong literary vehicle: as a genre, the sonnet sequence is designed to explore not reciprocal love but romantic frustration. The object of the King's literary infatuation, the Princess, easily fulfills her diplomatic mission—the King's forgiveness of a French war debt amounting to at least 100,000 crowns—but when a sudden messenger announces her father's death, she instantly discards the comic courtship, gathers her willing attendants, and prepares to depart. R. W. Maslen interprets the plot's resolution in terms of statecraft: "The [new] Queen has no choice but to consign the men's professions of love to the idle time of play or sport, which must be segregated from the time of serious business" (100). To spare his sentimental audiences confusion, Shakespeare appoints a choric explanation: the King's boldest and noisiest companion, Berowne, announces, "Our wooing doth not end like an old play: / Jack hath not Gill" (5.2.845-56). Instead, the playful sonnets dissolve into a homely epilogue that sings of the seasons turning from pastoral springtime to rural, domestic winter. Through art, effort, and a trove of amorous tropes, the sonnets of *Love's Labour's Lost* increasingly persuade their writers that literary love is genuine, while their stage readers respond with dubious amusement.

An unacknowledged collaborator in plotting *Love's Labour's Lost* appears to be Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), who—before he died a soldier's death nine years ahead of Shakespeare's play—created both the influential sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (published 1592) and a benchmark of English literary criticism, *The Defense of Poesy* (published 1595). Though Sidney's

sonnet sequence opens with the command that the amorous poet must simply "look in thy heart and write" (1.14), it defiantly employs Petrarchan conventions to articulate a highly self-conscious, often comically sophistical self-examination of a lover's psychology: Astrophil pits chaste neoplatonic idealism against his own raw desire until the contest fades out in irresolution. Were Astrophil to possess Stella or to vanquish his craving to do so, his literary purpose would vanish. Shakespeare's plot, like Sidney's, is slight, and it ends in the sonnet speakers' bafflement. Vain men who woo in sonnets woo in vain. Again, Sidney anticipates their failure of persuasion by imagining—as they do not—the addressees' gentle contempt for their conceits. Near the conclusion of *The Defense*, Sidney writes with evident amusement:

> But truly many of such writings as come under the banner of unresistible love, if I were a mistress, would never persuade me they were in love: so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings—and so caught up certain swelling phrases which hang together . . . than that in truth they feel those passions, which easily (as I think) may be bewrayed by that same forcibleness or *energia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer. (Greenblatt *et al.* 1079-80)

By deconstructing the sonnet from the perspective of its fictive female reader, Sidney exposes the biased genre's deceptive power to persuade only its writers.

Like Sidney, the critic who imagines himself a mistress, Shakespeare's French Princess and her ladies use cautious amusement to guide their reading of the sonnets they receive. "This [poem] and these pearl, to me sent Longavile," Maria reports to her royal mistress in a coy couplet.

> The letter is too long by half a mile.
>
> *Princess*: I think no less. Dost thou not wish in heart
>
> The chain were longer and the letter short? (5.2.53-56)

Maria agrees. "We are wise girls," asserts the Princess, "to mock our lovers so," and her mockery dramatizes Sidney's. An essential comic plot device, her derision for derivative literary efforts safely extends the romantic banter. As a critic, the Princess defines the love poetry as a comic game, while as a high-born diplomat, she favorably negotiates the reparations for late war debts and as an independent woman, she retains her honor and autonomy. Posing in the sonnets' roles of agonizing lovers, the men claim to sing "heaven's praise with . . . an earthly tongue" (4.3.106), to weep for woe (4.3.24-33), to be "sick to death" (4.3.100), to play the wise fool who adores a "goddess" who is also a "fair sun" (4.3.58-62), and most insistently to break their vows "not to see a woman for [three years]" (1.1.37) because "the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,/ . . . Persuade[s] my heart to this false perjury" (4.3.53; 55). In short, each man quickly tires of scholarship and artfully argues himself into the role of ardent lover, convinced by his own amorous poetry that his oath-breaking is all his chosen lady's fault. Meanwhile, the Princess and her ladies each play the only role the sonnet tradition permits them: a chaste Stella, the admired, unavailable lady who inspires verses and the critic who finds the verses wanting. The sonnet game offers them no other part.

Shakespeare creates a foil for his aristocratic courtship plot with the low humor of threadbare Don Armado's epistolary effort to court Jaquenetta, "a country wench." (see *Dramatis Personae*), with the "Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise, / [and] Three-pil'd hyperboles" that mark the "high-born words" for which the King keeps him near (1.1.170) and that Berowne smilingly pledges to forsake (5.1.408-09). The first courtier to discover he is in love, Armado introduces the romantic sonnet with absurdity. Addressing his young male attendant in self-conscious prose he confesses, "I am in love; and as it is base for a soldier to love, so am I in love with a base wench." (1.2.49-50). When he simply tells her, "I love thee" (1.2.116), Jaquenetta appears as indifferent as any conventional sonnet lady, possibly because she is simply bewildered.

In her absence, her disregard stirs his longings and inspires his vocabulary: "Assist me some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit! Write, pen! For I am for whole volumes in folio" (1.2.151-53). With prodigal impracticality, Armado sends his love in a letter though Jaquenetta cannot read and his rustic messenger, Costard, is known to consort with her. Of course the letter goes astray: the visiting court obligingly shares it with the audience. Written largely in euphuistic prose leading to a quatrain and couplet, the ridiculous billet-doux first praises—"More fairer than fair, beautiful than beauteous, truer than truth itself"—then threatens—"Shall I command thy love? I may. Shall I enforce thy love? I could." Rigorously, the writer asserts his self-importance with allusive metaphors: he is King Cophetua eyeing the beggar maid, Caesar crying "*Veni, vidi, vici*," and the Nemean lion roaring against a lamb: "Submissive fall his princely feet before, / And he from forage will incline to play" (4.1.59-85). The letter has little to do with Jaquenetta; its twin subjects are the author's self-image and his literary inventiveness.

Armado, however, is only the first of five lovers to compose rhyming self-portraits. Koshi Nakanori says he "functions as a funhouse mirror" for the others (297). Berowne employs Armado's clownish messenger to send Rosaline his end-stopped hexameter sonnet:

> Study his bias leaves and makes his book thine eyes,
> Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend.
> If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice;
> Well learned is that tongue that well can thee commend. (4.3.97-100)

Ill acquainted with his lady, Berowne fulfills the genre's obligations by treating the subject he knows best, himself. The King's sonnet, the most artful of the lot, reveals a like ignorance of the woman it praises. It addresses the Princess as "the golden sun" and "the silver moon." (4.3.20; 24), convenient figures of amorous discourse, yet the audience has heard the

Princess set the tone for her court by eschewing false praise. She gently disparages her Lord Boyet's gallant flattery:

> Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,
>
> Not utt'red by base sale of chapmen's tongues. (2.1.15-16)

She refuses to be objectified with flattery. A generation ago Irene G. Dash described the Princess as a proto-feminist: "Original in her thinking, she is unafraid and undominated. She laughs at the Petrarchan tradition that dictates praise of a woman's beauty and insists on truth even in examining her own thoughts" (15). Unlike Jaquenetta, the Princess grasps the purpose and courtly tradition of hyperbole, but like her, she remains unfazed. When the men of Navarre finally come courting in person, they cautiously don outlandish disguises [*like Russians and masked*] (5.2.158 s.d.). Meanwhile, the ladies—warned by Boyet to expect an inexplicable invasion of merry Muscovites in the field outside Navarre's court—identify their masked lovers by their folly, while each lord recognizes not his chosen beloved but only the favor he has sent her. The pun is pathetic: each man seeks and finds his own favor, but none finds favor with his lady. So Katherine, who wears Maria's gift, Longaville's chain of pearl, calls her benefactor a calf (5.2.250), and Rosaline, wearing the diamonds the King sent the Princess, hears the King repeat his sonnet's conventional metaphors of moon and stars shining "upon our watery eyne" (5.2.208) and reduces his efforts to mere "moonshine in the water" (5.2.210). To the sonnet writers, the ladies are indispensable but indistinguishable. Driven from earnest private study to the new context of conversation, the conventional language of love proves comical just as the sonnet's structure of antithetical octave and sestet or quatrains and couplet inverts the love story's plot structure by defeating closure.

More than ornamenting the courtships, the play's sonnets, quatrains, and couplets shape the dialogue, which they invade while the ladies are yet an offstage promise. Berowne's two

rhymed quatrains and couplets of protest against an oath that binds men to three years of denying the flesh challenge the King to extemporize a full sonnet that offers Don Armado's laughable diction as the "quick recreation" (1.1.158) that Berowne demands in default of adequate diet, sleep, or female society. Claiming "I will use him for my minstrelsy," the King wins the first poetic round by introducing the Spanish visitor in rhyme as

> One whom the music of his own vain tongue
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
> A man of complements, whom right and wrong
> Have chose as umpire of their mutiny. (1.1.164-67)

Not yet discovering himself in the funhouse mirror of Armado's linguistic affectations, the King delights in the Spaniard's love affair with diction. Sonnets are a man's game, a diverting competition, and the King indulges Berowne's witty poetic sparring while he himself takes up fancy phrases to display his wit as composer and critic.

The ladies' arrival dramatically raises the stakes in the sonnet game, for it excites the King and his lords to betray themselves in verses of arbitrarily forbidden love. Shakespeare explores lyric poetry as a device for comic suspense with a cumulative eavesdropping scene in which each lover nervously proofreads his rhymes in soliloquy while the concealed, disdainful onstage hearers multiply from one to three and the audience anticipates the exposure of them all. Lynne Magnusson finds a historical precedent for the lords' shaming critiques in behavior at the Inns of Court. Observing that the discovery scene "is between men," she finds that "in an inversion of the accustomed notion of how manuscript poetry circulates to the *admiration* of 'private friends,' . . . the male friends overhear, quote, critique, and deride one another's amorous verses" in a way that both excludes outsiders, such as Armado, and plays "an important role in shaping identity in their in-group communication." Perhaps too obvious for

Magnusson to add, the vast population of excluded outsiders includes the ladies whom these "high-flying verbal performer[s]" (205) praise on paper.

Led by the King and Berowne, a contest of seventeen quatrains enumerates and discounts Petrarchan formulae. One beloved is "a gracious moon" and another "the sun that maketh all things shine." If Berowne's lady "is black as ebony," then ebony is a "wood divine" and "no face is fair that is not full so black." "She passes praise," he declares, and the others rapidly take the challenge to dispraise his flattery until their language descends from romantic extravagance to boyish crudeness:

Berowne: O, if the streets were paved with thine eyes,

Her feet were much too dainty for such tread!

Dumain: O vile! Then, as she goes, what upward lies

The street should see as she walk'd overhead. (4.3.271-74)

This street, like the dialogue, is no place for a Princess, for it reduces all women to the image of what lies under their skirts. The King brings it to a dead end with the old question: "Are we not all in love?" and he licenses Berowne to prepare the sophistries that "prove / Our loving lawful and our faith not torn." Petrarchan commonplaces vanish into blank verse for Berowne's earnest tribute to love and folly:

Then fools you were these women to forswear;

Or keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools. (4.2.326-27)

Love sharpens men's senses, he insists, and inspires them to both valor and poetry. Easily persuading his compeers in love "to woo these girls of France," Berowne joins the King in two couplets and a quatrain to close the scene in sonnet shape.

Reliance on that genre, so persuasive to the loving lords, actually inhibits their courtship. The first venture into wooing, the Masque of Muskovites, exposes the men to ridicule because

the ladies, deprived of Berowne's elegant argument, perceive only an affected, impersonal game of dress-up. Fifty years ago C. L. Barber accounted for the romantic dilemma as a failure of poetry to parse feeling: "It is the folly of acting love and talking love, without being in love. For the festivity releases not the delights of love, but the delights of expression which the prospect of love engenders—though those involved are not clear about the distinction" (93). Easily deceived into protesting his love suit to the wrong lady, each lord hears his Petrarchan protestations deconstructed and dismissed. Taking her for the Princess, the King asks Rosaline to dance, and she replies:

> Play music then. Nay, you must do it soon.
>
> Not yet? No dance! Thus change I like the moon.
>
> *King.* Will you not dance? How come you thus estranged?
>
> *Rosaline.* You took the moon at full, but now she's changed. (5.2. 213-16)

In this is new poetic contest, stichomythic couplets defeat calculated poetic praise. Anne Barton explains the strategy: "As usual, the men are completely defeated by the ladies, the delicate fabric of their wit and artifice destroyed by the realistic humour of opponents who play with facts, not merely words" (44). Couplets are the ladies' favorite poetic style, though they join Boyet in a dialogue of quatrains to rehearse their triumph, and later the Princess and the King divide a sonnet that ends in her refusing to enter his court or to accept his courtly efforts to assign her a sonnet lady's role in beguiling him with her eyes.

> *King.* Rebuke me not for that which you provoke.
>
> The virtue of your eye must break my oath.
>
> *Princess.* You nickname virtue. "Vice" you should have spoke;
>
> For virtue's office never breaks men's troth. (5.2.349-52)

The ladies manipulate the sonnet to mock the traditional self-flattery of its male persona.

For all its entertaining mockery, *Love's Labour's Lost* celebrates the sonnet rather than judging it. The speakers have absorbed the little poem's formulae into their thought, speech, and feelings. When at last Berowne admits the folly of his ostentatious verbal display, forswears "Three-pil'd hyperboles" and promises to woo plainly: "In russet yea's and honest kersey no's," he promptly betrays himself by choosing the exotic term "sans" to assure Rosaline that "My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw." The choice wins her instant rebuke: "Sans 'sans,' I pray you!" As Thomas Greene points out, Berowne's effort "opens with a gesture toward the proper simplicity but winds up with an . . . inappropriate contortion. . . . Habits of feeling and language are not quickly overcome" (324). An indulgent audience longing for an added episode or some imagined *Love's Labour's Won* in which Berowne and Rosaline strike a world-without-end bargain may accept his offer for a prophecy, but whether Berowne truly wishes to forfeit his favorite verbal toy for homely speech is at least debatable. Berowne shapes his valediction to Petrarchan language in the quatrains and couplet of a sonnet.

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Constructing "England": Identity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

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The late 14th century alliterative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* creates a unique mythical construction of "England" that continues to enthrall (and often stupefy) contemporary readers. Duncan S. Bell takes note that nationalist myths are often constructed "through the particular resonance of works of literature and art" (75). Arthurian literature serves as no exception as it certainly plays a vital role in establishing both the past and present mythos of England's national identity. While scholars have discussed issues of nationalism in terms of collective identity, such as the Trojan foundations that frame the narrative, they have rarely spoken at length on how personal identities, such as that of Sir Gawain and Sir Bertilak, work in conjunction with collective identity in order to distinguish themselves from what Benedict Anderson refers to as "imagined communities." By exploring both personal and collective identity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* and how it functions in its portrayal of England, one can begin to position the poem in the complex and often contested concepts of nationalism and nationhood.

Defining nationalism within a medieval context provides a significantly difficult task. Two major schools of thought often rule the discussion of nationalism and nation—the primordialists, or perennialists, who contend that nations are ancient and natural phenomena, and the modernists who argue that nationalism is a product of the modern world, one that exists to influence and define the geopolitical climate. Benedict Anderson proposes the definition that the nation is "both inherently limited and sovereign" (49). While Anderson gives a nod to the "large cultural systems that preceded [the idea of the nation]," he spends much more time

arguing that print-capitalism serves as the origin of national consciousness and development of national identity (52). However, Anderson's emphasis on print-capitalism greatly devalues the importance of pre-modern cultural systems. Clearly, nationalism holds different meanings in both modern and pre-modern contexts, for collective identity certainly existed before the advent of print. Anthony D. Smith best discusses medieval collective identity by introducing the word "ethnies." He describes ethnies as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, historical memories and common cultural traits, associated with a homeland and sense of solidarity, at least among the elites" (105). This definition certainly works well with describing the relationship between the English and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* in particular as an element of shared myth. However, much of the cultural contention surrounding Arthurian literature is that it exists beyond ethnic boundaries. Smith continues to note that

> The overall picture of the course of English medieval histories represents therefore a series of movements into and out of sociopolitical structures approximating to pure types of ethnie, ethnic state and nation, rather than any simple linear progression from ethnic category to ethnic community to nation. Indeed, it is only from the late-fifteenth century that we can begin to speak confidently of a growing sense, among the elites at least, of an English national identity. (112-3)

Smith's assertion that a "growing sense" of an English national identity did not exist before the late-fifteenth century is certainly true; however, whether the common people realized the larger political structure or not, they were indeed part of a *nation* by the fourteenth-century, one with an established monarchy and shared political, economic, and social goals. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* reflects the intensifying need to solidify the English national identity and reveals the clashing of two different ethnies—the English and the Welsh.

To state it lightly, the Welsh and the English have a long and arduous relationship. It remains geographic irony that the Anglo-Saxons pushed the native Celts out of their homeland and gave them the title of Welsh, meaning "foreigner." Throughout the fourteenth century, England had to suppress a number of Welsh rebellions. Between 1380 and 1400, the dates typically ascribed to the writing of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, England was fighting to complete its colonization of Wales. The resonance of conflict between two distinct groups, the Arthurian Camelot (England) and the wild kingdom of Hautdesert (Wales) can be felt throughout the entire poem. Lynn Arner strongly supports this interpretation of the poem. She notes, "The poem is conventionally believed to have been composed in northwest England, alongside the Welsh border, and employs a northwest midlands dialect, specifically, the dialect of Lancashire and Cheshire. Appropriately, the bulk of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*'s narrative action unfolds in the English-Welsh borderland" (79). Arner continues to argue that the poem insists that the Welsh and English are two distinct groups and that the poem "promoted England's conquest of Wales" (81). While Arner discusses colonialism, she stays away from any use of the term "nationalism." However, the assertion that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* promotes England's conquest of Wales certainly lends itself to a more historically inclusive definition of nationalism, one that works to develop a cohesive concept of "England" in the 14th Century, as well as to justify England's subjugation of the Welsh.

One can see evidence of this English bias in the Trojan mythological narrative frame that works to re-situate Camelot in England rather than Wales. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* begins with, "Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye," and continues to fictionally link Arthurian heritage to Aeneas, Romulus, and finally Brutus, the founder and first king of Britain

(*Sir Gawain* 1) [1]. By establishing a direct ancestral line from Aeneas to Arthur, the poem accentuates England's right to rule, not only over themselves but also over Wales. Lynn Arner states that "English-Welsh colonial struggles included contestations over King Arthur. According to Welsh traditions, the invading Saxons drove Arthur and his Britons into Wales. The Welsh not only claimed to be Arthur's descendants, but they traced their glorious heritage through Arthur to Brutus, to Aeneas, and ultimately to Troy" (83). Several other Arthurian texts, such as the *Mabinogian*, situate Arthur's court in Wales. Geoffrey of Monmouth also places Arthur's capital in Caerleon, a village near Newport, South Wales.

Not only does the historical framework of the poem work to establish a collective identity, but personal identity also plays a large role in establishing the Gawain-poet's image of England. Even with what little description the reader receives of King Arthur, it becomes a strong initial point of contrast with the Green Knight. Arthur appears as a young king during the Golden Age of the Round Table, well before the tearing apart of the kingdom in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The poem reads, "Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were serued, / He watz so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered" and that he would not eat until he heard "sum auenturus þyng an vncouþe tale" (3)[2]. This passage presents an imperfect criticism of Arthur's personal identity; he comes off as a bit young and childish. Nevertheless, the poem portrays Arthur as a humble king and host as he allows everyone else to eat before him—a stunning difference compared to the brutish and arrogant arrival of the Green Knight.

Note: All primary quotations are quoted in the original. Corresponding numbers in the text refer to pages, rather than line numbers. All provided translations are my own.

[1] "When the siege and the assault had ceased at Troy"

[2] "But Arthur would not eat until all were served, / He was so jolly with joyfulness, and somewhat boyish" / "Some adventurous story or exciting tale"

However, it is not the youthful Arthur who undertakes the Green Knight's challenge, but Gawain who takes his place. Arthur certainly appears to be considering the offer as he takes hold of his axe, but Gawain tells Arthur, "And syþen þis note is so nys þat no3t hit yow falles" (11)[3]. As Gawain realizes, not only do the king's bravery and honor rest on the line, but also his life. By taking Arthur's place and trivializing the challenge, Gawain accepts his chivalric responsibility to protect and honorably represent the kingdom. Throughout the poem, Gawain works as a sum of his values—ideal values that are to be associated with Arthur's kingdom, and thereby the larger ethnie of England. Randy P. Schiff says that "Gawain's identity is exterior to himself—not anterior to his public persona, but rather produced by the codes circulating within the social collective of Camelot" (92). Humility, honesty, loyalty and chastity are all virtues that Gawain embodies. Gawain's identity also harbors a religious component, which represents his virtues and serves as an exterior *physical* symbol. According to the poem, Solomon designed the pentangle (referred to as the Endless Knot by the English), a five-pointed star that represents a virtue tied to the group of five. The text reads:

> Fyrst he watz funden fautlez in his fyue wyttez,
> And efte fayled neuer þe freke in his fyue fyngres,
> And alle his afyaunce vpon folde watz in þe fyue woundez
> Þat Cryst ka3t on þe croys. (18)[4]

In addition to the pentangle inscribed on the outside of Gawain's shield, he has a picture of the Virgin Mary on the inside. These physical symbols represent the virtues that Gawain represents, and it draws a strong connection between Christian ideology, Camelot, and, ultimately, England.

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[3] "And this affair is so foolish that it does not befit you"

[4] "First he was found faultless in his five senses / And he never failed in his five fingers / And all his faith was firmly in the five wounds / that Christ received upon the cross"

The Green Knight first tests Gawain's virtues in the beheading challenge in King Arthur's court, and they are again repeatedly tested once he arrives at Bertilak's castle. Randy P. Schiff notes, "discourse is the primary venue for knightly identity in the poem, both initiating Morgan's challenge and becoming the medium in which Gawain is tested" (92). Language plays a vital role in testing Gawain's knightly identity, and it is the game of choice of the Green Knight: "'3et firre,' quoþ þe freke, 'a forwarde we make: / Quat-so-euer I wynne in þe wod hit worþez to yourez, / And quat chek so 3e acheue chaunge me þerforne" (31)[5]. The word "wynne" provides fluidity in interpretation. In Bertilak's hunt, his winnings remain *physical* objects—the animals of the deer, boar, and fox. Just as Bertilak hunts the animals, Lady Bertilak "hunts" Gawain through her not too subtle sexual advances. Although Gawain attempts to fend her off, his earnings come in the form of kisses from Lady Bertilak. It is only the green girdle that he does not honestly exchange with Bertilak—an important element which shall be discussed later.

Gawain's arrival at the Green Chapel marks his final test, which works to establish Gawain's personal identity. At the Green Chapel, the Green Knight feigns to deliver the same blow to Gawain that Gawain dealt to him in Arthur's Court. Upon the first swing, Gawain flinches, and the Green Knight mocks him, saying, "Such cowardise of þat kny3t cowþe I neuer here" (62)[6]. Reverence for his own life over the virtue of honesty seems to be the only fault that Gawain possesses, and for that, the Green Knight teaches him a lesson. In the end, he receives a knick on the back of the neck, and he must take on the green girdle as a symbol of his quest. As William F. Woods suggests, Gawain is trapped by "social and ethical constraints belonging to his courtly persona—in other words, his promise to the green man, his chivalric vows, and his Arthurian identity—which will not allow him to flee" (222). While Gawain does "flee" from his

[5] "'One thing' said the man, 'we will make an agreement: / What-so-ever I win in the wood it belongs to you, / And what-so-ever you gain therefore exchange with me'"

[6] "Such cowardice of that knight I never heard accused"

"natural sense of death" in the sense that he takes on the green girdle as Woods suggests, it seems a bit much to say that Gawain serves as a "a prototype of late-medieval individuality, or as an early symptom of bourgeois sensibility" (222, 226). Instead, it seems that Gawain could serve as exactly the opposite. Gawain serves as a national icon, and his personal identity makes up the collective virtues of the ethnie of which he is a symbol. Surely, the Green Knight, a mystical man who excels in deceit and trickery, does not punish Gawain simply for lying, but rather for falling short of his intended cultural identity.

Much like Gawain, the Green Knight's personal identity comprises the sum of his ethnically inscribed virtues. The Green Knight's virtues dramatically oppose those of Gawain; where Gawain prides himself on courtly behavior, the Green Knight shows up in Arthur's court crass and wild. The poem describes him as a giant that seems to be "Half etayn" in size and his hair matching his horse: "And þe here of his hed of his hors swete" (5-6)[7]. He arrogantly challenges King Arthur in the middle of his own court, and insults the knights by calling them "berdlez chylder" (8)[8]. The Green Knight's arrogance and untamed look make him a mocking image of knightly virtues. Furthermore, the Green Knight not only remains characteristically contrasting to Arthur's court, but his own kingdom remains spatially and symbolically distanced from Camelot. Arner notes that

> Only after traveling extensively, a foray that includes traversing northern Wales, does Gawain discover Bertilak's castle, signifying that Arthur's court and that of his rival are a great distance apart geographically and symbolically . . . In fact, in SGGK, not only are the Welsh not the progeny of Arthur and his court, but the

[7] "Half giant" / "The hair of his head matched his horse"
[8] "beardless children"

> inhabitants of Wales and the frontier are positioned as the foes of Gawain and, by extension, as enemies of Arthur's kingdom. (83-84)

Just as the Trojan frame narrative re-establishes the link between England and Arthur's lineage, the distancing of Hautdesert from Camelot further emphasizes the disparity between Wales and England. Both the setting and the Green Knight's initial appearance at Camelot set him up as a symbolically different ethnie than that of Gawain.

While the Green Knight acts rather rudely in Arthur's court, one should not dismiss the seemingly noble and courtly manner of his alter ego, Bertilak. Bertilak's kingdom warmly welcomes Gawain as a "prynce to honour" (23)[9]. For all his appearances, Bertilak shows great hospitality and kindness to his guest, Gawain. However, as was discussed earlier, Gawain's time at the castle ends up mixed in with the aggressive advances of Lady Bertilak, which the poem juxtaposes with images of the lord's hunt. Furthermore, the Green Knight later reveals "'Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe. / Þur3 my3t of Morgne la Faye, þat in my hous lenges, / And koyntyse of clergye, bi craftes wel lerned'" (67)[10]. Bertilak's kingdom proves not to be a true representation of hospitality and courtly behavior, but instead an illusion in order to test Gawain's honor. Even the testing of Gawain's knightly behavior comes somewhat into question as the Green Knight reveals his actual motive for the entire event "to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dy3e / With glopnyng of þat ilke gome þat gostlych speked / With his hede in his honde bifore þe hy3e table" (68)[11]. The Green Knight's wish for Guinevere to die of horror hardly seems like an honorable motive. Furthermore, Morgan le Fay's association with the Green Knight attaches magic and paganism to the ethnie of Wales—another contrast to

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[9] "prince to honor"

[10] "Bertilak de Hautdesert hereabouts I am called. / By might of Morgan le Fay, that in my house dwell, / And cunning of clergy and crafts well learned"

[11] "To have hurt Guinevere and have her die / With terror at that glamour that unnaturally spoke / With his head in his hand before the high table"

Arthur's Christian kingdom and the imagery of the pentangle. Overall, the intentions of the beheading game are wicked from the outset, and the two facets of the green man's identity, the Green Knight and Bertilak, provide the reader with a mix of wild, uncivilized pagan behavior and the illusion of hospitality. As Schiff notes,

> Far from a racially homogenized proto-nation, the Gawain-poet's Britain is a fractured realm punctuated with wild spaces, with political settlements the exclusive province of traditional elites. Showing that Gawain's development of friendship and trust with Bertilak and his fellow courtiers was a ruse triggered by Arthur's powerful blood relative, Morgan, the Gawain-poet signals that the ethnic malediction of violence, fragmentation, and aristocracy continues to haunt Britain. (84)

While England remains "fractured" without a solidified identity, it is certainly a definable "nation." The Gawain-poet attempts to use Arthurian literature to draw out the two distinct contrasting ethnies of the English and the Welsh, thereby further establishing England's collective identity.

While one can categorize the personal identities as belonging to specific ethnies, the most problematic symbol in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* remains—the green girdle. Gawain himself seems to take it as a reminder of his moral faults:

> He tened quen he schulde telle,
> He groned for gref and grame;
> Þe blod in his face con melle,
> When he hit schulde schewe, for schame. (69)[12]

[12] "He was miserable when he told the truth; / He groaned for grief and anger / That blood in his face with flame / When he showed it, for shame"

To Gawain, the girdle represents his failure to live up to his knightly identity; he values his own life over keeping his virtue of honesty. However, when Gawain returns, the rest of the English court does not seem to express the same sorrow and disappointment. The final scene that follows remains one of the strangest in the entire poem:

> Þe kyng comfortez þe kny3t, and alle þe court als
> La3en loude þerat, and luflyly acorden
> Þat lordes and ladis þat longed to þe Table,
> Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
> A bende abelef hym aboute of a bry3t grene,
> And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were. (121)[13]

It becomes difficult to discern the meaning of such a notable item, as the green girdle, when its symbolism shifts from one of moral poverty to that of an item of honor. The Court's reaction trivializes Gawain's concerns; instead, the green girdle becomes a symbol of conquest. Arner interprets the band as

> thus transformed into an object of nostalgia, reminding the English court of its battle with its foe, where the English emerged from confrontation, having proven their worth and valor. The band becomes a medal of the colonial campaign, bearing witness to English authority and functioning as evidence that the English deserve to rule. (94)

[13] "The king comforted the knight, and all the court, / Laughed loudly thereafter, and lively understood / That lords and ladies that belonged to the table, / All of the brotherhood, a baldric should have / A band slantwise about him of a bright green / And that, for the sake of that knight, wear it agreeably."

Like the religiously inscribed symbol of the pentangle, the band represents yet another way to justify the English conquest over the Welsh. Thus, the green girdle shifts from being a symbol of personal identity to one of collective identity.

Both Arner and Schiff note the change in symbol; however, their conclusions seem to come a bit at odds. Arner presents the ending as "providing a self-congratulatory perspective on England that ultimately promotes the English conquest of Wales" while Schiff argues that "Gawain leaves only a sartorial legacy, the superficiality of which satirizes a chivalric British elite inordinately focused on clothing and heraldry" (94, 93). Both arguments have merit; however, to assert definitively one of these views over the other ignores the internal struggles between the different ethnies present in the poem. After the court's recognition of Gawain, the last lines of the poem tie England back to Brutus and Troy, and thus the opening Trojan frame narrative. David A. Lawton notes that the historical frame "distances the reader from the Arthurian court just as Gawain is detached from it by his experience of solitary quest and moral failure" (92). The disparity between the audience, Arthur's court, and Gawain's adventure reveals a barrier between medieval and modern, personal and collective identity.

While the English and Welsh are vying for power in the poem, Arthur's own kingdom struggles to solidify its virtues and collective identity. The clashing ethnies reveal evidence of an evolving concept of England and a developing English national identity. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* reveals an effort to, as Duncan S. Bell stated, construct a nationalist myth through a specific work of art. Through the ethnically inscribed virtues of the poem's symbols, Gawain, and Bertilak, the Gawain-poet exposes a fragmented Britain working toward a more complete concept of nationhood.

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Win, Waste, or Draw: Apocalyptic Imagery and Economic Decay in *Wynnere and Wastoure*

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Few poems inspire such a polarizing critical debate as the alliterative poem *Wynnere and Wastoure*. Critics of the poem rarely seem to find common ground other than agreeing that the debate poem was written between 1352 and 1360 and questions a variety of moral, political, and economic issues closely related to Edward III's rule and the contemporary socioeconomic status of England. Warren Ginsberg says it best in his introduction to the poem: "The poem's perspectives are truly dizzying…to try to follow their debate, much less to resolve it, without invoking a multitude of perspectives seems as doomed to partiality as are Wynnere's and Wastoure's own arguments" (5-6). Readers can see this volatility in a handful of critics' works that take myriad approaches to the poem. Presently, the hottest points of interpretive contention in *Wynnere and Wastoure* are the implications of the economic debate and whether or not the poet condemns, endorses, or simply aims to teach his audience about the fiscal policies under scrutiny throughout the poem.

In "Indeterminacy in *Wynnere and Wastoure* and *the Parliament of the Three* Ages," David Harrington asks his readers to "notice how the poets aim at a high degree of indeterminacy. We need to read these poems not just to find what is in them, but also to rethink, to add to, and modify the issues as the poets present them, drawing more intelligently and imaginatively from our own resources" (247). A nearly untapped interpretative lens, ecocriticism, can help critics answer Harrington's call. In fact, ecocriticism can provide a platform to explore many poems from this era because the poems often use the landscape and environment to create

sophisticated economic and political arguments[1]. Although looking to the environmental representations of a poem or work of fiction for economic or political commentary seems counterintuitive, examining the environmental imagery the poet creates in *Wynnere and Wastoure* can aid critics in rethinking its complex economic debate. In this essay, I argue that the way in which the poet employs pastoral and apocalyptic imagery along with images of collapse and catastrophe contributes more evidence to readings of the poem that claim that the poet condemns England's contemporary fiscal policies. Individually, the images of the poem contribute to more confusion and only lead to more questions—together, and taken as a progression of increasingly apocalyptic images, though, they demonstrate the economic harm the landowners, merchants and aristocracy are doing to the kingdom when they harm the environment in practicing avariciousness or prodigality.

The first step in this ecomarxist interpretation requires one to review the form and generic conventions of the poem. Formally, John Scattergood notes in "*Winner and Waster* and the Mid-Fourteenth-Century Economy" that the poem's opening "is the typical opening of the *chanson d'aventure*…Characteristically, the narrator, walking or musing alone, often in some named place or district at some particular season, comes unexpectedly upon something which reveals previously unsuspected knowledge"(72). Fittingly, the narrator in this poem finds himself in a pristine landscape, "Bi a bonke of a bourne; bryghte was the sone / Undir a worthicliche wodde by a wale medew" (33-34). In this passage, Scattergood correctly finds that "this typical 'wandrynge' narrator is so overcome by the beauty of a paradisal landscape through which he travels that he falls asleep and has a dream which forms the substance of the poem" (72). Although his analysis correctly credits this formal feature of the poem with creating the

[1] In addition to exploring environmental representations in *Wynnere and Wastoure,* my thesis further examines this trope in *Mum and the Sothsegger, Piers Plowman, The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* and *The Song of the Husbandman.*

dreamscape and observes the dream as the knowledge it yields, he inadvertently leaves another function of this setting open for interpretation: his insight also allows one to read the landscape in the framework for the dream *metaphorically* as the space that "reveals previously unsuspected knowledge." When one considers the environmental imagery of the outer frame of the poem with the substance of the debate, this setting provides an immediate contrast to the conflicting views of land and commodity between Wynnere, Wastoure, and the king.

For the narrator, the pastoral landscape provides a place to contemplate and reflect. His meticulous description of the pastoral landscape that surrounds him suggests that he truly loves the landscape and the serenity that it provides. What really stands out, though, are the features of the land that the narrator finds worthy of his recollection:

> Fele floures gan fold ether my fote stepped.
> I layde myn hede on ane hill ane hawthorne beside;
> The throstills full throly they therepen togedire,
> Hipped up heghwalles fro heselis tyll othire
> Bernacles with thayre billes one barkes thay roungen
> The jay jangled one heghe, jarmede the foles
> The bourne full bremly rane the bankes bytwene;
> So ruyde were the roughe stremys and raughten so heghe
> That it was neghande nyghte or I nappe myghte
> For dyn of the depe water and dadillyng of fewllys.
> Bot as I lay at the laste than lowked my eghne
> And I was swythe in a sweven sweped believe. (35-46)

In this section of Fitt 1, the nature that the narrator includes in his verse seems the same variety that Coleridge or Wordsworth meditated upon in their romantic poetry six centuries later. He

includes woodpeckers, blue jays, geese, flowers, hawthorn trees and a briskly running stream. If one pulls these natural elements out of the poem, he/she will see that the pastoral landscape and frame of the dreamscape has nothing to offer except intrinsic beauty and harmony. The singing birds and rushing water remind contemporary readers of a healthy ecological system in which everything functions as it should, and the narrator gives much more reverence to the woodland noises than he gives the words of Wynnere and Wastoure.

In fact, this is the only portion of the poem in which the poet has absolutely nothing to say of the extrinsic value of the land or its ability to produce. He doesn't write of rich soils on which to sew crops or trees to heat his home—instead, he spends fifteen lines explaining how beautiful and peaceful the countryside can be before he falls into slumber. When one pays close enough attention to the imagery and soundscape the poet creates in this section, he/she sees that this is the only space of earnest management and conservation in the poem. This refuge is the only portion of the poem truly free of Wynnere and Wastoure and their mismanaging practices, and even if it lasts only momentarily, readers can see that the poet privileges this refuge over the landscape he exposes in his dream.

Just as quickly as the narrator mentions his paradise, it disappears and fades into a land unrecognizable to him. He writes:

Me thoghte I was in the wrlde, I ne wiste in whate ende
One a loveliche lande that was ylike grene,
That laye loken by a law the lengthe of a myle
In aythere holte was ane here in hawberkes full brighte,
Harde hates appon hedes and helmys with crestys;
Brayden owte thaire baners, bown for to mete,
Schowen owte of the schawes, in schiltorns thay felle,

And bot the lengthe of a launde this lords bytwene.

And alle prayed for the pese till the prynce come, … (48-55)

Although the narrator still finds himself in what appears to be the liminal spaces of a forest or heavy woodland, the tone and imagery quickly shift from the pastoral to the apocalyptic as the landscape of the dream replaces the meadow in which the narrator finds peace. It still seems beautiful, but the impending conflict between Wynnere and Wastoure clearly threatens the narrator and the land, suggesting that this dream is a premonition of things yet to come.

In this prelude to what seems an imminent battle, the birds, river, and trees that provided the narrator with his peaceful rest appear silent, replaced with clamoring soldiers (and lawyers, bishops, and the Pope himself) scrambling from the trees. Few images conjure more apocalyptic despondency than a battlefield full of combatants waiting for war, but the poet mediates the immediacy of the conflict, choosing instead to depict the warring parties clad in armor and ready for war[2]. He brings his readers to the brink of catastrophe, but he stops short of unleashing the war parties at the last moment. Even though the combatants pray for peace, hoping to avoid bloodshed among the trees, the conflict still seems all but imminent, and the situation seems as delicate as the flowers that surrounded the narrator before he fell asleep.

Interestingly, the poet momentarily restores order in the verse when he provides an alternative battleground—a debate in front of the king. Even with all of the war imagery (the poet dedicates 145 lines to setting up the battle and its participants), the poet sheathes the combatants' swords and sets up a war of words. In a way, the looming war functions as a warning, both literally and figuratively. The poet writes that if the war comes to physical blows, nothing will be able to stop them from destroying each other. He writes, "That if thay strike

[2] Contemporary readers will also find the silence of the birds, river, and landscape of the outer frame of the poem as a type of apocalyptic rhetoric employed in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*—silence in the spring is equated with death. For a more complete discussion, see *Ecocriticism* by Gregg Garrard (Garrard 2-3).

one stroke stynt than ne thynken / Till owthir here appon hethe be hewen to deth" (195-196). Quite literally if the king allows them to fight, one army would go down. Given the interdependent relationship of Wynnere, Wastoure, and England, then, this hints at an impending collapse of the country. Figuratively, though, it suggests that if Wynnere and Wastoure keep on their respective courses of mismanagement, economic, political, and ecological catastrophe surely waits. Either way, the war imagery of the poem foreshadows the impending doom and scorched earth that often follows civil wars. In addition to this, the poem's warning also helps establish the poet as the prophet he claims to be in the prologue and makes even clearer the satirical aim of the poem.

As the debate rages on, the poet escalates his apocalyptic imagery. Through the ecological lens, Wynnere, not Wastoure, seems to hold the moral and economical high ground. His concern is with the long-term security and safety of his estate; Wynnere benefits from political stability; therefore, one would assume he would want as sustainable environment as possible to grow his wealth. Lois Roney's "Winner and Waster's 'Wyse Wordes': Teaching Economics and Nationalism in Fourteenth-Century England" provides some insight into Wynnere's character: "Winner consumes as little as possible. That is to say, no matter how good his intention, his behavior removes a great deal of wealth from the circular flow in England. Nowhere in the debate does he use, consume, spend, give away, or dispose of, or waste anything. He lives as frugally as possible, teachers others to do the same, and expects to be praised for it" (1090). Simply put, Wynnere cares only about production—and produce he does. Wynnere keeps his estate in order and stocks his grain well, but the poet illustrates some of the unuttered consequences of this type of behavior in Wastoure's responses to Wynnere's accusations. And although one should be skeptical of the accusatory tone of the responses in the play, each character seems to agree with the responses levied against himself to some degree—

never does Wynnere or Wastoure deny the allegations, instead choosing to flip the script on the other and turn a negative argument into a positive argument.

The apocalyptic imagery of catastrophe and collapse associated with Wynnere is less obvious and less immediate than it is in Wastoure's case. Wynnere's long-term preparations and hoarding, however, do conjure images of decay. For example, Wastoure accuses Wynnere of stuffing his home with the commodities he harvests:

> When thou haste waltered and went and wakede all the nyghte,
> And Iche a wy in this werlde that wonnes abowte,
> And has werpede thy wyde howses full of wolle sakkes –
> Thy bemys benden at the rofe, siche bakone there hynges (248-251)

Here, the text creates an image of a house full of raw products literally on the brink of collapsing. Metaphorically speaking, the collapsing house could be seen as a collapsing nation, and in the ecological sense, collapse also carries with it apocalyptic premonitions. The house contains so many decaying and stagnate commodities that it will fall unless Wynnere amends his ways. It is important to note, though, that the house has not yet fallen.

Shortly after these lines, Wastoure rhetorically asks about the status of Wynnere's collected wealth: "What scholde worthe of that wele if no waste come? / Some rote, some ruste, some ratons fede" (252-253). In these lines, Wastoure literally invokes the language and image of disease, death, and decay in regards to Wynnere's estate. The poet creates images of rotting grain in rat infested storage areas, overtilled fields, and tarnished silver. Just as Wynnere stresses the beams in his house, he pushes his lands to the brink of collapse in order to produce as much as possible. In addition to this, these lines point out the fact that Wynnere depends on Wastoure and Wastoure on Wynnere, just as a healthy ecosystem relies on all of its inhabitants to function

properly. But if we recall the arena and circumstances for the debate, we would certainly be reminded that this system is on the verge of catastrophe. Even though Wynnere plans for the worst and seems the privileged character in the environmental sense, it doesn't say too much that his opponent is a waster and his king is an apathetic enabler. On the negative side, he produces more than he needs, and the excess in production causes as much stress on the ecosystem and as many environmental and economic problems as wasting and consuming do. Overproduction is just as negligent as overconsumption.

No images remind readers of overconsumption, decay, or death more than the images that the text creates of Wastoure and his estate. Environmentally speaking, Wastoure's character name alone conjures images of refuse and pollutants, not exactly a pat on the back from the poet. Wastoure, according to Stephanie Trigg, "At times is the leader of a mercenary army, a knight of the king's household, a disaffected aristocrat who squanders his inheritance, a laborer who refuse to work, a wealthy man with due concern for the poor, a glutton, and a courtly lover" (93). To this list, one might add a poor keeper of his land. Wastoure lives only with the present time in mind—he drinks too much, prepares elaborate feasts that could feed an army for a week's time (mostly exotic and expensive fare, too, I might add), and neglects his duty to keep his estate in a manner working of production. Throughout the text, however, Wastoure suggests that his opulent lifestyle of consuming actually helps the people of England more than Wynnere's lifestyle of avarice, but his short-sighted lifestyle depletes nearly all of the materials of his own lands and forces his counterpart to overproduce to compensate. Of course Wynnere is more than willing to oblige him, though, so the faults lay (disproportionally) on both characters and classes' shoulders. Their codependence feeds the impending destruction of the environment and economy. However, Wastoure seems the more menacing character in the moral, economical, and ecological sense. He talks a good game, but his words are all hollow.

One can see this hollowness in the way in which the poet carefully crafts images of environmental collapse to add to the urgency of action in his exposition of Wastoure's faults. Each of the images Wynnere creates in his responses to Wastoure's accusations come together to create the controlling image of a vast and desolate wasteland incapable of production. Wynnere begins his introduction by openly and explicitly condemning Wastoure's treatment of the environment:

> Why hase this cayteffe no care how men corne sellen?
> His londes liggen alle ley, his lomes aren solde,
> Downn bene his dowfehowses, drye bene his poles;
> The devyll wounder one the wele he weldys at home,
> Bot hungere and heghe howeses and howndes full kene. (233-237)

Although Wynnere mostly concerns himself with Wastoure's inability to produce, he does so by drawing a very bleak picture of Wastoure's land management tactics—his lands lay in disarray, his wetlands are dry, and he cares not at keeping stock. A couple of lines later, Wynnere actually abandons his original critique and says "That if he life may longe this lande will he stroye" (243). To prove this point, Wynnere examines Wastoure's practice of husbandry, both in small grain production and forestry, and accurately claims that these practices cannot sustain themselves. For example, Wynnere claims that Wastoure leaves grain in his fallowed lands and refuses to collect "A kynde herveste to cache and cornes to wynn / For the colde wyntter and the kene with gleterand frostes, / Sythen dropeles drye in the dede monethe" (274-276). In creating one of the darkest environmental images of the poem, Wynnere blends imagery of frost and drought, both agents of death and decay, in his prose to attack Wastoure's practice of husbandry.

After he finishes attacking Wastoure's lax methods of production, he then focuses on Wastoure's habits of consumption and uses rhetoric that a contemporary audience might recognize as a "silent spring," apocalyptic rhetoric[3] as the debate nears its conclusion. In Wynnere's last environmental volley, he claims:

> Lesse and ye wrethe your wifes, thaire willes to folowe,
> Ye sellyn wodd aftir wodde in wale tyme,
> Bothe the oke and the assche and all that ther growes;
> The spyres and the yonge sprynge ye spare to your children,
> And sayne God wil graunt it his grace to grow at the last,
> For to save to your sones: bot the schame es your own.
> Nedeles save ye the soyle, for sell it ye thynken. (395-401)

In this exchange, Wynnere highlights Wastoure's need for a quick buck—he cuts down the forests that provide heat and shelter, leaving nothing besides saplings for those that come after. The image this leaves in the reader's mind's eye is a desolate estate devoid of life. Wastoure expends all of his resources as quickly as possible, leaving only a wasteland of dry ponds, deforested woodlands, and dead fallow lands. All around Wastoure's estate, then, the poet constructs images of decay, death, and collapse

The poet leaves its participants one more chance to manage the debate and prevent the impending civil war and the destruction of the countryside. The king, however, only practices more mismanaging techniques—he sends Wynnere to Rome and Wastoure to Cheapside and

[3] See the footnote on page five.

allows them to keep on winning and wasting[4]. His apathy in this matter keeps the swords from swinging in the short term, but as the increasingly dark and apocalyptic environmental imagery of the text suggests, allowing Wynnere and Wastoure to continue to destroy the environment can only lead to the eventual economic and environmental collapse of England. In this way, the poet allows no true winner, but the surviving text seems to suggest that any action is better than none; put simply, when one reads this text with ecocriticism in mind, the poem suggests that Edward III's fiscal policies will lead to the eventual destruction of the English economy and countryside.

Before one can put this argument to good use, he/she must first establish the relationship between the natural world and the fourteenth-century English economy. In *The Alliterative Tradition in Early Middle English Poetry*, Michael Nagy points out the lack of "an economic vocabulary with which to describe the financial conditions" (186). He further claims that "having no recourse to concepts such as 'supply and demand,' 'artificial shortage,' and 'monopoly,' the poet of *Wynnere and Wastoure* still clarifies the corruption of a system which allows one to manipulate the supply and therefore the price of staple good" (187). Drawing upon his argument, critics can see that this absence forces the poet to substitute an economic commentary with a crude, environmental vocabulary; therefore, one of the only tangible vehicles for the economic commentary within the poem is the imagery the poet employs regarding husbandry, consumption, catastrophe and collapse. Simply put, the poet's critique of Wynnere and Wastoure's mismanagement of the natural world *functions* as an economic and political critique of Edward III. However, the environmental images that the text creates "clarify more than the corruption of the economic system it critiques"; they depict the inner

[4] Rome is the home of the Pope and filled with people associated with avarice, and Cheapside of London is equated with a place of excess and prodigality (Nagy 180-183). Sending the characters to these places ensures that the characters will find it difficult to change.

failings of that system and demonstrate just how near it is to collapse. Whenever one observes an environmental image of decay, disease, or destruction, then, he/she also observes an economic and political criticism. Far from endorsing or merely teaching his audience about the fiscal policies of contemporary England, the poet uses his apocalyptic imagery as a warning device of a stressed system on the verge of collapse, and in the end, from pastoral to apocalyptic, the images of *Wynnere and Wastoure* clearly indict all who mismanage the landscape and its resources. The mostly unsatisfying conclusion to the debate between Wynnere and Wastoure does offer readers some hope, though. After all, no blood was shed in the meadow, Wynnere's house hasn't yet collapsed, and Wastoure's saplings are still growing—the landscape isn't completely desolate yet.

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