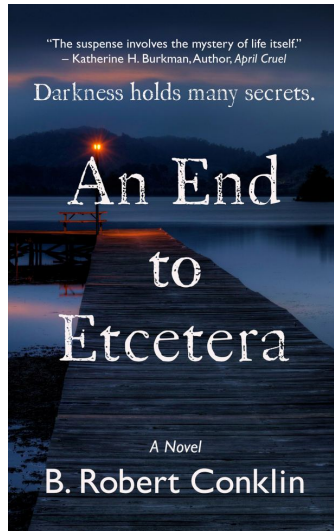




Psychological Thriller Reaches Back to Dark Ages for Victim's Nickname



Ohio State University Professor Traces Word to Medieval Poetry

COLUMBUS, Ohio - May 30, 2023 - [PRLog](#) -- In the novel *An End to Etcetera*, a teen confesses to drowning an autistic boy left in his care—a boy who may not even exist. The boy's name? Thuster. As the teen's therapist discovers, it's a word meaning "darkness" that appears in the poem *Hymn to the Virgin* (c. 1300). In recent correspondence, Lisa Kiser, Professor Emerita in the English Department at OSU, elaborates on its prevalence in Middle English literature.

"'Thuster' is a very early word that survives largely in poems before 1400," Dr. Kiser explains. "My favorite place of its occurrence is in the early 13th-century debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*. It appears several times in that work."

For example::

Vor evrich thing that shuniet right
Hit luveth thuster and hatiet light,
And evrich thing that is lof misdeed
Hit luveth thuster to his dede.

Dr. Kiser translates these lines as a proverb: "For every creature that shuns what's right/Loves darkness and hates light,/And every creature who loves misdeeds/Loves darkness for their deeds."

The meaning of the word ties in with the novel's use of Thuster as a shadow figure in the teen's counseling sessions, as his therapist probes to uncover the truth behind his confession. The University of Michigan's Middle English Dictionary suggests that the word may be figuratively used to mean "spiritual ignorance, moral blindness," which certainly applies to the teen antagonist.

How would a boy who isn't doing well in school know this word from the Middle Ages? It's an enigma his therapist intends to figure out. When she asks her patient how this nickname came about, he replies with a grin, "Use-ter know, don't anymore." His pun provides a clue as to how Thuster is pronounced.

As Dr. Kiser points out, the word is usually spelled with a runic letter called a "thorn" (Þ, þ) rather than "th." According to Daniel Donoghue (<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cb45/middle-english-basic...>) of Harvard University, Middle English consonants are generally pronounced the same as today, so the "thorn" would sound like the *th* in either "thick" or "the." As for the "u," he suggests the "oo" sound in "boot."

Is a word from the so-called Dark Ages of history still relevant for modern readers? Very much so, according to Samantha Verba, an advance reader of the novel: "I am so hung up on the name Thuster. I'm very big on names and nicknames, and it just grabs me every time I read it to the point I have to say it out loud when I see it on the page."

If you wish to test whether the name has a similar effect on you as a reader, you can access the novel on Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/End-Etcetera-B-Conklin-ebook/dp/B0...>).

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