

# QUIDDITAS

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Manuscripts written in English and dealing with medieval or renaissance studies, regardless of field or nationality, should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* and be submitted without the author's name appearing therein. A cover letter containing the author's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and title of paper should accompany the submission. Please send four copies of the manuscript to:

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Quidditas*. This is a Latin legal term that originally meant “the essential nature of a thing” and appeared in fourteenth-century French as “*quiddité*.” In the Renaissance, the English adaptation, “quiddity,” came to mean “logical subtleties” or “a captious nicety in argument” (OED) and is so used in *Hamlet* (“Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his *quiddities* now, his quilleys, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?” 5.1.95–97). Thus, the original Latin meaning, together with the later implied notions of intense scrutiny, systematic reasoning, and witty wordplay, is well suited to the contents of the journal.

Cover design by Winston Vanderhoof, Truman State University designer.

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# ARTICLES

## The Demonization of Sidney's Cecropia: Erasing a Legal Identity

Stephanie Chamberlain  
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IN OCTOBER OF 1533, fourteen-year-old Catherine de' Medici married Henri, duc d'Orléans in a union meant to secure a favorable political alliance between Francis I, the King of France and Pope Clement VII, her uncle and legal guardian. When, however, the Pope unexpectedly died less than a year later, Catherine's symbolic worth virtually died as well: leaving a less than enamored France to bear the burden of one whose status, as R. J. Knecht has noted, "was immediately reduced to that of a foreigner of relatively modest origins."<sup>1</sup> When Henri unexpectedly died following a ceremonial jousting match in 1559, Catherine became positively reviled. By the time she died in 1589, she had been thoroughly vilified by virtually all of sixteenth-century Europe. Not only was she blamed for masterminding the massacre of thousands of Huguenots at Paris in 1572, but she was held at least partially accountable for the political unrest regarding the marriage question which unsettled England during much of Elizabeth's reign.

To what degree Catherine was responsible for the atrocities long attributed to her continues as a subject of debate among sixteenth-century French historians. What interests me, however, is the steady deterioration of this early modern widow's reputation once she emerged from her relatively contained status under coverture into a much more conspicuous role as regent to the minor Charles IX.<sup>2</sup> For whatever her degree of complicity during the tumultuous years following Henri's sudden death, demonization became a means by which to combat the threat her unveiled legal status unleashed upon a vulnerable early modern world.

By the time Sir Philip Sidney began revisions on his politicized pastoral romance, *The New Arcadia*, Catherine de' Medici had hosted the infamous massacre of the French Huguenots and had embarked upon the second of two unpopular series of marriage negotiations with Elizabeth I

<sup>1</sup>R. J. Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 28.

<sup>2</sup>See Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*. Francis II, who succeeded his father in 1559 at the age of fifteen, was deemed old enough to rule under Salic law. A year later, on his death, Catherine became the official regent to the ten-year-old Charles IX.



on behalf of her sons, Henri, duc d'Anjou and François, duc d'Alençon. It is, perhaps, no surprise then that Sidney's Cecropia, one who unleashes escalating terror upon an Arcadian community after her husband's unexpected death and her son's displacement as heir to Basilius's throne, strikingly resembles this widowed "Jezebel" of early modern France.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, not unlike the vilified Catherine de' Medici, Cecropia's emergence from coverture is marked by an escalating tyranny which will not finally be contained until the moment of her death. Even before she takes Pamela and Philoclea captive to force a royal marriage and a place within the Arcadian social and political structure, she is represented as evil personified, as one who thrives on staging terror against those around her. This stylized demonization, I would argue, becomes a means by which to nullify the horrifying legal identity the state of widowhood has created, thereby paving a return to a patriarchally constructed normality.

Under English common law, an early modern woman possessed one of two legal identities. As *feme covert*, a woman's legal identity was subsumed under that of her husband: her right to sue, contract, or bequeath linked to a patriarchal privilege supported by biblical authority.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a wife in early modern England could not, for the most part, be said to possess a legal identity outside that of her husband.<sup>5</sup> The state of widowhood, however, abruptly altered this legal anonymity, tearing aside the veil obscuring the *feme covert*'s identity: revealing in her place a *feme sole* in all her wonderful, frightening potentiality.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as B.J. Sokol and Mary Sokol have noted, "if she [the married woman] became a widow her legal personality revived and she was once more able to hold property and enter into contracts in her own name, and to earn money and keep it."<sup>7</sup> Importantly, widowhood also allowed the widow virtually unlimited control over

<sup>3</sup>In Sidney's "A Letter to Queen Elizabeth" (1579), he refers to Catherine de' Medici as "the Jezebel of our age," *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 48.

<sup>4</sup>See 1 Corinthians 7. Paul decrees that within marriage husband and wife are one.

<sup>5</sup>There were exceptions to this general rule. See Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Families: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Dolan notes that a wife could also emerge from coverture if deserted by her husband or if she committed a criminal act on her own (27). See also Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 30. Erickson notes the incidence of the *feme sole trader*. Married women engaged in business apart from their husbands had been recognized as separate individuals using this legal distinction, which had been in practice since the middle ages.

<sup>6</sup>Theoretically, any single woman in early modern England could be considered *feme sole*. The term, however, was most often applied to widows as opposed to never married women. Single, unmarried women of the minority age typically remained under the control of their fathers. Single, never married women past majority age were legally referred to as spinsters. And as Erickson, *Women and Property*, has noted, women who never married were the least visible of any within early modern England (47).

<sup>7</sup>B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare's Legal Language* (London and New Brunswick, N.J.: The Athlone Press, 2000), 89.

the interests of any minor children born within the marriage, enabling her to make financial and matrimonial decisions on their behalf. It may well be, as Amy Louise Erickson concludes, that the widow “was a loose, free electron in a society of coupled atoms, with all its potential—and all its danger.”<sup>8</sup>

Widowhood in early modern England indeed constituted a confused social category, one which beguiled, tested, and ultimately threatened a patriarchal state struggling to assert its authority in a rapidly changing social, political and religious world. Widowhood by its very nature created a legally androgynous being that eluded the control of a society eager to fix the gender categories which would preserve patriarchal privilege. The abrupt division of the ideological oneness that coverture had fused, widowhood inevitably impacted political, social, and familial order in early modern England. From a biological perspective, widows were women, subject to the same limitations imposed on other members of their sex. Yet, having emerged from coverture, widows likewise possessed a legal identity denied their married counterparts. Widowhood was at once an idealized state, envisioned as a perpetually grieving widow piously mourning the loss of her mate *and* an uncontrolled, indeed, uncontrollable state of being, capable of altering if not destroying political, social, and familial order.<sup>9</sup>

One of the greatest threats Cecropia represents to the Arcadian community is in her heightened role as widowed mother to Amphialus. For arguably herein lies Cecropia's most ambiguous, most contestable function within Arcadia. Susan Frye has argued that the maternal role has historically been an “unstable” one, that the struggle to “imagine a ‘self’” within domestic space ultimately rendered motherhood a confused, anxiety-producing state in early modern England.<sup>10</sup> While a delegated domesticity conceivably served to contain the threat of the feminine, when coupled with maternity it conversely operated as a site of patriarchal exclusion. Many social historians, including David Cressy, have noted, for example, the virtual exclusion of men from the early modern birthing room. Cressy suggests that “from the viewpoint of ministers and physicians, and perhaps too for many husbands, the gathering of women at

<sup>8</sup>Erickson, *Women and Property*, 153. Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare's Legal Language*, have, however, challenged a common critical assumption that an early modern widow's life was an enviable one, since many remarried (91).

<sup>9</sup>Catherine de' Medici and Sidney employ both of these conflicting cultural representations of widowhood to further their respective narrative aims. While Catherine uses the black-draped figure of the idealized widow to lend legitimacy to her prolonged role as regent to her sons, Sidney represents his widow as a Machiavellian mother, one whose emergence from coverture makes possible widespread social and political terror.

<sup>10</sup>Susan Frye, “Maternal Textualities,” in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 229.

childbirth was exclusive, mysterious and potentially unruly.”<sup>11</sup> Not only did such an exclusion conceivably empower midwives, solely entrusted with bringing new life into the world, but perhaps more importantly, it established an exclusive, even propriety link between mother and child.

That the bond between mother and child was both an ideal and a source of concern is evident in lactation literature from the early modern period. On the one hand, behaviorists such as Juan Luis Vives praise those mothers who breast-feed their infants, citing the health benefits accruing from this decidedly maternal function.<sup>12</sup> As Vives notes, “the wise and generous parent of all things that supplied blood for the formation of the fetus in the womb transfers it after birth into the white milk of the breasts, which are like a reservoir of abundant and wholesome nourishment for the sustenance of the child.”<sup>13</sup>

The affective maternal bond nurtured at birth and through the lactation period, however, also created the potential for corruption within the child, according to early modern behaviorists. For while the bond between mother and child was actively cultivated, it could likewise pose a threat as far as perceived ownership of offspring was concerned. Certainly, this was one of the driving forces behind the move to limit the use of wet nurses. Vives suggests that because “it is not uncommon that the wet nurse suckles the child reluctantly and with some feeling of annoyance,” the child suffers at the hands of a figure meant to nurture it.<sup>14</sup> If we apply this same logic to a bad mother, then a close maternal relationship is potentially more damaging than no relationship at all.

The early modern belief in prenatal imprinting sheds further light on a mother’s innate potential to corrupt her child. According to early modern behaviorists and medical authorities, a mother could inflict monstrous deformities upon her unborn child simply by gazing upon an unpleasant site while pregnant. Vives notes that

since the power of the imagination is incalculable in the human body, pregnant mothers should take care not to entertain violent thoughts of anything monstrous, foul, or obscene. Let them avoid any dangerous occasions in which some ugly sight may come before their eyes. And if they are exposed to such dangers, let them think beforehand of what they may encounter so that no

<sup>11</sup>David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55.

<sup>12</sup>Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century Manual* (1523), ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000). See also Robert Cleaver and John Dod, *A Godly Form of Household Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, according to the Direction of God’s Word* (London, 1621); and William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties. Eight Treatises* (London, 1621).

<sup>13</sup>Vives, *Education*, 269.

<sup>14</sup>Vives, *Education*, 269–70.

harm may befall the child in their womb from some unexpected sight.<sup>15</sup>

When Agnes Bowker purportedly gave birth to a cat in January of 1569, the women attending the birth fled in horror, reportedly lest their own wombs be contaminated. Despite a long investigation, ecclesiastical court officials failed to determine the cause of this monstrous event, or whether, indeed, she had given birth to a cat at all. What such an event did, however, was feed the imaginations of a culture only too ready to believe in the potential harm a mother could inflict upon her child, for whatever conclusion was finally drawn in the Bowker case, it necessarily went against the mother. Agnes had surely been guilty of some crime or indiscretion which had led to the deliverance of a virtual monstrosity.<sup>16</sup>

If a mother was viewed as capable of inflicting such unspeakable physical harm on a fetus, her perceived impact on a child's moral development was perhaps even greater. As Vives notes, "much more depends on the mother in the formation of the children's character than one would think. She can make them either very good or very bad."<sup>17</sup> Importantly, the early modern mother was entrusted with the initial education of her child in moral virtues. Vives continues:

At this age, high moral principles and pure Christian ideals must be infused: to despise the vain foolishness of wealth, power, worldly honors, fame, nobility, and beauty; to hold as beautiful and worthy of admiration and imitation and as the only true and substantial good justice, piety, fortitude, temperance, learning, clemency, mercy, and love of humankind.<sup>18</sup>

A mother's responsibility in the instruction of her child would, however, seem fraught with difficulty given an early modern cultural concern over a woman's inherently unstable nature. Despite this concern, a mother was held responsible should her child fail to receive proper moral and spiritual instruction.

Elizabeth Jocelyn's, *The mother's legacy to her unborn child* (1624), expresses one early modern woman's concern over the moral fate of a child she has not yet delivered. In a preface written to her husband shortly before the birth of their child, Elizabeth agonizes over a mother's responsibility to educate a son or a daughter in proper moral virtues:

<sup>15</sup>Vives, *Education*, 268.

<sup>16</sup>Discussed in David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9–27.

<sup>17</sup>Vives, *Education*, 270.

<sup>18</sup>Vives, *Education*, 272.

Mine own dear love, I no sooner conceived an hope that I should be made a mother by thee, but with it entered the consideration of a mother's duty, and shortly after followed the apprehension of danger that might prevent me from executing that care I so exceedingly desired, I mean in religious training our child.<sup>19</sup>

The *Legacy* which follows becomes a means by which she can fulfill her maternal responsibility in light of the dangerous uncertainties of child-birth. That one or both of them may not survive the passage only seems to intensify Elizabeth's perceived obligation to nurture her child properly.

Just how fostering figured into assessments of mothering must be considered as well, for this established practice of parental exchange undoubtedly impacted relationships between mothers and their children in early modern England. Lawrence Stone has argued that the primary reason for fostering, a practice whereby aristocratic and middle-class families exchanged infants and small children during the first few years of life, was the high mortality rate, "which made it folly to invest too much emotional capital in such ephemeral beings.... The longer a child lived, the more likely it was that an affective bond would develop between it and its parents."<sup>20</sup> Sending one's child off to another family during these dangerous years conceivably eased the pain should the infant or young child not survive. While I find Stone's explanation inherently unsatisfying, even unfathomable, denying early modern mothers *and* fathers fundamental, instinctual emotions, it does raise important questions concerning the bond which eventually developed between mother and child.<sup>21</sup> Given the fact that mothers were held responsible for the primary nurturing of their young children, what impact did early separation through fostering have upon their overall assessment as parents? Were they, as Stone seems to suggest, accounted sensible for refusing the emotional trauma routinely associated with childbirth and childhood? Were they deemed judicious for sacrificing their own possible attachments in the best interests of their (hopefully) developing children? Most importantly, to what degree could a mother be held accountable for the moral development of a child in

<sup>19</sup>Elizabeth Jocelyn, *The mother's legacy to her unborn child*, cited in *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 183.

<sup>20</sup>Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 82–83.

<sup>21</sup>Stone's conclusions have, in fact, been challenged by a number of social historians who argue that early modern parents experienced love for their children and grief at their passing. See, for example, Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*; Ann Laurence, "Godly Grief: Individual Responses to Death in Seventeenth-Century Britain," in *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450–1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1984); and Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

another's keeping during the most formative years of life? The issue of fostering proves crucial to a consideration of Cecropia as a mother figure, who fosters out the young Amphialus during the first years of his life following his father's death.

In many respects, Amphialus's stint as foster son to Timotheus seems a fortuitous one, given Cecropia's studied propensity for social and political mischief. According to Helen, queen of Corinth, fostering has made Amphialus the supremely virtuous individual he is. As she notes,

a happy resolution for Amphialus, whose excellent nature was by this means trained on with as good education as any prince's son in the world could have (which otherwise, it is thought, his mother, far unworthy of such a son, would not have given him), the good Timotheus no less loving him than his own son. (1.61)<sup>22</sup>

This decidedly biased assessment of Amphialus's moral development is troubling in many respects. Not only does it ignore the decision (some might call it a sacrifice) that Cecropia makes on her son's behalf, but it presents conflicting claims regarding the ultimate source of virtue. As Helen further notes,

his mother (a woman of a haughty heart, being daughter to the King of Argos) either disdain[ing] or fear[ing] that her son should live under the power of Basilius, sent him to that lord Timotheus (between whom and her dead husband there had passed strait bands of mutual hospitality) to be brought up in company with his son Philoxenus. (1.61)

Cecropia's "haughtiness" aside, one may well argue that this mother acts responsibly in removing her son from a potentially hostile environment to one known for its hospitality. How would the politically irresponsible Basilius have treated Amphialus had the latter remained under his tutelage? If Gynecia views Amphialus as a threat to her daughters' succession claims, how would this nephew's innate excellence have been handled in a politically unstable Arcadia? Helen's assertion that Amphialus's excellence comes not from his mother also proves complicated. On the one hand, the text seems to argue the ultimate importance of nurture to the development of moral integrity. And, indeed, this assessment would be borne out by the fact that it is Cecropia who corrupts Artesia, the young woman she fosters: training her in deceit and entrapment only to execute her as part of a larger political scheme.

<sup>22</sup>All *New Arcadia* citations are from Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (*The New Arcadia*), ed. Victor Skretkovicz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

At the same time, however, Amphialus's excellence clearly seems inborn; he is the biological as well as political progeny of a carefully arranged alliance between the daughter of the king of Argos and a duke who would be king. It's safe to say that such innate nobility will not be found as a distinguishing character trait in any of Sidney's rustics, who like the supremely inept Dametas, exhibit behavior "beyond the degree of ridiculous" (1.18). This becomes even more interesting given the fact that it is Dametas and his equally inept wife Miso, whose "splay-foot have made her accused for a witch" (1.18) who essentially foster the innately perfect Pamela during Basilius's sojourn in the forest, an arrangement thought strange by Kalander. While Pamela survives her questionable fostering with nobility firmly in tact—Gynecia never relinquishes total control over her daughter during this enforced retreat—Artesia does not. Her stay within Cecropia's household is marked by a progressive decline, which ends, not unexpectantly, with her death. That the royally born Cecropia may nonetheless harm what is by nature supremely excellent is clear. Indeed, what ultimately emerges from the text is the idea that innate virtue may readily be corrupted through bad maternal nurturing.

A widowed mother's assumed role as regent could further challenge her at times questionable ability to nurture her minor child properly. This is immediately evident in the case of Catherine de' Medici, who assumed the role of regent during the reigns of two of her three sons. As official and unofficial regent to the ten-year-old Charles IX and later, unofficially, to the twenty-four-year-old, Henri III, Catherine literally ruled France, dictating governmental policy during much of the politically contentious sixteenth century. While Catherine's overall political acumen remains open to critical debate, what is certain is that the infamous Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day took place during her tenure as unofficial regent to the twenty-two-year-old Charles.

The event was, in many respects, as spectacular as it was sudden. Just before dawn on 24 August 1572 forces loyal to Catherine began killing Protestants in town for the wedding of her daughter Marguerite de Valois and the Protestant Henri de Navarre. The Massacre, which lasted almost a week and spilled well beyond Paris's boundaries, ultimately claimed an estimated 5,000 lives. Whether Catherine personally ordered the slaughter of thousands of French Huguenots is perhaps less important to this discussion than her purported penchant for political ruthlessness. Accounts which emerged from this postnuptial event would take on mythic proportions. That Catherine never publicly condemned the massacre and, in fact, as R. J. Knecht notes, "seems to have thoroughly enjoyed its results,"<sup>23</sup> merely fueled suspicions about her capacity for cruelty. Not only was she

<sup>23</sup>Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*, 162.



declared "a disciple of Machiavelli," one who would "commit all necessary cruelties in a single blow,"<sup>24</sup> but her name would subsequently be associated with murder, poisoning, and political intrigue. Catherine's contested regency during the politically unstable years following her husband's death, in fact, demonstrates well how conflicted the roles as widow and mother were in the early modern period.

At the time of his father's death, Amphialus would not have been of legal age and thus a protector would have been appointed to address his needs and responsibilities. And as guardian to the designated heir of Basilius, who at the time of his brother's death is yet unmarried and childless, Amphialus's guardian would have been enormously important. That the widowed Cecropia steps forward to serve her minor son's interests would not have been unusual in the early modern period. Widows were frequently appointed as executrixes and/or protectors for their minor children's estates until they reached the age of majority. As well as her own one-third portion, Lady Fitzhugh was to be warden of the rest of her husband's lands, "during the minority of Richard, his son and heir."<sup>25</sup> Joel T. Rosenthal observes that as "guardian of minor child-heirs, the widow's temporary portion of her late husband's estates often was even healthier than what she would realize for herself from her dower share."<sup>26</sup> As was the case with Catherine de' Medici, Cecropia's role as mother to one earmarked to be king proves chilling to an increasingly unstable political state long disturbed by her political ambition. It is bad enough that had her husband outlived Basilius, Cecropia would have been Arcadia's queen. If, however, the aging king had failed to produce heirs after her husband's death, Cecropia would, like the reviled Catherine de' Medici, have reigned in her son's stead. A chilling thought, indeed.

Yet, perhaps Cecropia's greatest present threat as widow and protector remains in her unyielding, increasingly criminal role as would-be political matchmaker on behalf of her son and one of the Arcadian princesses. Not only would such a marriage secure her son's political future, but, as it did for Catherine de' Medici, it would guarantee Cecropia a place in Arcadia's political structure as well. One need only examine the strife surrounding Catherine's repeated attempts to marry either of her sons to an aging Elizabeth I to understand how contentious royal marital negotiations of the early modern period could be. Although Elizabeth was strongly encouraged to wed to end succession uncertainties, a marriage to

<sup>24</sup>Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*, 164.

<sup>25</sup>Cited in Joel T. Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Widows in Fifteenth Century England," in *Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, ed. Barbara J. Harris and Jo Ann McNamara (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 42.

<sup>26</sup>Rosenthal, "Aristocratic Widows," 42.



any son of the notorious Catherine de' Medici ultimately proved untenable to an England horrified by this French widow's purported appetite for political violence. John Stubbs's inflammatory 1579 pamphlet, *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf whereinto England is like to be swallowed*, whose publication cost Stubbs his right hand, gauges at least one early modern response to the horrendous prospect of a Medici alliance. Such an alliance would result, Stubbs suggests, in Elizabeth being "led blindfold as a poor lamb to the slaughter."<sup>27</sup>

That Catherine would use her children as virtual pawns in political marriage schemes is perhaps not unusual given the period's propensity for political matchmaking. At the same time, however, the cataclysmic lengths to which she purportedly went to secure alliances favorable to France marked this widow as dangerous to English national interests. Marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Catherine's sons began in earnest in 1572. When her eldest son, Henri, duc d'Anjou, refused to consider a match, Catherine attempted to arrange a marriage between Elizabeth, who was nearly forty and her younger son, François, duc d'Alençon, who was only sixteen. An even more horrendous outcome of Catherine's matchmaking would occur only a few months later. To secure an alliance between her daughter, Marguerite de Valois and Henri de Navarre, Catherine purportedly poisoned Navarre's mother, Jeanne d'Albret. Jeanne, who had long opposed the match, died suddenly after reluctantly agreeing to the marriage. Reports which surfaced after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day linked Catherine to the death. Although an autopsy cited tuberculosis and a breast abscess as the cause, Jeanne's death would be popularly attributed to poisoned gloves supplied by Catherine's Florentine perfumier.<sup>28</sup>

Sidney's Cecropia likewise attempts to force marriage negotiations between Amphialus and both Philoclea and Pamela to secure a favorable position for herself within the Arcadian political structure. When the abduction fails to convince the two princesses to yield to Cecropia's matrimonial scheme, this Machiavellian widow systematically employs increasingly harsh inducements to achieve her goal. When gentle coercion fails to break down either Philoclea or Pamela's resistance, Cecropia commits bizarre acts of physical and psychological terrorism against those who have stymied her political plans. Failing to "prevail with girls" (3.419), Cecropia systematically removes "servants and service" (3.419) from her prisoners, frightening them with horrible noises in the night and other tactics, in an effort to convince at least one of the girls to agree to her matrimonial

<sup>27</sup>John Stubbs, *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf whereinto England is like to be swallowed* (1579), cited in Carole Levin, "The Heart and Stomach of a King": *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 61.

<sup>28</sup>See Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*, 151.

plan. When none of this works, Cecropia violently attacks first Philoclea, then Pamela with words, and when that fails to move, with a rod:

She [Cecropia], resolving all extremities rather than fail of conquest, pursued on her rugged way, letting no day pass without new and new perplexing the poor ladies' minds and troubling their bodies: and still swelling the more she was stopped, and growing hot with her own doings, at length abominable rage carried her to absolute tyrannies; so that taking with her certain old women (of wicked dispositions, and apt for envy's sake to be cruel to youth and beauty) with a countenance empoisoned with malice, flew to the sweet Philoclea, as if so many kites should come about a white dove; and matching violent gestures with mischievous threatenings, she having a rod in her hand...fell to scourge that most beautiful body. (3.419–20)

The high point of her cruelty comes when she ritually executes Artesia. Disguising her as Pamela in a "crimson velvet" (3.425) gown, Cecropia parades the unfortunate Artesia past Zelmane and Philoclea, hoping finally to break them with this unspeakable image of terror. This horrendous episode is followed by yet another, where Zelmane is made to witness his beloved's apparently severed head resting in a blood-coated basin. The visual impact is devastating: "The horribleness of the mischief was such, as Pyrocles could not at first believe his own senses, but bent his woeful eyes to discern it better; where too well he might see it was Philoclea's self, having no veil but beauty over the face" (3.431). Only Amphialus's last minute intervention prevents the secret poisoning Cecropia plans "thinking since they [the princesses] were not to be won, her son's love would no otherwise be mitigated" (3.440). In many respects, the increasingly vicious measures this widow undertakes to wrest back the crown perceivably stolen from her represents the quintessence of a stylized Medici cruelty.

Cecropia's role as widow is, in many respects, exacerbated by her foreign status. Indeed, from the moment she first enters Arcadia, until the terrifying moments before her fall, Sidney's Cecropia faces increasingly critical, public scrutiny. Although she is initially received as a princess, her husband's death, followed by the unexpected marriage of Basilius and the births of Pamela and Philoclea reveals the growing contempt of the Arcadians for the now politically useless Cecropia. As she reflects:

And though I had been a saint I could not choose finding the change this change in fortune bred unto me—for now from the multitude of followers, silence grew to be at my gate, and absence in my presence; the guess of my mind could prevail more before than, now, many of my earnest requests; and thou, my dear son,

by the fickle multitude, no more than an ordinary person born of the mud of the people, regarded. (3.319)

As did the historical Catherine de' Medici, this foreign princess ends up in a suddenly xenophobic land as part of a political arrangement that too rapidly falls apart. Although Cecropia argues that her arrival was a welcome one, "their eyes admired my majesty; and happy was he or she on whom I would suffer the beams thereof to fall" (3.318), it becomes readily apparent that her presence is more tolerated than embraced. While it is true that in the beginning her favor is fastidiously courted, her husband's death and her son's displacement as heir decimate Cecropia's cultural net worth. She becomes, in short, non-negotiable foreign tender.

In his study of the dynastic union, Pierre Bourdieu has argued that "it treats the woman as a political instrument, a sort of pledge or liquid asset, capable of earning symbolic profits."<sup>29</sup> This is readily apparent in the case of Catherine de' Medici, whose carefully negotiated marriage promised important political capital to a France struggling with Spanish domination. Indeed, a marital alliance between Catherine, the niece of Pope Clement VII, and Henri, the second son of Francis I, appeared an advantageous union in light of repeated Spanish encroachments on French interests. The Pope's death less than a year later, however, drained Catherine of her symbolic worth. Without her papal connections, she became little more than the obscure daughter of a suddenly insignificant Medici. As her father-in-law, Francis I, reportedly concluded, "the girl has been given to me stark naked."<sup>30</sup>

Worse yet, her family connections now actually worked against her, for Catherine subsequently came to represent the worst that Florence had to offer, including an association with Machiavelli and a familiarity with poison. When the Dauphin, François died unexpectedly in 1536 after drinking a glass of ice cold water following a tennis match, rumors circulated that he had been poisoned and that both Henri and Catherine were involved. That her husband reviled her, openly preferring his mistress Diane Poitiers, and that she failed to bear children during the first tumultuous years of their marriage did little to endear this Florentine nobody to a France no longer in need of her.<sup>31</sup>

Cecropia's symbolic capital is likewise from the beginning measured in terms of what she can bring to Arcadia. For the Arcadians, her chief value lies in her status as daughter of the king of Argos, an important royal

<sup>29</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 54.

<sup>30</sup>Cited in Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*, 28.

<sup>31</sup>See Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici*, 30. While Catherine ultimately bore Henri eleven children, seven of whom survived to adulthood, it was not until she took medicines prescribed by French physicians that she conceived.

affiliation given the fact that her proposed husband is brother and heir apparent to an aging bachelor king. As Cecropia notes of her late husband, "so that he, holding place and estimation as heir of Arcadia, obtained me of my father, the king of Argos" (3.318). With her husband's unexpected death and Amphialus's equally unanticipated displacement, Cecropia's symbolic worth within the Arcadian community virtually dies as well. This loss of status is evident when, at Basilius's postnuptial feasts, a much younger Gynecia visibly displaces Cecropia. As she notes, "this beast (whom I can never name with patience) falsely and foolishly married this Gynecia, then a young girl, and brought her to sit above me in all feasts—to turn her shoulder to me-ward in all our solemnities" (3.318). Cecropia has been demoted to a virtual nonentity.

Not only is her continued presence a liability to a state no longer in need of this foreign princess to ensure its future, but Cecropia begins to exhibit behavior decidedly antithetical to Arcadian social and political well being. This is immediately evident in her unnatural affinity for wild beasts, which she occasionally loosens for the apparent purpose of inciting communal panic. That the beasts are not native to Arcadia is clear. As Basilius notes, "the like had never been seen" (1.117) in these pastoral woods, at least not prior to Cecropia's arrival. Indeed, the savagery of these strange beasts seems to mirror that of Cecropia herself, a being (ill) bred to do whatever it takes to survive in a world hostile to her continued presence.

Thus, when her husband unexpectedly dies, quashing her political aspirations, she looks to her son, the yet proclaimed heir of Basilius to realize her dreams of monarchy. As she repeatedly reminds Amphialus, "yet did not thy orphanage or my widowhood deprive us of the delightful prospect which the hill of honour doth yield, while expectation of thy succession did bind dependencies unto us" (3.318). Gynecia, as mother of the heir apparent, expresses deep distrust of her sister-in-law's motives. Although Basilius initially dismisses the threat Cecropia represents, Gynecia instinctively recognizes the danger this widow poses to the lawful heir of the Arcadian throne. Indeed, Gynecia "had heard much of the devilish wickedness of her heart, and that, particularly, she did her best to bring up her son Amphialus, being brother's son to Basilius; to aspire to the crown as next heir male after Basilius" (1.117). This displaced widow, in short, comes to threaten the patrilineal order.

If Cecropia is thus viewed with suspicion at the time of her marriage, she becomes openly reviled following her emergence from coverture. Amphialus's momentary stint as designated heir to the childless Basilius does little to endear Cecropia to the Arcadians. If anything, she becomes even more suspect with the births of Pamela and Philoclea, when, in other words, the last excuse for her continued presence in Arcadia is finally removed. While there can be little doubt that Cecropia acts criminally

when she kidnaps Pamela and Philoclea and wages terrorism against the Arcadian state, it is ultimately her unveiled legal identity that goes on trial. For as Lynne Dickson observes, “Cecropia [is] a nightmarish image of feminine power.”<sup>32</sup> Michael McCanles has noted, “wrapped in her smug evil, she becomes at once threateningly sinister and oddly petty.”<sup>33</sup> Martin Raitière declares her “unrelievedly wicked,”<sup>34</sup> one who could well engage in psychological terrorism in the name of personal and political gain. As Katherine Roberts concludes, “Cecropia is responsible for all of the major disruptions in Arcadia.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, even before Cecropia abducts Pamela and Philoclea and wages war against the Arcadian state, the process of demonization is complete. This “unrelievedly wicked” widow has been reduced to one whose manufactured evil negates any legal privilege her unveiled status enables. Once exposed in all its terrifying magnificence, Cecropia’s unveiled identity is swiftly demonized, before it is finally erased.

Why Sidney would choose to represent Machiavellian villainy in the guise of a widowed mother is in some respects difficult to understand. Although widowhood and motherhood in general proved easy targets for misogynist attacks in early modern England, Sidney in many ways seems an unlikely participant in the practice. As a favorite son from a family of notable women, Sidney possessed a kind of profeminism unusual in the early modern period. And, indeed, there are many notable women in the *New Arcadia* representing virtually all stages in a woman’s life, including Parthenia, Pamela, Philoclea, and Helen. Even the less than maternal Gynecia with all her behavioral flaws emerges as a strong woman, one whose inherent virtues ultimately overcome her momentary indiscretions. Cecropia, however, remains a dark and forbidding figure throughout the text, one whose sole narrative purpose seems to test the resolve of other, more virtuous members of the larger Arcadian community.

While it’s tempting to speculate how Cecropia’s villainy would have been represented as a maid or a wife (or a man, for that matter), such speculation in some respects seems superfluous given the political climate at the time that Sidney was writing the *Arcadia*.<sup>36</sup> Marriage negotiations

<sup>32</sup>Lynne Dickson, “Sidney’s Grotesque Muse: Fictional Excess and the Feminine in the Arcadias,” *Renaissance Papers* (1992): 50.

<sup>33</sup>Michael McCanles, *The Text of Sidney’s Arcadian World* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), 76.

<sup>34</sup>Martin N. Raitière, *Faire Bitts: Sir Philip Sidney and Renaissance Political Theory* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1984), 32.

<sup>35</sup>Katherine J. Roberts, *Faire Ladies: Sir Philip Sidney’s Female Characters* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 88.

<sup>36</sup>While Sidney would not begin his revisions of the *Old Arcadia* until sometime between 1582 and 1584, at which time he added the Cecropia character to the text, her presence is arguably already visible in his representation of Catherine de’ Medici in *A Letter to Queen Elizabeth*.

between Elizabeth and Alençon were well under way. Moreover, the Machiavellian machinations of Catherine de' Medici had long been known to Sidney. He was just eighteen and on his first continental tour in Paris when the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre occurred. Only through the fortuitous intervention of Protestant friends was Sidney able to flee the carnage.<sup>37</sup>

In *A Letter Written by Sir Philip Sidney to Queen Elizabeth Touching Her Marriage with Monsieur* (1579), Sidney argues forcefully against the proposed match between Alençon and the middle-aged Elizabeth I, citing the dangers that it would represent to a yet struggling English Protestant state. The English people, Sidney argues,

how their hearts will be galled, if not aliened, when they shall see you take to husband a Frenchman, and a Papist, in whom, howsoever fine wits may find further dangers or painted excuses, the very common people will know this: that he is the son of a Jezebel of our age.<sup>38</sup>

Jezebel was, of course, the wicked wife of Ahab, king of Israel, who nurtured a long line of corrupt rulers even after her husband's death. Indeed, as a widow, she merely intensified the evil begun as a wife, passing along her corruption to her sons before she was finally killed through divine intervention. Even her end seems strangely familiar; like Cecropia, she fell to her death.<sup>39</sup> That Sidney's Cecropia is intended to represent the infamous Catherine de' Medici seems clear. That widowhood serves as a most appropriate vehicle through which to condemn this Machiavellian mother becomes obvious as well.

In early modern England, the erasure of threatening widow identity was most often accomplished through remarriage or death. As problematic as remarriage proved, it did serve to contain the threat this "loose electron" induced, for the widow merely re-entered another state of coverture.<sup>40</sup> And death often solved as many problems as it created, provided it occurred in a timely fashion. In the case of Catherine de' Medici, it did not happen soon enough. This vilified widow of early modern France finally died in 1589, three days after suddenly becoming ill. An autopsy revealed she died of "rotten lungs, a blood-soaked brain, and an

<sup>37</sup>For a detailed discussion of Sidney's first continental tour, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney, Courtier Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup>Sir Philip Sidney, *A Letter Written by Sir Philip Sidney to Queen Elizabeth, Touching her Marriage with Monsieur*, *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 48.

<sup>39</sup>See 2 Kings 9:30.

<sup>40</sup>Numerous early modern conduct manuals advised against widow remarriage. See, for example, Juan Luis Vives's *Education of a Christian Woman* and *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights* (London: 1632).

abscess in her left side,” visible signs, her critics might argue, of a corruptness nurtured through unauthorized power.<sup>41</sup> After the French Revolution, her body, which had been entombed at Saint-Denis, was removed from this traditional resting place of kings and queens and thrown into a mass grave.<sup>42</sup> In what was perhaps the final gesture of erasure, French revolutionaries succeeded in wiping away the last vestiges of one whose unveiled identity had proven such a source of social and political turmoil.

As for Cecropia, after her coup attempt fails, as indeed it must, this demonized widow and mother falls ignominiously from a rooftop to her death. While order is not immediately restored to the Arcadian world—the reunited royal family must still slosh through several prolonged bouts of betrayal and intrigue before they achieve a measure of negotiated harmony—Cecropia’s death, followed closely by the removal of Amphialus—does eliminate the threat of competing claims to Arcadian patrilineage. In the end, Pamela and Philoclea are confirmed as rightful heirs to Basilius’s estate as the vilified widow Cecropia is literally erased from the text.

<sup>41</sup>Knecht, *Catherine de’ Medici*, 268.

<sup>42</sup>Knecht, *Catherine de’ Medici*, 269. Catherine de’ Medici’s entombment at Saint-Denis came only after a twenty-one year delay. When she died in 1589 in Blois, inadequate embalming spices required a quick burial in an unmarked grave. The body was later moved to the Valois rotunda at Saint-Denis.



## “Women of the Wild Geese”: Irish Women, Exile, and Identity in Spain, 1596–1670

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IRELAND IN THE SIXTEENTH and seventeenth centuries was subject to major invasion and settlement. Tudor foreign policy towards Ireland attempted to introduce an English model of government and, during the reign of Elizabeth I, attempts were made to introduce the Protestant religion. During the sixteenth century both England and Ireland were the regular focus of European Catholic plots. This led the Tudor monarchs to invade Ireland with a double agenda: to prevent European invasion, and to subdue a country over which it had always been difficult to exercise any influence. Henry VIII invaded Scotland and France in the 1540s, and the failure of these interventions precipitated Scottish and French intervention in Ireland. The English monarchy and Scottish officials then began to enter Ireland and impose colonial government and settlement. Officials operated increasingly aggressive policies with English and Scottish Presbyterian officials moving into positions of judicial and local power. These officials were quick to cite Irish women as well as men as rebellious and influential in opposing English rule.<sup>1</sup> Irish Women were involved in widespread activities relating to rebellion, including diplomacy, spying, and raising troops and munitions against the English and, therefore, became a focus of criticism, blame, and expulsion from Ireland at a point in time when land was increasingly given over to English and Scottish settlers. Although the Irish successfully rejected a state-imposed religion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this did not prevent the wholesale expulsion of chieftains and their families after the involvement in open rebellion against the settlers.<sup>2</sup> After the final defeat and surrender at the battle of Kinsale and the proclamation of James I as king in Dublin in

<sup>1</sup>The Calendars of State Papers of Ireland contain numerous accounts of rebellious Irish women singled out for special mention. The response appears to be more fevered than any accounts in relation to Scottish women in the same period. Hans Claude Hamilton, Ernest Atkinson and Robert Pentland, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth: preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record office* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1914).

<sup>2</sup>This began in 1569 with the Ormond rebellion and intensified during subsequent rebellions, including the battle of Kinsale, when the Spanish army intervened during 1601 in support of the Irish.



1603 the downfall of the Irish nobility was clear. The long-term link with Spain offered a safe haven for many, in particular those committed to rebellion against the English.

This paper will examine the close relationship between the Irish emigrants and the Spanish communities where they settled, with particular attention to the “Flight of the Earls” to Spain after 1607. Migration studies are now a well-established part of history and social sciences.<sup>3</sup> For some years researchers have been examining Irish migration to English-speaking countries, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Less attention has been devoted, however, to an earlier migration: one to Europe between the Reformation and the French Revolution. The early seventeenth century, for example, saw the surviving members of the septs, or clans, of those Irish chieftains at war with the English colonizing forces, fleeing to several regions throughout Spain. Once in Spain they established permanent settlements. The experience of the Irish in Spain was often a positive one, with the Irish making a significant and sustained contribution to the Spanish military, and the establishment of many Irish schools, colleges, and universities. This exchange of people, ideas, and resources marked Ireland’s historical experience and had an important impact on Europe during the early modern period. The continental character of Irish migration patterns persisted until events during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries oriented Irish migrants towards English-speaking countries.

Despite its importance early modern migration from Ireland to Europe has been neglected by historians, with the result that Irish historical studies have been greatly impoverished in this period. It is important to place this migration center stage, since it linked Ireland to continental centers of intellectual, social, and economic change. Often Ireland’s historical experience has been seen in isolation, resulting in a narrow and externalized British picture of change in Ireland. Many of the sources relating to Irish experiences have been underused or not quantified in any way. Many remain in continental archives, neglected by Britain-based scholars. By contrast North American studies are better developed and focus upon broad notions of ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>See Jim MacLaughlin, ed., *Location and Dislocation in contemporary Irish society: emigration and Irish identities* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1914* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1991).

<sup>4</sup>See Binley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954); David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801–1921* (Dublin: Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>See Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986). Knobel makes the point that there is a need to define Irish identity through the perceptions of the Irish rather than a purely externalized view by the native population of the newcomers.

The formation of the early modern state was a complex process, which involved significant changes in how people were governed, how they practised their religion and how they behaved. By the 1520s the drive for religious reform had produced the spread of Protestantism throughout much of Europe, and by the 1540s the Catholic religion was committed to radical change. The advent of religious diversity put severe pressure on emerging early modern monarchies. In addition, religious identity was becoming a political question. The Irish were recognized by the Spanish as upholders of the true religion: Catholicism. Contemporary documents repeatedly cite the Irish as particular friends, due to their support of the Catholic religion, but also because of their bravery in the face of cruel treatment and persecution by the English.<sup>6</sup> Because of this persecution and oppression the Spanish monarchy offered asylum to the Irish. However, the Spanish also expected that the Irish would contribute a variety of services which would benefit the Spanish nation.

The literary metaphor, “Wild Geese” has been popularly associated with pre-nineteenth century refugees, particularly those who followed Colonel Patrick Sarsfield to France in 1691. The general assumption was that most people leaving Ireland before 1800 were involuntary exiles, compelled by politically inspired circumstances to seek employment, primarily in the military, in Catholic Europe. However, this is a narrow focus, which has omitted the variety of professions undertaken by the Irish, particularly the women, and assumes that all migrants were victims of circumstances beyond their control.

From 1500 to 1691 the majority of emigrants were Catholics, impelled to leave Ireland because of their political and religious loyalties. Chieftain families and septs emigrated to France, Spain, Portugal and Austria at the close of the sixteenth century. As a diaspora people the Irish made significant contributions to the communities they settled in. Records reveal a demonstrable Irish influence on those countries they moved into. Equally important is the sense of belonging expressed in these records. I first need to qualify why I chose Spain as my area of study, however.

There has been a considerable amount of scholarship produced on the Irish in France and in the Low Countries, particularly Belgium. New studies have highlighted the experiences of the Irish in Barbados, but little exists on the Irish in Spain.<sup>7</sup> The Irish appear to have been particularly successful in Spain in terms of making money, becoming privileged members of the military, establishing colleges, and becoming civic leaders.<sup>8</sup> In fact it would appear that the Irish were arch-assimilationists. During the

<sup>6</sup>Estado 984, Archivo General, Simancas (hereafter cited as AGS).

<sup>7</sup>For the Irish in Barbados see Sean O’Callaghan, *To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland* (Dingle: Braddon, 2000).

<sup>8</sup>The first Irish college was established at the University at Alcala de Henares in 1590.

early modern period large numbers of Irish soldiers and diplomats helped to shape the success of Spain as a European nation. On a small scale the town of Salamanca had an Irish mayor within ten years of Irish settlement in and around the town. The dedication stone laid in the castle at Simancas was dedicated to Hugh O'Donnell, who was assisted in 1602 by the military forces of Philip III when O'Donnell attempted to eject the English from Ireland during the battle of Kinsale.<sup>9</sup> When the vanquished O'Donnells left Ireland for Spain they joined the Spanish army. This led to a lengthy tradition of all-Irish units in the Spanish military.

So distinguished were the Irish regiments that Irish commanders were placed over Spanish troops, thereby exerting a widespread influence over the Spanish army. Irish soldiers in the armies of Spain appear to have placed their loyalty towards one another and their units above anything else. Records show that the officers were often sept leaders who pledged their allegiance to the king of Spain.<sup>10</sup> Early modern historians have often perpetuated the notion that the Irish as well as the Scottish acted as mercenaries for foreign powers, but this is not true of the Irish in Spain.<sup>11</sup> The Irish appear to have taken a rather dim view of mercenaries, and granted primary allegiance to Spain and the Spanish king. As thanks and acknowledgement of their dedication and contribution to Spain, Philip III granted equal citizenship to the Irish in 1608, expressed in the following terms:

The Irish established in these dominions shall keep and maintain the privileges which they have, by which they are made equal to native Spaniards; and that the formalities of the oath, to which all other nations have been forced to submit, shall not be exacted from the Irish, seeing that by the mere fact of their settling in Spain the Irish are accounted Spaniards and enjoy the same rights.<sup>12</sup>

Within the army the Irish regiments continued to use the Irish language, and although all written orders were issued in Spanish, the soldiers and their families continued to speak Irish among themselves. This helped to facilitate cultural continuity and the Irish language was preserved throughout the period. Letters, songs, poetry, and other records and documents tend to be in Irish, or in a hybrid of Irish and Spanish, revealing the use of both languages. This is significant as the incoming English had

<sup>9</sup>For a study of the battle of Kinsale which gives an account from the Irish and the Spanish sides against the English see John J. Silke, *Kinsale: The Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars* (1970, repr. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>Estado 887, AGS includes official recognition and thanks to the septs of O'Donnell, O'Neill and Fitzgerald for their service to the Spanish army.

<sup>11</sup>For an account of Irish rebels hiring Scottish mercenaries to fight the English see the preface in Cyril Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (1950, repr. London: Constable, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>Resolution adopted by the Spanish Council of State, granted by Philip III in 1608.

attempted to ban and proscribe the Irish language in Ireland, although the ban had limited success. Government sources and records from the seventeenth century onwards in Ireland tended to be recorded in English, although rural local records continued to be recorded in Irish and then translated.

In Spain there was no appearance of hostility towards the use of the Irish language within communities; in fact, there would appear to be a take up of Irish words and terms, music, and songs. Records show that Irish spelling and pronunciation of family names continued, whilst first names were altered to their Spanish form. Though records of the experiences of male emigrants have been subjected to scholarly analysis, the experience of women has been neglected. Exceptions to this are the early studies produced by Micheline Kearney Walsh and Jerrold Casway. Walsh produced a seminal work on Irish women emigres in 1961, which was vital in pinpointing the gender dynamic within Irish migration to Spain.<sup>13</sup> Casway focussed upon the experiences of Rosa O'Dogherty who migrated to Spain in 1607 and experienced the generosity of the Spanish government.<sup>14</sup> Both Walsh and Casway produced some fruitful work as they both pointed to the pensions and other generous benefits Irish women enjoyed from the Spanish monarchy and governments. However, Walsh and Casway stop short of problematizing how and why these women worked in the ways they did.

The sex ratios of both genders are difficult to calculate due to the lack of consistent inventories. The evidence that does exist indicates higher proportions of women accompanied their septs abroad when exiles had some input into the emigrating decision. Data covering refugees living in Valladolid in northwest Spain who were receiving allowances in 1610 indicates that nearly eight hundred were receiving pensions from the Spanish crown.<sup>15</sup> A similar number appear from the records in and around La Coruna in the north of Spain.<sup>16</sup> These numbers do not include those who did not apply or qualify for financial support.

The opportunities and professions open or created by these migrants appear to be varied. Scholarship of Irish migration to Spain has traditionally focussed upon the military and ecclesiastical populations; however, the work of women would appear to be highly significant in a number of areas. Examination reveals the numerous and varied creative employments undertaken by Irish men and women. In addition to the well documented

<sup>13</sup>Micheline K. Walsh, "Some Notes Towards a History of the Women of the Wild Geese," *Irish Sword*, vol. 5 (Dublin: Military History Society of Ireland, 1961), 98–106, 133–45.

<sup>14</sup>Jerrold Casway, "Rosa O'Dogherty: A Gaelic Woman," *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, vol. 10 (Armagh, Ireland: Armagh Diocesan Historical Society, 1980), 40–63.

<sup>15</sup>Estado 984, AGS.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

military profession there appears to have been educational and training opportunities in Catholic Europe, more plentiful than in Ireland and England. A number of Irish women entered convents, though often as Dominican lay nuns rather than full officiates. Such lay nuns were holders of property and money and left wills which often contained considerable wealth or substantial properties.<sup>17</sup> On taking holy orders, nuns swore not to own anything, hence the lay nuns appear to have had considerable power. Manuscripts in the Spanish archives show that the Dominican convent played a more important role in the Irish community than the Franciscan convent.<sup>18</sup> Many of the Irish Dominicans figure as important links between the Irish community and the court: they appeared as witnesses and as receivers of powers of attorney in many of the notarial documents.<sup>19</sup> This was the case with the regions of Coruna and Castille-Leon.

A number of specific case studies will be focussed upon in order to highlight the experiences of a number of women of the wild geese. During the "Flight of the Earls" in 1607, Nuala O'Donnell, older sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, exerted her influence and independence by testing her fortunes abroad. Estranged from her husband, Nuala believed her prospects were better as a political refugee in Catholic Europe, than under surveillance in colonized Ireland. Nuala's sister-in-law, Bridget Fitzgerald, did not accompany the rest of the Tyrconnell sept. Nuala built up ties with the Irish in northwest Spain and remained in Spain, supporting herself and her daughter. Nuala was the sister of Red Hugh O'Donnell, who was honored by the Spanish for his bravery during the battle of Kinsale. Nuala took the decision to leave her husband, Niall Garve, and moved from Rome to Flanders, directly against the wishes of the King of Spain.<sup>20</sup> Nuala went against her husband and the king of her adopted country. This was not typical of the behavior of the Irish in Spain who normally displayed exceptional loyalty to the monarchy. However, she continued to receive payment in the form of a pension for her work in carrying documents and information back and forth during her travels.<sup>21</sup>

Catherine Magennis, the third wife of the earl of Tyrone, actually did not wish to emigrate to Spain and initially refused to go with her husband.<sup>22</sup> Eventually she agreed. After his death in 1616, Catherine's widow share of his pension was officially reconfirmed (although in practice it was often paid in arrears). She later moved to Naples, where she died in 1619. Financial support from Spain came in the form of pensions, *entretenidos*,

<sup>17</sup>Estado 887, AGS.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>See Walsh, *Wild Geese*, 137.

<sup>21</sup>Estado 984, AGS.

<sup>22</sup>CSP Ireland, 1606–8, 270.

allowances, *ventajas* or grants-in-aid, *ayuda da costas*. The terms pension and pensioner in the Spanish records are *entrettenidos*, which was a term that represented an award for services carried out for the king, and brought with it an obligation to serve. Thus, during the Armada of 1588, many Irish served without pay in the hope that they would later be given an *entrettenido* for their past services. Irish women who were awarded very generous pensions by the Spanish crown were refugees who had suffered losses from the wars and persecutions in Ireland. These pensions had strings attached. Sometimes the *entrettenido* worked as a contract between the woman and the Spanish crown and authorities. Pensions became a way of official payment for spying and intelligence work.

One of the earliest female spies in the early modern period was “Imperia Romana.” This is the only name ever used and recorded with reference to this woman. She was known to English authorities, although she appears to have remained untouchable. In a letter from John Johnson to Lord Burghley in 1581, Johnson details the actions of “an Irish woman who professes to be Spanish, who has travelled from Spain to England with the Spanish Ambassador, with the protection of the King of Spain. She carries documents from the King and stays for a good length of time in the Spanish Ambassadors house.”<sup>23</sup> The master of the ship she sailed on was questioned and reported that she travelled with money and lots of packets of letters. She was also said by Johnson to be a “fit instrument for such purpose (spying), insomuch as she can speak as good Spanish as if she had been born in Spain, good Irish and English.”<sup>24</sup> What made her behavior even more suspicious was that she conveyed packets to other Spaniards in and out of town. She remained with the Spanish ambassador, in a position of diplomatic immunity, so that the English, paranoid at this time about a Spanish invasion, constantly attempted to monitor her covert activities. The ambassador later requested her safe passage, which technically had to be granted, further provoking outrage amongst Elizabeth’s ministers and spymasters. There are a number of comments about the clearly perceived alliances between Ireland and Spain, but there appears to be nothing that English officials could do about a person under Ambassadorial protection.<sup>25</sup> Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham continued to comment upon Imperia Romana, but ultimately were not able to arrest her. Female spying was already established by 1581, with women able to travel through Europe with protection.

Records held in the Spanish archives reveal that by December 1610, a total of 769 Irish refugees were receiving allowances in the regions of Coruna, Santiago, and Valladolid. The figures provided in the manuscripts

<sup>23</sup>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, vol. 15, 1581, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>CSP, Foreign 1581, 13.

detail the amounts paid out in monthly intervals.<sup>26</sup> Notes in the orders cite that the women had been constant in their service to Spain. Another interesting case study concerns an Irish woman who managed to assimilate herself and her family into the highest ranks of Spanish society. Marianna McCarthy and her husband Thadeo O'Mouroghu departed from Cork for Portugal in 1622, together with their baby son, Domingo. Impoverished they went to Madrid where they were granted a royal audience. The young Spanish queen, grieving over the loss of her first child, was moved by the sight of the couple's baby, and they agreed upon the course of taking the child into the royal household to be raised at court, with the parents being allowed grace and favor apartments. This was acceptable to Irish families due to the widespread fosterage system practiced. Similar systems of fosterage existed in Spain and Ireland.<sup>27</sup> Fosterage was a long established child-rearing practice of the Celts, whereby a child was formally placed in the household of another sept. This was further buttressed by Brehon Law. Brehon law existed in Ireland from the seventh to the seventeenth century, when the English legal traditions began to be introduced. This was a distinctive legal tradition bearing no relation to English, Scottish or Welsh legal traditions. Women appear to have had high status compared to women in other European countries. The laws defining female inheritance were more generous than other European states. Women were judges, traders, musicians, they had the right to bear arms, form contracts and engage in professions such as medicine. Women were also often scholars, linguists, and translators.

In Spain the Irish continued these traditions, albeit with some constraints. In Spain Irish women continued to act as physicians but within their own communities. They continued fosterage and the extended kin system which had flourished in Ireland. A Celtic extended family included everyone in a sept who could trace their descendant from a common ancestor. Since women in Irish Brehon society could choose the person whom they wished to breed with, and because they often took multiple sexual partners to increase the chances of procreation, no man could be certain a child was his. Under Brehon law children did not know the identity of their father until their mother named him on her death bed. This lack of the legal notions of legitimacy and primogeniture horrified the incoming English colonials who felt this lack of male power over women to be at the heart of Irish barbarity.<sup>28</sup> However, intermarriage between the Irish and

<sup>26</sup>Estado 984, AGS.

<sup>27</sup>For fosterage systems in Spain and Ireland respectively see James Casey, *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 192–221; Matthew J. Culligan and Peter Cherici, *The Wandering Irish in Europe: their influence from the Dark Ages to modern times* (London: Constable, 2000), 22–23, 106.

<sup>28</sup>See Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary of the present state of Ireland, part two, 1594–1603* (England, 1609).



Spanish was allowed, even approved of, and the lax marital and legitimacy traditions broke down in Spain over time. The tradition of fosterage, however, continued to flourish. Young celtic men and women placed in fosterage lived as adopted members of the sept until they reached adulthood. Sometimes fosterage was used to form an alliance between septs. A high degree of community involvement was evidenced in this tradition.

For an Irish child to be placed within the Spanish royal household was not only significant but also a very rare occurrence. However, the fosterage system allowed this type of adoption, even within the most elite households. The parents of Domingo were well cared for with lifetime allowances.<sup>29</sup> Domingo himself eventually became a high-ranking officer in the Spanish army and a knight of the Military Order of Calatrava. He married a lady-in-waiting at the court and was sent to Naples with the viceroy and later held several high posts in the king's household. This kind of assimilation was very successful. Frequent references in Spanish records refer to the award of asylum and refuge to the Irish. To the Spanish nation the Irish were particular friends. Their bravery is mentioned frequently. There are also constant references to the Irish being awarded passports and documents allowing them to travel unhindered.<sup>30</sup> This would appear as a stark contrast to the expulsion of Jews, Muslims and converts from Spain at this time. Early race policy in Spain saw the Irish as potential Spaniards.

Finally, I want to move on to the case of Rosa O'Dogherty. Rosa was born in 1588, into the O'Neill sept, a sept which had a high legal and social status in Irish Brehon society. Rosa was educated, along with many other Irish women at the time, by Irish Franciscans. When Rosa emigrated to Spain she maintained close contact with the Franciscan colleges in Santiago and Salamanca. Rosa was involved in the resistance and rebellion against the English at the end of the sixteenth century. She then left Donegal in 1607 to be met initially in Brussels by other Irish emigres. Rosa took the opportunity offered to spy. Records show that she travelled widely.<sup>31</sup> She had the protection of the Conde de Castro, the Spanish ambassador.<sup>32</sup> She negotiated her own pay and pension directly with Castro. The Spanish government was very generous to her and their other women pensioners.<sup>33</sup> From Spain Rosa continued in her efforts to restore her family, her people, and their religion from 1607 through 1650. She also spent her adult life combining this work with carrying information for the Spanish government. Rosa's specific roles included being a political intermediary,

<sup>29</sup>Expediente 1830, Calatrava, Archivo Historica National, Madrid.

<sup>30</sup>Estado 887, AGS.

<sup>31</sup>Estado 984, AGS.

<sup>32</sup>Casway, *Rosa O'Dogherty*, 53.

<sup>33</sup>Estado 984 has a list of women on the pension payroll.



lobbyist and purchasing agent.<sup>34</sup> Rosa travelled around Spain and the Low Countries on a regular basis. This was at a time when Spanish women would not have been expected to have travelled without their families. This would indicate a certain continuity in the freedom to travel which Irish women were used to; however, it also indicates that Irish women were used in this potentially dangerous area of spying. Diplomatic immunity aside, if caught, spies were usually executed, often after torture. Through their particular skills in spying Irish women were allowed and accepted as having more freedom of movement than Spanish or Low Country women. Records in the Spanish archives are particularly revealing when they record that Irish women made exceptional spies because they had “innocent faces.”<sup>35</sup> Rosa’s involvement in intrigue and counter-plots intensified as Spain considered invading colonized Ireland.<sup>36</sup> Rosa’s activities were documented in detail throughout the 1640s, the decade covering the 1641 rebellion. They confirm her continued role at the centre of intrigue. English intelligence officers in Brussels kept a close watch on Rosa.<sup>37</sup> She was under constant surveillance. Rosa, however, managed to get her husband out of Ireland in 1642, along with men, money and armaments, right under the noses of the English. Rosa’s husband, once he was installed in Spain, rarely had any knowledge of where his wife was. However, the Cromwellian settlement did massive and widespread further damage to Irish septs, and many were forced to flee Ireland and ask for papal protection. Rosa spent the final years of her life living off a Spanish pension. It was during native Ireland’s struggle for survival that conditions and circumstances gave women’s actions more exposure. Many emerge as activists in a broad international sphere. They appear in this European setting with a militant devotion to their septs, their families, their faith, and their culture; this gave them their identity. This identity maintained many elements from their lives in Ireland. These women carried on a way of life to which they were born, and responded to its defence with the actions and attitudes characteristic of that embattled generation. Women like Rosa O’Dogherty, Nuala O’Donnell, and Mariana McCarthy bridged a gap in the political and domestic roles associated with their sex.

Many women reconciled themselves to colonization. Others resisted. Some were powerless and accepted their fate. The remainder went with their septs into exile. Once in exile they assumed positive, powerful identities, facing post-colonial challenges in Spain. On the continent they continued as rebels and shared this role with the men-folk of their septs. They

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Estado 984 notes that Rosa and Elena McCarthy had innocent faces that would help in their spying work against the English.

<sup>36</sup>Casway, *Rosa O’Dogherty*, 56.

<sup>37</sup>Casway, *Rosa O’Dogherty*, 57.

assimilated into Spanish society whilst continuing distinctive Irish Brehon traditions. They identified themselves, like Imperia Romana, as Spanish and Irish. They built merchant and banking traditions in the north of Spain and in the south, in Cadiz. This involvement in banking had been forbidden whilst they were in Ireland. The identity of these women and their septs was an active and positive one. The women of the wild geese were not simply victims of English colonialism; they were successful women, they were survivors.

## Glimpsing Medusa: *Astoned* in the *Troilus*

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IN THESE PAGES I would like to consider the role of Medusa in Chaucer's *Troilus*—a modest enough enterprise except for the fact that there is not a single reference to this puzzling figure in the entire work, or in any of Chaucer's other works for that matter. Such an absence does not of course mean absence of influence. After all, Chaucer does not mention Boccaccio, even though his *Il Filostrato* supplies the narrative material for and fundamental shape of the *Troilus*. Obscuring authorial indebtedness because of some "anxiety of influence" is one thing; alluding to a figure from classical mythology, which Chaucer frequently and plainly does in his narratives, is quite another. A discussion of the ways in which the Medusa figure informs the *Troilus* requires then an answer to the question of how it can even be claimed that this mythological figure has a part in the narrative.

Immediate support for such a claim is patristic, a method of reading, according to D.W. Robertson, inspired by the epistles of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> In general terms, the aim of this art of reading was to discover the spiritual meaning beneath the veil of the text, a metaphor encouraged specifically by Paul's explanation of the Hebrews' inability to discover the truth beneath the veil that Moses puts over his face of truth (2 Cor. 3:12–16). The veil remains as long as the minds of those interpreting the meaning of the laws carved in stone are hardened by an inability to read spiritually. This ability to read spiritually emanates from a belief in Christ, which removes the veil from the interpreter's face; it transforms the reader of a text—and the text itself (in this case the stone tablets of the old law)—from stone into spirit. For our purposes this method of interpretation emerges most notably in canto 9 of Dante's *Inferno*. Here Virgil covers the pilgrim's eyes to prevent him from catching sight of the petrifying Medusa; and then the narrator suddenly instructs the reader on how to interpret this, and any passage, by uncovering the spiritual meaning hidden beneath the veil of strange verses. On recalling how the snake-haired furies threatened him and Virgil with the appearance of Medusa, who could turn the pilgrims into stone and keep them in hell, the narrator tells his readers: "O all of

<sup>1</sup>D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 286–316.

you whose intellects are sound, / look now and see the meaning that is hidden / beneath the veil that covers my strange verses."<sup>2</sup> As John Freccero argues, this passage is dedicated to the purpose of laying out the entire *Commedia* in terms of a conversion structure concerning Dante's poetic career, and so oversimplification of its meaning is dangerous.<sup>3</sup> Such oversimplification is dangerous also because, as Robert Hollander points out, the address to the reader remains a vexing passage, possibly referring not to the Medusa but ahead to the avenging angel who arrives to unlock the gates of Dis.<sup>4</sup> Even though the direction of Dante's reference in this passage is a matter of debate, the passage undoubtedly activates the Pauline tradition because of its mention of Medusa as a threat.

Medusa represented a variety of threats in the Middle Ages: terror, despair, and, in Boccaccio's view, "an obstinate sensuality blind to spiritual matters."<sup>5</sup> Because of the setting and the problem that Virgil and Dante must overcome—entry through the gates of Dis—the common metaphor of penetrating a surface of a text in order to discover its true meaning also prevails in this passage. The tradition that the Medusa petrifies those who look at her, then, makes her a rich symbol of the dangers of a misplaced emphasis on the surface, literal level of a text: petrification representing spiritual death in the Pauline tradition. Appearing as the aegis on the shield of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and chastity, Medusa represents the false, bodily beauty that obscures the "Athenian" wisdom beneath, a configuration that, according to Howard Bloch, Jane Chance, and Carolyn Dinshaw, for instance, ultimately links sexual with textual seduction.<sup>6</sup>

A powerful tool, this allegoresis can be used rather bluntly, ignoring the individualized prompts of a particular text. Thus, as a member of the female, material element in the body-spirit dichotomy, Medusa can be discovered as part of any text in which its surface represents danger, particu-

<sup>2</sup>The lines are quoted from Mark Musa's translation in *The Portable Dante*, ed. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 48.

<sup>3</sup>John Freccero, "Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit," in John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 119–35.

<sup>4</sup>See Dante, *The Inferno*, trans. Robert and Jean Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 164, where Hollander summarizes the scholarly controversy over this passage.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Robert Durling, ed. and trans., *The Inferno*, vol. 1, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 150.

<sup>6</sup>Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, 346. Here Robertson develops the case that medieval readers would be expected to understand poetry through allegorical analysis. He offers an abundance of examples to support such an assumption, including Richard de Bury's defense of poetry, which refers to "the delicate Minerva [i.e. wisdom] secretly lurking beneath the image of pleasure." Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 21, also quotes this passage from de Bury's *Philobiblon* as she lays out her case that allegorical reading supports male hegemony. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37. Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994), 1.

larly the threat of spiritual petrification. No doubt, a hearty sense of the heroic is inscribed within this project of getting past the text's Medusa. "Reading like a man," as Dinshaw calls it, can make of the Wife of Bath or the fictional surface of any of Chaucer's works a gorgon, against which only the wisdom of a Virgil-figure, the experience of a Dante looking back upon his misspent poetic youth, or ultimately the divine power of a Christ-figure such as Perseus, the slayer of Medusa, can provide protection.<sup>7</sup> According to this method of reading, we fail if we do not at least explore the possibility that Medusa lurks within the text of the *Troilus*.

The heady power of allegoresis in part rules the only extended discussion I have seen of Medusa in Chaucer: that by R. A. Shoaf on the "Franklin's Tale."<sup>8</sup> He persuasively buttresses his discussion by arguing that Chaucer was composing his tale with full knowledge of the passage in the *Inferno*, which is especially relevant because it occurs within the circle of hell where the Epicureans are punished. In the "General Prologue," remember, the Franklin is portrayed as an Epicure. Shoaf launches his study, however, from the description of Dorigen as "astoned," astonished (F 1339).<sup>9</sup> She responds in this way on learning from Aurelius that the rocks she had so feared had been removed from the coast. Because the word monster appears five lines later, according to Shoaf, the passage "authorizes" us to recognize "a pun in *astoned*—namely, *a-stoned*, that is, 'turned to stone.'"<sup>10</sup> The monster that Dorigen sees is the Medusa, who turns those who look on her into stone. Dorigen is "astoned" because she, as a product of the Franklin's materialistic, appearance-dependant, Epicurean world-view, is herself incapable of going beyond the petrifying letter, the surface, of Aurelius's claim. What Shoaf represents as Chaucer's cagey allusion to Medusa, then, expands into a condemnation of the Franklin's superficiality and an exposure of unredeemable literalism.

<sup>7</sup>Concerning the Wife of Bath as *textus*, see Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 113–31; regarding the recursive project in which Virgil aids Dante the pilgrim, see Freccero, "Medusa," 120–21 esp.; and on the reading of Perseus as Christ-figure in the Middle Ages, see Sylvia Huot, "The Medusa Interpolation in the *Romance of the Rose*: Mythographic Program and Ovidian Intertext," *Speculum* 62, no. 4 (1987): 874 n. 9. She quotes, for instance, Bernard Silvestris's commentary on *Aeneid* 4.289, in which Perseus is interpreted as "the virtue that, with the help of wisdom (Athena) and eloquence (Mercury), destroys wicked acts (Medusa)." She also cites, among other sources, the *Ovide moralisé*, which treats Perseus as Christ and Medusa as carnal pleasure. Also see Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, 12, 33, 201–2, and 332 for examples of mythographers' allegorical readings of Perseus's decapitation of Medusa and for examples of battles with Medusa as heroic endeavors.

<sup>8</sup>R. A. Shoaf, "The *Franklin's Tale*: Chaucer and Medusa," *The Chaucer Review* 21, no. 2 (1986): 274–90. For a brief treatment of the subject, see Timothy D. O'Brien, "Troubling Waters: The Feminine and the Wife of Bath's Performance," *Modern Language Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1992): 388–89, where the figure of the Medusa is discussed as part of the region of Bath and its titular goddess, Sulis-Minerva.

<sup>9</sup>This and all other quotations from Chaucer's works come from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

<sup>10</sup>Shoaf, "Franklin's Tale," 275.

In this interpretation, interestingly, the trope of the monster's (the Gorgon/Medusa's) petrifying face, a trope that actually occurs in the tale beyond the passage from which Shoaf launches his interpretation, becomes Shoaf's own.<sup>11</sup> He describes the Franklin as trying to present "as smooth and glossy a surface as he can" in order to "astone" us so that we do not go beneath its surface.<sup>12</sup> Shoaf goes on to dramatize even more fully the risk we take on reading the tale: "But while we are thus on hold, playing this waiting game—while we are gazing at this Medusa, petrified by the illusion of honor, *gentillesse*, and noble self-sacrifice—precisely what we are *not* doing in our petrification is investigating, penetrating, prodding the tale, its text, to ask the one question sure to betray the Franklin's hand if he fails to keep the Gorgon in our faces...." He continues: "Arveragus's *soveraynetee*...[is] a Medusa of a name to astonish all who look on the marriage between Dorigen and him"; the Franklin "knows that, in his case, the signifier has hardened, has petrified, into the idolatrous signified of his own self-aggrandizement"; and "Think of his table which 'dormant in his halle always / Stood redy covered al the longe day' (A 353–54)—*fixed*, in other words, or *frozen* in place to be an icon of his wealth" (281).<sup>13</sup> The tale does present an alluring surface whose few seams expose its actual "disconnects." Shoaf is certainly right about this. His reading illuminates the tale's superficiality and its teller's use of literature as a ladder for his social climbing; it exposes, indeed, how spiritually empty the Franklin is.<sup>14</sup> Shoaf does not, however, discuss the tale's use of the Medusa figure, so much as employ it as a trope authorized by his version of the patristic method of reading that makes the literal text, the world, idols, material, women, the Medusa, etc. all interchangeable elements.

In fact, the "Franklin's Tale" depends upon images that develop an extended metaphor of petrification. The most obvious case, and one that Shoaf curiously ignores, is the rocks themselves, the central symbol in the story. Dorigen's wanting to wish, hope, or purchase the rocks away is as wrong-headed as the rioters' literal-minded venture to slay death in the "Pardoner's Tale." The rocks reflect her state of mind. Those rocks also belong to a pattern that Chaucer seems to be developing in the descriptive surface of the work. This pattern includes the single pun on "astoned," the several uses of "engrave"/"grave" (see, for instance, F 830, 836 and

<sup>11</sup>See Joseph Parry, "Dorigen, Narration, and Coming Home in the *Franklin's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 30, no. 3 (1996): 264–66. Parry highlights nearly all the textual details related to petrification, though without mentioning Medusa, part of the tradition behind the image.

<sup>12</sup>Shoaf, "Franklin's Tale," 277.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 279, 280, 281.

<sup>14</sup>See Shoaf's discussion of the critical debate between the apologists for the Franklin and those, like Shoaf, Gaylord, Owen, Roberston, and Spearing, who read the Franklin's character with suspicion. Ibid., 288 n. 12.

1484), and the allusion to Deucalion in the clerk of Orleans's words to Aurelius: "Sire, I releese thee thy thousand pound, / As thou right now were copen out of the ground, / Ne nevere er now ne hadde knowne me" (F 1613–15). This allusion to the flood myth as retold in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is relevant not just because it, like the "Franklin's Tale," treats the obscuring of the earth's geographical features with a watery surge but because it also depicts two other themes: the birth of the human race from stones that Deucalion and his surviving mate, Pyrrha, throw over their shoulders and Pyrrha's almost fatal literal-mindedness in not being able to interpret metaphorically the instruction to throw their mother's bones over their backs in order to repopulate the earth—their mother's bones being "mother earth's" stones.<sup>15</sup> These details suggest that there are solid textual prompts for placing the Medusa, however vaguely, in the "Franklin's Tale," and, therefore, that there is an alternative to Shoaf's apparent assumption that because the tale is a fiction and deals with perception—as do virtually all the tales of Canterbury—its surface needs to be viewed suspiciously as the face of Medusa.

I make this point not because I want to reject Shoaf's reading, but, as contradictory as it might seem, because I seek the support of its central observation about Chaucer's pun on "astoned" as something that calls into play the figure of Medusa. However, I would like to emphasize that the pun insinuates into Chaucer's richly textured narrative about Troilus's love not just the spiritual meaning of Medusa but her story as well. My claim is that Chaucer's use of "astoned" in the *Troilus* links astonishment to the transformation into stone, and that his use of "stone" as well as "astoned" usually carries the possible link to the Medusa and the issues represented by her troubling story, *including* the wayward fascination with worldly beauty that Shoaf argues is at the root of Chaucer's portrayal of the Franklin's heroine. Even without the allusion to Medusa this claim makes some sense. Chaucer seems terribly interested in portraying emotional paralysis in terms of the transformation of humans into wood and rock, or sticks and stones, to borrow from Pandarus's pledge to Criseyde in book 3 that Troilus is nowhere near, even though he lurks in a closet adjoining her room. Pandarus's swearing "by stokes and by stones" (3.589) is glossed in the *Riverside Chaucer* as "stumps and stones" or "objects of pagan worship" (n. 589). To be astonished is to be turned into stone, the unredemptive material of pagan idols; and to be insane, a state in which we more than occasionally discover Troilus, is to be "wood," also the material of pagan objects of worship.

<sup>15</sup>Huot, "The Medusa Interpolation," 870, discusses Jean de Meun's treatment of this Ovidian story, as it, along with the story of Pygmalion, works to offset the petrification in the Narcissus story and Medusa interpolation with a sense of the regenerative nature of love, as directed by Genius.

In addition to the pun that Shoaf notices in the "Franklin's Tale" and the concentrated attention in the *Troilus* on suggested metamorphoses of the characters into elemental states such as rocks and wood, there is some suggestion also from passages in *Boece* that the Medusa-"astoned" connection must have informed Chaucer's imagination. Under the influence of the Muses, Boethius is "astoned" (398) until Lady Philosophy wipes from his eyes the sight of dark, mortal things. The sight of only those things and the fact that they make him incapable of coping with the sudden appearance of Lady Philosophy constitute his astonishment, which clearly is a condition of physical oppression: he can neither speak nor move. According to her, "*astonyng* hath oppresside" him (399, emphasis added).<sup>16</sup> And it has done this even though she had nourished him and provided him with armor that should have defended him against the despair of being imprisoned. Lady Philosophy here resembles both Minerva and the Virgil of Dante's *Inferno*: her role is to arm the hero—Perseus or Dante's pilgrim—against the petrifying specter of the worldliness that Medusa comes to represent. That person who "desireth thyng that nys noht stable of his ryght, that man that so dooth hath cast away his scheeld, and is remoeved from his place, and enlaceth hym in the cheyne with whiche he mai ben drawn" (401). "Astoned" is the condition of living entirely within the perturbations of the world: "The moevable peple is astoned of alle thinges that comen seelde and sodeynly in our age; but yif the trubly error of our ignoraunce departed fro us, so that we wisten the causes why that swiche thinges bytyden, certes thei scholde cesen to seme wondres" (450). As we shall see, *Troilus*'s transformation is in part that of Boethius in that he begins the poem in astonishment (he is "astoned" by the sight of Criseyde) and ends it outside of astonishment because he is transported beyond the realm of the "moevable" into the eighth sphere.

Medusa's story, however, contains complexities in excess of the way in which medieval commentators captured her as part of the conflict between the spirit and body. This excess, in fact, comprises the matter out of which feminists have adopted Medusa as their own aegis. The story of Medusa likely available to Chaucer in Ovidian material begins with Poseidon raping her in Athena's temple in the very presence of Athena, who hides her chaste eyes from the event and then punishes Medusa for the transgression by turning her locks into snakes and inscribing in her face the power to turn anything that looks upon it into stone. The ruling assumption here, as Perseus tells the story to the Ethiopians in the *Metamorphoses*, is that Medusa's physical beauty, represented by her originally gorgeous

<sup>16</sup>According to Guisepp Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of The Desert* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 285, John of Garland and Arnulf of Orleans both interpreted Medusa's metamorphosis of onlookers into stone in a way that coincides with the language in Boethius: it represents the "stupor," the kind of madness, into which she throws the mind.



locks, is the cause of the rape. The punishment essentially glosses her beauty as dangerous and paralyzing. Once turned into a monster, Medusa is the Gorgon (there are usually three of them, Medusa being the only mortal) whom Perseus is tasked by Polydectes, the wooer of his mother, to behead. With the help of Athena and Hermes, Perseus finds Medusa asleep in a cave with the other Gorgons. He approaches by looking not at her but at her reflection in the shield Athena has provided; and thus secured from the fascination of her appearance, he strikes off her head. Pegasus, whose hoof creates the poetic spring on Helicon, is born from that wound. After using the Medusa head to defeat several enemies that he encounters on his return home, Perseus gives it to Athena, who places it in the middle of her shield or aegis. Thus portrayals of Athena include the image of Medusa. They amount to classical versions of what Robert Hanning calls the Eva/Ave palindrome of the medieval period.<sup>17</sup> In the Middle Ages, as Freccero explains, Medusa becomes associated both with the furies (partly because of the furies' threatening to call out Medusa as Virgil and Dante approach in canto 9 of the *Inferno*) and with the dark side of love, as portrayed in some manuscripts of the *Romance of the Rose* that include a description of Medusa as a negative contrast to the Lover's image of the beloved, which is ultimately regenerative rather than petrifying.<sup>18</sup>

If we examine the episode in which Pandarus announces to Criseyde that Troilus is in love with her, we can get an idea of the way in which the story of the Medusa edges its way into the *Troilus*. Criseyde's reaction is astonishment:

What, is this al the joye and al the feste?  
 Is this youre reed? Is this my blisful cas?  
 Is this the verray mede of youre byheeste?  
 Is al this paynted proces seyde—allas!—  
 Right for this fyn? O lady myn, Pallas!  
 Thow in this dredful cas for me purveye,  
 For so *astoned* am I that I deye. (2.421–27, emphasis added)

Pandarus, as might be expected, matches Criseyde's outrage with an histrionics of despair: he invokes the "Furies thre of helle" (2.436) to witness that he did not mean harm, and goes on to claim "by Neptunus" (2.443) that he will die with Troilus because of Criseyde's antagonism toward the prospect of reentering the social world as the object of man's love. As it turns out, Criseyde relents bit by bit, and so this passage captures just a particular stage, though the important first one, in her relationship with Troilus.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Hanning, "From Eva to Ave to Eglentyne and Alisoun: Chaucer's Insight into the Roles Women Play," *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977): 580–99.

<sup>18</sup>Freccero, "Medusa," 125–26; and also Huot, "The Medusa Interpolation," 76.

Still the texture of this "primal scene" of her discovery, in a sense, includes many of the features of the Medusa story that work to reinforce the allusive power of "astoned." Especially interesting are the last three lines of Criseyde's response quoted above. Criseyde pleads for Pallas's help in a case in which her beauty has made her the object of Troilus's desire. In fact Pandarus as much as says that her beauty is to blame for Troilus's passion: "Allas, that God yow swich a beaute sente!" (2.336). The sense of petrification contained in "astoned," right next to Criseyde's plea to Athena, goddess of chastity but also punisher of Medusa, the victim of Poseidon's rape, implies something more than an attempt by Chaucer to make characters seem of the ancient rather than medieval world. The same is true for Pandarus's invocation of the Furies and his swearing to Neptune.<sup>19</sup> Both his and Criseyde's responses intensify this sense of there being a specific, not just broadly heuristic, activation of the Medusa story in this scene. Like Criseyde's plea to Pallas, Pandarus's swearing to Neptune, occurring as it does with the use of "astoned" and the emphasis on Criseyde's physical beauty, calls to mind Medusa's rape. In the corresponding episode in *Il Filostrato*, Boccaccio does not highlight Criseyde's astonishment, though she does turn red; nor does he have the characters bring into their exchange allusions to Athena, Poseidon, or the furies.<sup>20</sup> The furies were likely linked in Chaucer's mind with Medusa. Assuming Chaucer's awareness of the passage in the *Inferno*, Freccero conjectures that Chaucer's invocation to one of the furies, Tisiphone, at the outset of book 1 includes the figurative value of Medusa, which amounts to "a sensual fascination and potential entrapment precluding all further progress."<sup>21</sup> Certainly the Medusa Chaucer encountered in Dante resembles the images of the Medusa he himself may have encountered, say, in journeys to Bath.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 106, focuses on Pandarus's swearing to Neptune as a typical feature of Chaucer's complex, ironic use of mythology *and* mythography in order to highlight the blindness of his characters. Though she does not address Neptune's rape of Medusa as a feature of this allusion, Chance does remind us of Neptune's enmity toward Troy and thus of the deadly irony in Pandarus's oath. Many of the allusions in the *Troilus*, according to Chance, function in this way. See, for instance, her discussions of the feast of the Palladium and Niobe (118) and of Pandarus's swearing by Cerebus that if Criseyde were his sister she would be married to Troilus tomorrow (116, 123).

<sup>20</sup>R. K. Gordon, ed. and trans., *The Story of Troilus* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1964), 45–46.

<sup>21</sup>Freccero, "Medusa," 126. Howard H. Schless, *Chaucer and Dante: a Revaluation* (Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, 1984), 1025, recommends restraint in regarding Chaucer's invocation to Tisiphone as originating in his acquaintance with the passage from the *Inferno*.

<sup>22</sup>For a brief discussion of the likely appearances of the Medusa in the town of Bath, see O'Brien, "Troubling Waters," 385–88; and John M. Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer* (New York: Peter Smith, 1926), 232.

Just after Pandarus leaves Criseyde alone to mull over what she has heard, Chaucer marks this scene once more with the images of petrification. She goes into her closet and sits “style as any ston” (2.600); and while replaying in her mind every word that Pandarus said, she waxes “somedel *astoned* in hire thought” (2.603, emphasis added) apparently because she feels imperiled, though that feeling wanes as she imagines herself free to bestow her love when and where she chooses. And soon after this private consideration and then her gazing at the triumphant and battle-bloody Troilus from her window, she listens to Antigone’s song in which the male lover is depicted as, among other wonderful things, the “*stoon* of sikernesse” (2.843, emphasis added). The value of this image of petrification—Criseyde sitting still as a stone—varies with context: it first captures Criseyde’s sudden emotional paralysis; then her mere posture and her fretful considerations about her new position; and finally, as repeated in Antigone’s song, the sense of the male lover being the one certainty in the woman’s life. Within these variations, however, the image remains anchored in the subtext of the Medusa story.

Though Criseyde is “astoned” by the news of Troilus’s passion for her, she is not simply in the position Shoaf ascribes to Dorigen, having seen the petrifying surface, and only the surface, of the world. The petrifying powers of the beloved are also part of the language of the courtly love tradition. Again, Dante provides us with a model. A series of lyrics centered on the metaphor of petrification, his youthful *rime petrose* repeatedly depict the stony, disregarding heart of *Donna Pietra* as having the power to turn the vitality and passion of the lover into stone. Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* depends to a lesser degree on the same image of petrification, even in excess of Petrarch’s punning on his name.<sup>23</sup> In the tales of Narcissus and Pygmalion, Ovid too develops this theme of petrification as an aspect of romantic love. Criseyde’s astonishment as “astoned,” then, is a complex evocation that does not have to overcome what seems an obvious problem: that she as female, the petrifying Medusa figure, cannot at the same time be the figure who is essentially stone. The news of Troilus’s passion for her makes her a part of the romantic love tradition, whether she wants to be or not: she is the lady of stone to Pandarus and Troilus. Moreover on finding herself unwittingly part of the dynamics of passion, she is Medusa, who though having the power to turn others into stone, is also seen as petrified. Most importantly, however, Criseyde’s saying she is “astoned,” along with all the

<sup>23</sup>For discussions of the image as part of the romantic love tradition cultivated in the poetry of Dante and Petrarch, see Haddad, “Ovid’s Medusa,” 216–17, and especially Freccero, “Medusa,” 128–32. Mazzotta, *Dante*, 163–64, treats the image as part of the romantic love tradition, but emphasizes petrification as an expression of love’s madness. This emphasis follows particularly Augustine’s erotic typology in Confessions 13.8, whereby erotic love is depicted as ponderous, weighing the lover down. In contrast, spiritual love has the ascending force of fire.

other resonations from the Medusa story, calls attention to the fact that she is also the pre-Gorgon, pre-apotropaic shield decoration and aegis; she is the beautiful woman that Medusa once was before becoming the object of aggressive, male passion. "Astoned" suggests that in its fundamentals Criseyde's story is that of Medusa, including even her final definition—by Troilus, Pandarus, and even the narrator—as beautiful face that betrays the best part of man. In discussing the "Medusa interpolation" in *The Romance of the Rose*, Huot persuasively analyzes it as an addition that ultimately reads the poem's other episodes of petrification accurately as expressions of the dark side of love.<sup>24</sup> This view, of course, coincides with the patristic reading suggested by Shoaf's discussion of the Medusa in the "Franklin's Tale." However, the Medusa-like implications of Criseyde's astonishment here imply that the dark side of love is also the fact that in a world controlled by men Medusa must inevitably be turned into a Gorgon in order that Minerva survive.

The foundation for registering these percolations of the Medusa story up through the details of this episode in the *Troilus* is situated early in the poem, but is also laid thinly throughout. It begins with the likely association of Tisiphone and the Gorgons/Medusa in Chaucer's mind. Also in place are cultural assumptions that would connect romantic love with poetry. Medusa is implicated in both sides of this connection: first, as we have already seen, she represents, in Freccero's words, "a sensual fascination, a *pulchritude* so excessive that it turned men to stone"; and second, from the severing of her head by Perseus is born Pegasus, whose hoof carved out the spring of the muses on Helicon. It is almost as if the severed head of Medusa, the remnant of violence toward women as much as the threat of her beauty, is at the center of the creative project.<sup>25</sup> The opening stanzas of the poem entangle these associations: instead of invoking the muses, Chaucer's narrator calls upon Tisiphone, the gorgon like creature of Dante's *Inferno*, and simultaneously directs his highly self-reflexive poem to adherents of the god of love.

Following upon these suggestive preliminaries is the description in book 1 of Troilus falling in love with Criseyde. The event takes place in

<sup>24</sup>Huot, "The Medusa Interpolation," 76.

<sup>25</sup>In regard to this connection between Medusa's slaying and the birth of poetic inspiration, Haddad, though largely influenced it seems by Freccero's discussion, writes, "To my knowledge, no critic has yet focused on the link between the killing of the Medusa and the creation of the poetic source; nevertheless, both Dante and Ariosto imply that connection in their treatment of the Medusa legend." Haddad, "Ovid's Medusa," 215. She goes on to argue that the confrontation with the Medusa in Dante and Ariosto is really another way of configuring the artist's confrontation with himself, as is the case with Dante when on facing the threat of the Medusa he is being called to review that fact that he spent himself in youth writing "stony" poetry that served his own erotic sensibilities (217). See also Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), who analyzes Medusa as a symbol of art in Petrarch and Dante (208–10).

Minerva's temple during the feast of the Palladium. This is the site on which Poseidon raped Medusa. It is also a site on which one could expect to see, in addition to the Palladium, representations of the goddess that include images of Medusa's head. Though the setting is religious, it also has, both in Chaucer and Boccaccio, the springlike features of the romantic love's dream vision. It is, of course, April, when the desires of young people are reflected in the new greens of the meads and the fresh colors of the flowers (1.155–60). In this highly charged scene, then, where the conventions of romantic love coexist with the latent suggestions of the inevitable linkage of female beauty, rape, and the complicity of the goddess Athena in that rape, Troilus's eyes penetrate the crowd and light on Criseyde, whereupon "sodeynly [Troilus] wax therwith astoned" (1.274).

Figuratively he is turned to stone. Her "fixe and depe impressioun" (1.298) puts him in a state in which he does not even know "how to loke or wynke" (1.301). Her sight is so powerful "That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,/Right with hire look, the spirit in his herte" (1.306–7). Unlike Boccaccio in *Il Filostrato*, where Troilus takes his time to "size up" Criseyde during the festival of the Palladium, Chaucer highlights the suddenness of the change, using "sodeynly" three times to capture Troilus's "conversion" to love (1.308). The immediacy of conversion as expressed particularly by "sodeyn" constitutes an important theme in the *Troilus*, one that Chaucer explores in order to get at some fundamentals of human motivation. In *Boece*, remember, "sodeyn" describes the way events appear to the forever "astoned" eyes of those who are too much a part of the "movable" world. Chaucer highlights suddenness later in the *Troilus* by having his narrator contest the anticipated criticism that Criseyde's becoming intoxicated with a feeling of love for Troilus—"Who yaf me drynke?" (2.651)—was too sudden and therefore unworthy (2.667–86).

Certainly, the descriptions of Troilus's reactions here coincide with those of the romantic lover: the event is largely ocular, with sight being the penetrating weapon, and his response conforms exactly with the lover's malady, a symptom of which is the almost catatonic reaction Troilus has. And if we take but one half of the suggestive force of "astoned," the half that Shoaf and Freccero emphasize, Troilus's transformation into stone on seeing Criseyde conforms nicely with the Pauline tradition and thus with the Christian irony that emerges in full force only at the end of the poem: in letting himself be penetrated by Criseyde's beauty, Troilus, in spiritual terms, is turned to stone. That moral tradition and the imagery of petrification involved in the conventions of romantic love go hand in hand. Descriptions of Criseyde's hardness of heart follow naturally upon this emphasis. An example is the subtly arranged scene in which Pandarus and Criseyde are described as sitting down on a "stoon" (2.1228) in order to discuss the letter she has just composed to Troilus.

In the stanzas immediately following, Pandarus refers to her “hardness” (2.1236–45), and then the narrator contributes by saying that as hard of heart as Criseyde has been up to now, he hopes a thorn of love has finally penetrated her heart (2.1271). With Pandarus, the narrator employs imagery of petrification as features of the romantic love tradition. Even Troilus’s swooning on the night of the lovers’ consummation is a matter of Troilus’s spirits being “astoned” (3.1089), as the narrator tries clinically to describe in terms of love sickness, or some other physical event, Troilus’s comical swooning while in bed with Criseyde.

Chaucer has his characters use images of petrification in terms of romantic love conventions, but he also loads those images with suggestions of the moralistic tradition that undercut their use within the system of romantic love. On the one hand images of petrification and stoniness help to display the human, romantic softening of heart that the narrator promotes, or the rigid coldness that he resents. On the other hand those images and the allusions to Medusa establish a presence condemning those who follow that tradition as helplessly and forever turned to stone because of their allegiance to flesh. In loving Criseyde, for instance, Troilus admits to having failed as a reader of a “hard” text. After the consummation of their love, Troilus engages in some pillow talk with Criseyde—the usual recap of how they have arrived at this stage. Troilus’s talk is filled with the conventions of romantic love: the entrancing eyes, the capturing net, and even the inextricable link between poetry/text and love:

Oh eyen clere,  
It weren ye that wroughte me swich wo,  
Ye humble nettes of my lady deere!  
Though ther be mercy writen in youre cheere,  
God woot, the text ful hard is, soth, to fynde!  
How koude ye withouten bond me bynde? (3.1353–58)

Though Troilus does not know it, this is also the Medusa story allegorized. He is turned to stone by her features, by the gaze of her eyes, and by the “hard” text those features symbolize, a text that he is not equipped to penetrate. This is the text that Dante warns his readers against approaching without care. Thus, according to this structural undercutting of the romance conventions, Troilus’s being “astoned” with the sight of Criseyde means the same thing here as it does, according to Shoaf, for Dorigen in the “Franklin’s Tale.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Winthrop Wetherbee’s comment on this passage in *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on “Troilus and Criseyde”* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 86, is worth quoting: “Criseyde’s beauty, then, is itself finally a corrupted text. Its angelic perfection is contaminated by an erotic appeal that reflects both the corruptibility of her own malleable, ‘slydyng’

This Patristic reading has to be assumed to be part of what Jauss calls the “horizon of expectations” with which Chaucer was working.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, however, he seems to offer hints of the petrifying Medusa in such detail as to suggest that we also ought to see Criseyde in terms of the Medusa story, not just the allegorized version of it.<sup>28</sup> In the allegorized version of the story, she is little more than the petrifying Medusa head, the bloody guise that Perseus used to turn his foes into stone and the image that Minerva has on her aegis and/or shield to warn men of the dangers of physical beauty and love. Hints of Medusa’s story within the *Troilus* produce at least two ironies: first, a kind of “cosmic irony,” by which we know what happens to Medusa in Minerva’s temple and so any sense of Criseyde’s power over Troilus and possibility of fulfillment is seen jointly with its inevitable failure and even vilification (rape and transformation to Gorgon); and second, an irony that undercuts the romantic love conventions, which seem to glorify and worship the women but only in the end as cover for a kind of rape. Such an irony would extend to the scene in book 2 where Criseyde is “astoned” by Pandarus’s news that Troilus loves her. There, Criseyde prays to Minerva for protection. Because she has already been captured earlier in this goddess’s temple as the object of male desire and therefore as Medusa, her call for help borders on the futile. It is even grim, as we realize that traditionally Minerva’s sympathies are with the male hero—Perseus, of course, but also, famously and more relevantly for Chaucer’s poem, Diomedes, whose aggressiveness towards women clearly emerges in Chaucer’s treatment of him and is later projected by Henryson in his *Testament*, and whose violence toward women is suggested by Ovid in *Amores* 2.7, where he is compared with the persona, who has beaten his beloved.<sup>29</sup>

“Astoned” then is part of at least three competing stories within the *Troilus*: romantic love, entrancement by passionate response to the physical

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character and the deeply flawed nature of the vision accessible to even so pure an imagination as that of Troilus in the absence of sure knowledge of the divine.”

<sup>27</sup>Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 25.

<sup>28</sup>This discussion assumes that medieval readers could also read literally, which does not mean literal mindedly but rather imaginatively in terms of textual and historical context. The discussion of the ascendancy of one mode of reading over the other is, as students of medieval literature well know, rich and thoughtful. For a discussion of medieval readers as increasingly “literal,” see the John P. McCall, *Chaucer among the Gods* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press), preface and 7–25; Douglas Wurtele, “Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and Nicholas of Lyre’s *Postillae litteralis et morales super totam Bibliam*,” in *Chaucer and the Spiritual Tradition*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1984), 90; and Janet Coleman, *English Literary History, 1350–1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 205–74.

<sup>29</sup>Ovid, *The Heroides and Amores*, Loeb Classical Library (1977), 345. The speaker refers to Diomedes as the son of Tideus: “The son of Tydeus left most vile example of offense. He was the first to smite a goddess—I am the second!”



world, and male violation of women and women's complicity in that violation. They are all related but not uniformly. The story of Medusa's rape and vilification undercuts the rhetoric of womanly adoration in romantic love. That same story, when the emphasis falls on who turns Medusa into a Gorgon, also unveils the male force that positions female beauty as responsible for male waywardness and in turn causes the female to adopt the self-defeating fiction that she, in fact, is responsible for that waywardness.

While being rooted in all three of these competing stories, "astoned" also expresses a sudden disorientation, a return to a kind of elemental condition where consciousness, the remembered private history of identity, has vanished. In this way the word gets at the fundamental instability of the world that Chaucer builds into his poem. How can the amazed reaction of petrification described by "astoned" on the one hand and Antigone's version of the male lover as the "stoon of sikernes" on the other coincide even though Chaucer's punning links them? Criseyde tells Troilus that "everich roche out of his place sterte, / Er Troilus oute of Criseydes herte" (3.1497-98) and, as if her very heart is the enduring stone that monumentalizes their love, "Ye ben so depe in-with myn herte grave, / That, though I wolde it torne out of my thought... / To dyen in the peyne, I koude nought" (3.1499-1502). Yet the brooch that Troilus gives Criseyde when she leaves for the Greek camp turns up later in the coat that Deiphobus had rent from Diomedes during a skirmish (5.1658-63). Troilus's heart goes cold on discovering this forgotten symbol of their love, and even Pandarus for once is "astoned" by the fact: "As stille as ston; a word ne kowde he seye" (5.1728-29). If there is any doubt that such an ornament relates to the imagery of stones and petrification, consider Pandarus's crudely pragmatic and antiromantic comment to Criseyde when she proposes putting off Troilus's entry into her room by sending him a ring as token of her devotion: "'A ryng?' quod he, 'Ye haselwodes shaken! / Ye, nece myn, that ryng moste han a stoon / That myghte dede men alyve maken'" (3.890-92). Cynically expressing confidence that Criseyde does not have such a regenerative stone (Pandarus is sure in his pragmatism that the romance he is "authoring" is of the more realistic variety), he urges Criseyde to save Troilus from bodily death with her own body.

The stone that symbolizes durability and dependability functions also to undermine those values, marking the waywardness and unpredictability of human emotion and attachments, especially as circumstances impinge upon them. Troilus's return to Criseyde's house captures this irony, as he worships that structure and in the process speaks of Criseyde as the stone in the ring, idealistically using a trope out of which Pandarus, as we have seen, has already taken the air. Criseyde's house is a shrine, a "ryng, from



which the ruby is out falle" (5.549).<sup>30</sup> Then as "stone" she shows up in the form of the brooch that Troilus discovers inside Diomedes's coat. In this form, her stoniness, as it did in Athena's temple, becomes that power to turn Troilus's heart cold: when he discovers the brooch, his heart "Ful sodeynly" turns "colde (5.1659). In this way, the trope of the poem's beginning, Troilus's being "astoned" by the sight of Criseyde, is reconfigured here and at the end of the poem where "astoned" expresses the only durable thing in this world, sudden change and lack of stability. "Stoon of sikernes" amounts to a brutal irony to the extent that "astoned" as unstable worldliness, as an unavoidable response within the "movable" spheres, is a certainty.<sup>31</sup>

As Medusa, Criseyde embodies that paradox. Even the poem's concluding stanzas in which Troilus, released from temporal and physical constraints of the moveable realm, looks down upon "This litel spot of erthe that with the se / Embraced is" (5.1815–16) reinforces the Medusa connection, while repeating several vital images. Here again Troilus is gazing into a visual field and being attracted to a particular element in it, just as he was in Athena's temple when he was "astoned" by the sight of Criseyde. Without the threat of astonishment, he sees a spot, a little stone, even a version of the jewel that had been lost from the ring of Criseyde's house, now back in its appropriate setting. Criseyde and the little spot of mutable earth are synonymous, though I think it is important to realize à la Dinshaw that the vision identifying them is particularly male. No matter how thoroughly Troilus turned her into an ideal, Criseyde has always been this stone embraced within this worldly setting. In addition, the image upon which Troilus focuses repeats his dream of Criseyde embraced by the boar (5.1241); but finally and more importantly, it also reconfigures part of the subtext behind the story of his loving Criseyde, the primal scene of the Medusa story: as a version of the earth here, she is as much as anything Medusa locked in the mastering embrace of Neptune.

<sup>30</sup>For a thorough interpretation of the suggestive associations of the ring image in the *Troilus*, see John Fleming, *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's "Troilus"* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), esp. 8 and 12.

<sup>31</sup>Robert M. Durling and Ronald Martinez, *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante's "Rime Petrose"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 33–37, analyze the ways in which medieval discussions of gems relate to the concept of the "stone lady." In light of their analysis, the identification of Criseyde with gem, jewel, brooch, and the power to fascinate and petrify is lodged in more than just the imagery patterns of Chaucer's poem.

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## Interpreting Early Modern Woman Abuse: The Case of Anne Dormer

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[T]hese hard laws I live under must keepe us from seeing one another.  
Anne Dormer

WHEN ANNE DORMER, of Rousham, Oxfordshire, wrote to her sister, Elizabeth Trumbull, in August 1686, she complained that she would not be able to greet her on her return from a tumultuous year in France.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth (sometimes called Katherine) was married to the special envoy William Trumbull and had just endured the events of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Anne's husband, Robert Dormer, had certain "laws" under which his wife had to live, one of which prohibited her from going to London to visit her relatives. We know from Anne's account of her marriage in a series of intimate letters to her sister that she experienced her husband's sovereignty over her as an "insupportable Tyranny,"<sup>2</sup> and there were no higher "laws" in the land to overrule her husband's edicts. Robert, twenty years her senior, was jealous, angry, and violent. He employed what we would today call psychological abuse, if not actual physical beatings, to maintain complete control over his wife. The thirty-two letters from Anne, some fifty-five thousand words written between 1685 and 1691 to Elizabeth in France and later in Constantinople, offer a rich first-hand account of this seventeenth-century woman's abuse.<sup>3</sup> This paper will examine Anne Dormer's complex letters not only for their representation of the everyday life of an abused early modern

<sup>1</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 28 August [1686], British Library Add. MSS 72516. All letters quoted in this paper are from BL. Add. MSS 72516. I am indebted to Patricia Crawford for introducing me to the Dormer letters, and many thanks to Sara Mendelson and Sylvia Bowerbank for reading drafts of this article. A shorter version was read at the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, May 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 22 June [1687]. In 1677, Anne Wentworth also used "unspeakable tyrannies" to describe her experience of oppression in marriage. See Anne Wentworth, "A Vindication of Anne Wentworth," in Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox, eds., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989), 183.

<sup>3</sup>Unfortunately, there are no extant letters from Elizabeth Trumbull to Anne Dormer.

woman, but for her analysis and diagnosis of the problem, her coping strategies, and her resistance. The letters add to our current body of literature that theorizes woman abuse; they also add important insights to early modern history. As literature, the letters are a poignant and dramatic narrative of this woman's struggle. Anne Dormer's extended narratives and expressed emotional relationship with her sister convey an alternative subjective space of security and even mastery. Thus, while these letters represent for us the conditions and techniques of her abuse, they also describe and embody the maneuvering that enabled her to act as an independent subject.

Anne Dormer was born in 1648, the daughter of Sir Charles Cottrell, Master of Ceremonies under Charles I and II and James II, as well as translator of French romances, and "Polliarchus" to Katherine Philips's "Orinda."<sup>4</sup> Her family left for the Continent shortly after her birth, while she remained at nurse in England. Her mother, Frances West Cottrell, died when Anne was still young. Anne lived with relatives and finally with her father once he returned to England in 1660.<sup>5</sup> Anne was well liked in the family, receiving attention in her grandmother Cottrell's will and presents from her uncle, Roger Pratt, the architect and half-brother of her mother.<sup>6</sup> Portraits of her by Peter Lely and Godfrey Kneller exist.<sup>7</sup> Morris concludes that Anne may have enjoyed the friendship of Edward Browne, the elder son of Sir Thomas Browne.<sup>8</sup> Robert Dormer was a widower with a ten-year-old son by a previous marriage when Anne married him in 1668.<sup>9</sup> He was a second son with no title but with large properties in Dorton, Buckinghamshire, and Rousham, Oxfordshire. The couple lived at Rousham, now called Rousham Park, where Anne bore him eleven children, with seven sons and one daughter living into adulthood. When the letters to her sister Elizabeth begin, in 1685, Anne has just given birth to her last child. Elizabeth has just left for France with her husband, William Trumbull. They return to England in the autumn of 1686 but leave again for Constantinople the following spring. Their imminent return to England in 1691 marks the end of the letters and the narrative they have created, with Anne poignantly imagining "the joy of hugging thee in my

<sup>4</sup>See Katherine Philips, *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips The Matchless Orinda Volume II: The Letters*, ed. Patrick Thomas (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1992).

<sup>5</sup>Patrick Thomas, "Sir Charles Cotterell and Katherine Philips," Appendix 4, of *Collected Works of Katherine Philips* ed. Thomas, 157–95.

<sup>6</sup>G.C.R. Morris, "Sir Thomas Browne's Daughters, 'Cosen Barker', and the Cottrells," *Notes and Queries* 33 (Dec. 1986): 478.

<sup>7</sup>See J. Douglas Stewart, *Sir Godfrey Kneller and The English Baroque Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 102 (Catalogue no. 230).

<sup>8</sup>Morris, "Sir Thomas," 479.

<sup>9</sup>10 December 1668 at St. Andrew, Holborn (Guildhall Library, MS 6668/1).

armes againe.”<sup>10</sup> Until recently, Anne Dormer has appeared mostly as a footnote to her father and son’s biographies.<sup>11</sup>

Documents other than Anne’s letters confirm that the abuse that Anne Dormer describes in her letters did in fact take place. Letters from her father, Sir Charles Cottrell, corroborate specific events as well as the general quality of life Robert Dormer created in his domain. The following letter from Anne’s father to his son-in-law, Sir William Trumbull, is a good place to begin, for it shows how Sir Charles shared firsthand the regime of abuse under which his daughter lived. He recounts a visit to Anne’s house in August 1687 and the treatment he received from Robert Dormer while staying there:

[H]e forbad Mrs Vernon to come at us till his returne...so we saw no body nor so much as went abroad to take the ayre, for that also was forbidden, even in my Coach, all the while I was there[,] yet all this compliyanse could not keepe him in good humour, but two days before our coming away, he broke into a violent causelesse fury at dinner, before all our servants teling her [Anne] seuaerall times he would make her feare him & saying it was her friends best course to advise her to it, & then bidding her take heed of waking a sleeping Lyon....<sup>12</sup>

The regime of the household represented here is one of control and fear. The control of movement forbids others from coming into the home and those within from going out, including visiting houseguests. The resulting confinement and isolation prevent any communication that might establish an alliance outside the master’s control. The prohibitions are reinforced by threats and the sudden eruption of anger resulting in his wife’s humiliation in front of her relatives and the servants. Nor does obedience, in the end, work to contain or evade this violence. Household members are left trying to control themselves but with no assurance of peace or

<sup>10</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 18 November [1691].

<sup>11</sup>See *Dictionary of National Biography* entries on Charles Cottrell and James Dormer. The latter was a significant general who renovated the Rousham estate and oversaw the design of its park, which is still visited by the public today. See Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford’s discussion of Anne Dormer in their *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 138–40, 146, 157, 235. See also Mary O’Connor, “Representations of Intimacy in the Life-Writing of Anne Clifford and Anne Dormer,” *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis, and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79–96. Mendelson and I are presently preparing an edition of Anne Dormer’s letters.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Cottrell to William Trumbull, 29 August [16]87. The Vernons were a Catholic family with whom the Dormers were on very friendly terms; their family seat was at North Aston near Rousham in Oxfordshire (*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Oxfordshire*, ed. C.R. Elrington [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 9:14, 17, 148).

safety. The lion is always present, never predictable. Accounts of Robert Dormer's violent anger suggest the possibility of physical abuse; however, the strategies of tyranny that Anne Dormer identifies in her letters are for the most part psychological. Her letters give us detailed examples of various facets of that abuse: constant surveillance, incarceration while he is away, control of movement, enforced isolation from friends and family, unpredictable rage, and both public and private humiliation.

Sir Charles Cottrell's letter tells us a good deal about how he sees his relation to both his daughter and his son-in-law. The letter continues with his response to his son-in-law's behavior:

I kept my temper there and with great coldnesse while I stayed, but as soone as I was come to London, I writ him a longer letter then he was willing to receive wherein I spoke my resentments for that & all his former usages of her, Laying before him his obliging Complements & shewing him the difference betwixt her behaviour & mine towards him, & his toward us, yet wth all the caution I writ, not to exasperate him more against her, & after I had told him his owne very roundly, I made up all in a fine conclusion, if he would yet be but in some degree like other men, & not treat her as a slave, but as the daughter of a free borne Englishman & a Christian....she trembles at the fear of an utter break between us but I don't think he'll have so little wit in his anger as to fall quite out with me he will see I will not suffer her to be trampled upon.<sup>13</sup>

Just as Anne's letters encode her own femininity and notions of proper masculinity for the seventeenth century, her father here makes clear what is expected for "the daughter of a free borne Englishman & a Christian." Her own protection from abuse stands on the ideological grounds of the legal status of her father as "English" and "Christian." Wife abuse is figured here, then, as foreign, pagan, and uncivilized, the abject of the new nation as it comes to know itself in contradistinction from its "other"—foreign lands and non-Christians. Wife abuse is written metaphorically as something both physical and political: as "trampling" and as slavery.

It is important, though, that we see that Sir Charles in fact received some of the trampling himself. As a guest, as a father-in-law, as an older man, as one knighted and revered in the world, as a man with important political connections at court, and as the father of a daughter who has provided Robert with seven sons, Sir Charles is entitled to honor and deference. Yet, in the description of the curtailment of his movements while

<sup>13</sup>Charles Cottrell to William Trumbull, 29 August [16]87.



visiting the Dormers, Sir Charles suggests that he became feminized and abused, trapped by the dictates of an unjust and unreasonable master of the house. His own coach, an index of his status, power, and freedom of movement in this “civilized” state, is immobilized. Here is a courtier who has handled ceremonies of state and ambassadors throughout Europe now restrained from circulating in the wilds of Oxfordshire. Furthermore, his attempts at obedience find no secure response. He is unable to control this host through compliance and is open to the very arbitrary whims of power and anger that his daughter, the wife, has experienced. When Robert Dormer erupts at the dinner table in front of all the servants and rails at his wife, he is also railing at her “friends”; Sir Charles himself is humiliated and insulted before the servants.

Indeed, the letter to Trumbull complains as much about the treatment of the father-in-law (Sir Charles) as it does of the wife (Anne). There are allusions to the power relations between the two men in the midst of which the abuse of Anne takes place. Cottrell, the man of public life with connections to the king, believes that Robert Dormer, no matter how rash he is, will have wit enough not to fall out with him. Cottrell emphasizes his own diplomacy and courtesy, which has, after all, been the art of his profession: he controls his anger, and his letter offers concessions. Cottrell ends the description by trying to regain his own masculinity with the threat that he will put his son-in-law in his place.

The relation between Cottrell and Robert Dormer was complex and needs to be situated in the political context of the late 1680s. Although Robert was not a Roman Catholic, other branches of his family were, and the neighborhood of Oxfordshire in which they lived was predominantly Catholic. Believing that the shift in power in the country was moving toward the Catholics, Robert was considering becoming Catholic and ingratiating himself with his neighbors. Cottrell and Anne were committed Protestants and welcomed the Glorious Revolution when it came in 1689. It is clear that Anne Dormer became a site of struggle between her husband and her father, between two political positions in England at the time.<sup>14</sup> Charles Cottrell’s letter, quoted above, conveys Robert’s strategies of abuse and typical familial responses to that abuse, but it also embodies structural forces that contribute to abuse. It is debatable whether Cottrell offered an effective intervention in his daughter’s problematic marriage. We might argue that Cottrell left Anne in an unsafe place, and particularly

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20. has lately explored the relation between subject formation, interiority and state power. Working with records of torture, she shows how men differentiated themselves hierarchically through eliciting secrets. Women in this system are a means through which men relate to one another, rather than subjects in themselves.



that his letter's overtures and arguments are strongly embedded in a masculinist notion of power that is at the heart of woman abuse.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, if Anne "trembles at the fear of an utter break" between the two men, her father's diplomacy and concessions in the letter are in part strategies for keeping alive whatever links he does have with Robert Dormer for his daughter's sake. Both his silence in his son-in-law's house and the subsequent critique and diplomacy in his letter are part of the practice of living with abuse: attempting continually to maintain one's integrity and agency within a framework of silence and concession. Anne never suggested that she wanted to leave her husband: her seven boys, she argued, needed a father; she was committed to her marriage vows; and she insisted that she still loved her husband. Her maneuvers within the marriage were similar to her father's. Her reported conversations with her husband suggest that she did talk back, did try to curtail his mad behavior, but at the same time she kept her place.

Anne Dormer, like her father, formulates the abuse she experiences in political terms—as tyranny, as slavery, and, as we have seen, as a set of "hard laws." The fact that her sister is in Constantinople offers both Anne and her father a pertinent reference point for their description of Anne's condition. Whereas the Ottoman Empire, with its practice of slavery and its alien religion, become an imaginary other for this English family, the two public men—Cottrell and Trumbull—become the ideal English gentlemen heroes in Anne's discourse against which Robert Dormer is measured. Anne stresses how ideal Trumbull is in her letters to Elizabeth. She argues with her own husband over his dealing in trivialities and his idle life. Her standards are set by these other two men, both of whom have earned knighthood through their service to king and state. Robert Dormer's trifling with tinderboxes and, worse, cooking, show his lack of true manhood: "Mr D ... spends all his ingenuity in finding out the most comodious way of frying broileing roasting stewing and preserving."<sup>16</sup>

It is not just his lack of public service that condemns Anne's husband. However, if the family home or marriage is understood as a state headed

<sup>15</sup>Most of our current theorizing concludes that woman abuse is a systemic abuse of power, built on a long tradition of hierarchical gender roles and privileges. See, for example, R.E. Dobash and R.P. Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (London: Open Books, 1980); *Domestic Violence: No Longer Behind the Curtains* (Plano, Texas: Instructional Aides, Inc., 1985); Catherine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Linda MacLeod, *Battered But Not Beaten... Preventing Wife Battering in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1987); Barbara M. Pressman, *Family Violence: Origins and Treatment* (Guelph, Ont.: Children's Aid Society of the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington, 1984); Shirley Rawstorne, "England and Wales," *Domestic Violence: A Global View*, ed. Randal W. Summers and Allan M. Hoffman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 25-38; and L. Walker, *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

<sup>16</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 10 September [1687].

by a lord/ruler, then Robert Dormer is seen as one who abuses his power in that role.<sup>17</sup> The husband was understood to have responsibilities attached to his power—namely, providing both materially and spiritually for wife, children, and servants. The ideal gentleman should be both powerful and reasonable, just, and conscientious. He may have been expected to be violent but also to control that violence and use it in a just cause: “Self-mastery was the characteristic that distinguished a responsible adult male.”<sup>18</sup> Women’s “desires [were] subject to their husbands” and common law allowed men to beat their wives, but only if they caused them no “bodily damage, otherwise than appertaines to the office of a husband for lawfull and reasonable correction.”<sup>19</sup> In Anne’s case, she is careful to articulate that she is innocent of any wrongdoing and that her husband’s excessive coercion and anger are unfounded and extreme. It is an unacceptable tyranny that both Anne Dormer and her father identify in Robert’s behavior.

The responsibility of patriarchal surveillance in Robert Dormer’s case meshed with his own propensity to extreme jealousy and possibly paranoia. His wife gathers that his choice of bedrooms in the house was linked to his desire to keep watch over the household. It was a particularly uncomfortable room, which, because of its heat, made his wife ill. Once she finally extricated herself from the room, she remarked on her freedom from him: “[L]ying here has given me some conveniencies too, which I wanted in the other room when I lay there he was alwayes in it, I suppose because at that window he can see all that passes in and out, for now he keepes there all the morning and that helps me somtimes to hear an hours reading.”<sup>20</sup> Despite the apparent liberty to read, her movements within the house were generally not free. Robert’s jealousy could control her from within a different room:

<sup>17</sup>For extensive discussions of the early modern patriarchal family and its relation to monarchy and the state, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Frances Dolan, *Dangerous Familiar: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Cynthia B. Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) idem, “The Patriarch at Home: The Trial of the Second Earl of Castlehaven for Rape and Sodomy,” *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996): 1–19; Margaret Hunt, “Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women’s Independence in Eighteenth-Century London,” *Gender & History* 4 (1992): 10–33; Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*; Lena Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977); and Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England 1680–1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>Herrup, *A House*, 71.

<sup>19</sup>*Lawes Resolutions of Woemens Rights: or, The Lawes Provision for Woemen* (London, 1632), 6, 128.

<sup>20</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 3 November [1688].

I think for now I am growne so gray so leane and so hagged that I might justly hope I might now be trusted in the garden without the feare of any bodyes running away with me but noe my Ld has as constant watch over my steps as ever and can tell exactly how many will carry me from my Chamber to the garden and if I happen to stopp one minute I am sure to be askt the reason....<sup>21</sup>

Amussen, Gowing, Dolan, and others have pointed out that it may be that both the laws and the ideology of early modern marriage insist on the husband's right and duty to supervise and control the behavior of his wife, family, and servants; nevertheless, Anne's narrative recounts precise details that convey a pathological surveillance, one in which one's footsteps may be counted; any variations in the pattern will be noticed; one's body will be tracked in a space not one's own. The entire domestic space is mapped in the mind of the abuser in relation to the control of movement. Anne identifies this behavior as madness ironically, by the husband's asking for the "reason" for any change. Her ability to set the scene with concrete details conveys to us three hundred years later both a theory and narrative of woman abuse: knowledge embodied in story.

Robert Dormer's attempts to control his wife extended to her close relationship with her family. He monitored Anne's correspondence with them as much as he could: "I contrive to write when he [Robert Dormer] is from home, that I may spare my self and my friends the trouble of hatching a formall letter, he watches to read those I receive but now he is almost continually abroad I write when I can have most liberty to speake my thoughts...."<sup>22</sup> It is clear that Anne had learned to "hatch a formall letter," but the writing that she needed to do was of a different sort. These letters offer an example of a woman trying to write outside of the constraints of a formal genre. The fact that she can imagine two kinds of letters hints at a form of life-writing that has not as yet received a full literary analysis. It is clear that at this point—in 1688—the condition of Anne's marriage, coupled with the historical development of a new subjectivity—one based on internal self-reflection—produces a new kind of writing. In Anne's case, this writing is understood as a new "liberty" and one that allows for the analysis and narration of intimate details of a marriage.<sup>23</sup>

In her letters to her sister, Anne also implies a sexual dimension to her husband's abuse. Using their twenty years of sexual intimacy and what at one point seems to have been a loving response from his wife, he taunts her with sexual advances. She complains of his "fondness" since it is cou-

<sup>21</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 3 November [1688].

<sup>22</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 28 September 1688.

<sup>23</sup>See Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), and O'Connor, "Representations of Intimacy."

pled with anger and humiliation. Love, passion, and sexuality are conflated with jealousy, violence, and possession. Again and again, she complains that she cannot win: either she gives in and is played the fool or she resists and is violently harangued. Both positions lead to her humiliation:

My Ld who keepest up his unreasonableness in every thing he doth, considers nothing but his own humore and pursues only the pleasing of his owne fancy all which I would contentedly allow him but this will not serve his turne without being allowed to be a very kind good Hus and here lies one of my inexpressible torments for in order to that he still continueth his way of kissing a dirty glove of mine and saying he loves me extreemly and then he will hang about my neck and often take occasions to praise my beauty which to me looks more like a jeere then a commendation but these favours if I do not returne greates acknowledgements for, he is eternally upbraiding me with my ingratitude to his love, which after so many yeares is still the same to me, in company his envie to see every body so kinde to me makes him watch all opportunities to lessen me in every thing, to trample me down to ridicule every thing I say and do....<sup>24</sup>

The vivid example of “kissing a dirty glove,” which Anne repeats in another letter, makes concrete the strategy of control in the name of love. The vacillations between sexual advance and ridicule, between fondness and rage, form a kind of sexual humiliation. The partner is invited to open up, to submit, to become aroused; having done so, she is “trampled” and shamed. Anne eventually retreats from these advances and refuses to “kiss” her husband any more. Her letters further document the ploys her husband devises in response to this act of resistance:

I think he was not made to be kist and therefore I have severall times assured him while I live I will never go to kiss him more, nor do not, since he came from London not but that I thank God I could run to him with the same kindness I ever did, and when he kisses me which he doth twenty times a day I receive him not only with civility but with hearty kindness and one night he vomited and I not only satt up by him till morning but found my self touched as neerely for his being sick as I used to be, and it seems then I kissed him as I held his head, which the next day he was much pleased with and bragged to me that I came of my self and kissed him to which I said that I did assure him whatever I might do then; when I was well my self I never would unless he gave me more reason then hitherto he has don, and indeed I have that

<sup>24</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 22 June [1697].

aversion for any sort of deceit that when I reflect with how much fraud and art he has endeavored to fix me at home it doth convince me that I ought no more to pursue him with fondness....<sup>25</sup>

His transformation of her compassionate kiss into a sexual act manipulates both her sympathy for him and her resistance against him.

Anne's letters contain many complaints of public and private humiliation. Robert Dormer would laugh at her and degrade her both at home and while visiting neighbors. We have already seen how he did so in front of her father and the servants. He also contrasted her with other women, complaining on one occasion of her "timourousness" while their neighbor Mrs. Vernon could weather a bandit's attack on her stagecoach from London:

Last somer Mrs Vernon was robbed in the coach coming from London and a Man a stranger hurt who was with her in a stage coach and upon the discourse shee then not seeming to regard it much, he [Robert Dormer] has pondered upon't ever since, and t'other day it was thrown at me for a reproach that I would not have beene so little frightened as Mrs Ver was and her courage was admired as highly as I was to be layed low....<sup>26</sup>

"[T]o be layed low" is both the strategy and the goal of the abuse. It transpired that even Anne's acquaintances agreed that she should stay home instead of coming out and being humiliated in public. Her language conveys her analysis of the abuse: the stripping of self-esteem and the absence of reasonable responses are debilitating psychologically. What is most crippling is that women are left with no self-worth and no secure or predictable world.

Nor is Robert Dormer's jealousy built on any ground of his own fidelity to his wife. He had mistresses, and he even fell in love with one of their neighbors. Anne's humiliation includes not only being forbidden to use her husband's coach, but having to watch as her husband's favorite is allowed to use it: "I bore all my restraints patiently while I saw nobody could comand his choach [=coach] or servant but when Peggy Brooke could comand both, it satt hard upon me and shee who loved me dearly was so sensible of it shee has often come with teares and blushes to me and said I vowe I am ashamed to send your servants or to use your coach when you canot."<sup>27</sup> Anne's withdrawal of her affections (if not her love) seems to have come with the recognition that he had really fallen in love with someone else: "I could not but tell him his fondness of Piddy Brook took

<sup>25</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 11 August [1888]

<sup>26</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 2 January 1688 [1689].

<sup>27</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 20 July [1688].

away his sivilty to me and since his passion for BV had taken away his love I did not value such a pretence of fondness.”<sup>28</sup>

By 1688, the relationship between husband and wife had deteriorated and Robert’s full madness is explicit in Anne’s letter of 3 November. If Anne had been able to find moments that were free from her husband’s oversight—particularly when he was away from home—she was not secure for very long:

In the day I have no resting place my closett in the winter is too cold, and in the somer too hott and in my chamber when once he is up he is alwayes passing too and fro and in the Nursery if I stay half an houre he is in fury and once this winter broke the doore and made it flie cross the roome when he fancied I was there but I was not nor noe creature but clem<sup>29</sup> and his maide his jealousy is a sort of maddness....<sup>30</sup>

No space is considered “safe,” either in Anne’s eyes or his. The walled garden was one permissible destination for her movements, but with no deviations; the nursery was viable, but for no more than a half an hour. A closed door with only a child and his nursemaid on the other side was fair game for this man’s enraged violence. His loud eruptions in the dining room here are transformed into the physical destruction of his home, even his three-year-old son’s designated space. His breaking down the door is in the service of significant psychological violence—that of invading and controlling his wife’s space and mind. There is no space, it would appear, that is free of the fear of his violence. No matter where Anne is, no matter how great her compliance, she is never free of the possibility of his anger.

Thus, as well as offering concrete examples of the facets of abuse, Anne Dormer’s letters also reveal the effects of a life patterned by abuse. They include a consistent refrain about the deleterious state of her physical health. She cannot sleep at night; she suffers from “spleene and vapours.”<sup>31</sup> She writes to her sister, “He can but hurt my body but he ruines his owne soul.”<sup>32</sup> Intermingled with the binary opposite of the soul, her references to her sick body convey at one and the same time the physical component of her abuse and one coping mechanism she resorts to, that of relying on heaven’s reward:

Finding those oppressions I have layne under this last four months do dayly encrease and considering that friendship requires a communication of all concernes without reserve I will

<sup>28</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 20 July [1688].

<sup>29</sup>Clement was Anne’s last child (1685–97).

<sup>30</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 3 November [1688].

<sup>31</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, [Autumn 1685].

<sup>32</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 4 February [1688].

no longer conceal those sorrows from thee I am dayly so grievously afflicted with for since I hope they will proove as profitable to my soul as they are tormenting to my body I have reason to be thankfull for them and patient under them....<sup>33</sup>

Anne Dormer retreats further and further from society, living for the most part the life of a recluse, with occasional visits from some women friends in the neighborhood. As Mendelson and Crawford point out, there are class dimensions to her perception of the abuse. She complains that village women have more freedom than she does to seek solace and friendship: "A poore woman that lives in a thatched house when shee is ill or weary of her work can step into her Neigh: and have some refreshment but I have none but what I find by thinking writing and reading."<sup>34</sup>

We have learned from modern studies of woman abuse that a major effect of abuse is that the woman internalizes the abuser's discourse and surveillance: self-esteem is destroyed and the woman limits her own actions. This effect is most telling in Anne after Robert dies suddenly in 1689. She speaks of wandering through the house feeling guilty that she is looking in chests and touching things which he had forbidden her to approach: "Using such things as he would scarce suffer me to look upon I am like one ha[u]nted with an evell spirit or who has comitted some crime."<sup>35</sup> We have confirmation of this behavior from her father's account in a letter to William Trumbull:

His [John Dormer's] too good naturd Mother cannot yet disacustome herselfe from strict retirement she has so long been forced too that it is become too naturall to her being more sensible of three kind words spoken by him to her in twenty years, without any one obliging action for all that time, then of three score thousand vexations wherewith he made her life uncomfortable all that while and thinkes herselfe bound to performe all things as punctually to his memory as if he had been the most indulgent husband in the world, Sometimes saying she would not do the least thing, that she thought he would find fault wth if he should looke upon her out of his grave; wch is to put herselfe under a greater slavery now God hath set her at liberty then she was before & to be a worse tyrant to herselfe then he was to her.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 29 November [1688].

<sup>34</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 5 April 1688. Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 146.

<sup>35</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, St. James's Day [9 May 16]89.

<sup>36</sup>Sir Charles Cottrell to William Trumbull, 9 August [16]89. Anne's eldest son John [Jack] Dormer traveled with the Trumbulls to France and Constantinople. On his return, having come of age, he was to take over the Rousham estate.



Cottrell's language of slavery is now used to describe Anne's own control of her movements, the internalized surveillance of her behavior. The space of the house has been so strongly demarcated by Robert Dormer that his eyes and voice are transferred into his wife.

And yet, it would not be a full portrait of Anne Dormer or of her self-representation in her letters to give the impression that she did not fight back. Her letters show that she often stood her ground and indeed, triumphed over her husband. As Mendelson and Crawford point out, Anne "was not docile."<sup>37</sup> She may have restrained herself but she also used many resisting tactics. The very feat of writing this series of letters to her sister may be understood as moving beyond just survival to resistance—the eking out of free time and space in which to "write my thoughts." The intimacy that she has with her sister is both a cause and an effect of her confidences. Anne carves out a safe space beyond the domain of her husband's rule. The letters create and maintain a bond with her sister, the love of whom maintains the integrity and identity of the writer. Elizabeth's dialogic presence is felt throughout the letters, countering the construction of Anne's identity that Robert is shaping through his abuse. Anne speaks of keeping her carcass alive until she can hold her sister again, but Elizabeth also becomes the audience for whom Anne can present herself as one in control of her situation.

Furthermore, Anne's recounting of abusive events is often expressed in the voice of a dominant personality rather than that of a victim. She uses wit, sarcasm, and humor to represent her husband to her sister and even to himself, as we can judge from her reported arguments with him. The following letter creates another concrete scene of abuse, but one which Anne turns around and uses for her own mastery of her husband's discourse. In her account of the event, she revels in the triumph of her own repartee, employing what might be considered unacceptable bawdy references in witty jest. Anne complains of having to be always on guard to justify herself so that he does not hold up some detail for accusation year after year. He reminds her of a time he visited her at her father's house when he was courting her and she had a scratch on her arm. Twenty years later he still suspects she received it from some rude licentious man who had visited her brothers. Anne continues:

I had often rejoyced in my mind that my innocence which feared no ill had never occasioned me to have a rudeness offred me now I had reason to wish I might have suffred some one affront, that I might have beene secured by the hatred I should have taken against all Men never to have Married any...but since he resolved for ever to be unjust to me I would not alwayes be a foole but for

<sup>37</sup>Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 139.



the time to come be as I had beene, carefull of even the appearance of evill, I would satisfie my self, and if he pleased to beleive I gott that scratch at a Tavern ramping with my Ld Rochester and Sr Charles Cidly [Sedley] it should be indifferent to me....<sup>38</sup>

Robert Dormer's imagination, built on his own experiences or the reports of such libertines as Rochester or Sedley,<sup>39</sup> is used to frame and control his wife, but the innocent wife takes his words and references and returns them in her own rebuttal. The language of libertines, because it has been introduced by her husband, is fair game now in her witty response.

Having moved into the separate and safe space of her letter-writing, Anne recounts her decisions and actions, placing her husband in the role of madman as much as master. To sit with him would mean having to invent drivel as much as having to endure criticism. Her husband's abusive humiliation, then, is reduced in this narrative to the ranting of a fool. Instead of enduring slavery, she maps out "a little liberty":

I have eased my self of the trouble of sitting two or three houres to find my Master discourse who will only find fault and cavill for his divertisement, which is none to me, and so there I have taken a little liberty, more then I used when I hoped by finding him trumpery stuff to twattle to him to have pleased him.... I found it absolutely necessary to keepe my self from his contempt, as I do by free speaking my mind to him now and then, to shew him I do nothing out of pure stupidity....<sup>40</sup>

By naming stupidity, contempt, and trumpery as associated with her former activities, she establishes herself now as the opposite: intelligent, honorable, and honest. Her very submission to his "absolute dominion" is juxtaposed with her ironic (and bawdy) parody of that power: "I submitt most cheerfully to his absolute dominion over me, and jeast with it for when he sayes I will do this and that I say as Sr Oliver Butler did twas his owne house and should sh-- in every roome on't."<sup>41</sup> Her "learned" allusion in this flurry of wit demeans all her husband's activities to mere shitting. In a carnivalesque way, reducing her husband's entitlements and orders to his "lower bodily stratum," her narrative undermines any notion of his absolute control.<sup>42</sup>

Even Anne's use of the voice of the victim in her letters can also be seen as a strategic ploy of gaining allies, trying to balance the power which

<sup>38</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 29 November [1688].

<sup>39</sup>John Wilmot, earl of Rochester (1648–80), and Sir Charles Sedley (1639?–1701).

<sup>40</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 10 March [1688].

<sup>41</sup>Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 10 March [1688].

<sup>42</sup>See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968) on the power of laughter, parody, and carnival to undermine fixed authority.

her husband has over her. If she keeps her relatives informed, she establishes a balance of power in the family dynamic—one in which, perhaps, her father will not “suffer her to be trampled upon.”<sup>43</sup> The risk, as we have seen, is that she thereby becomes the site of battles between the men.

Anne’s letters as a whole provide a curious space of obsession with her abusive husband in which the “he said”/“I said” of their many verbal battles is repeated in detail. While she constructs herself as victim, however, she also makes herself the narrator of victimhood and takes great pleasure in the story telling. Her rhetorical strategies reconstruct herself and often lead to moments of victory. That victory is of a superior wit and intelligence. It is also the victory of gaining control of the story. By rewriting her abusive circumstance she creates a narrative with its own climaxes, comic relief, and heroes. Even while her husband is playing the role of the villain in her story, he is also playing the fool. The letters may therefore be explored for both their power to provide an alternative subjectivity—one related to her love for and trust in her sister and to her mastery of arguments with her husband—and their revisiting of what seemed like daily oppression. The letters offer a rich narrative of love and pain in a bad marriage. But they also offer an opportunity to witness, on the one hand, strategies of disciplining women and, on the other, an early modern woman’s attempts to construct a separate and oppositional self in writing. For those interested in woman abuse, the letters offer an extensive analysis and diagnosis of an early modern woman’s psychological abuse and her strategies of survival and resistance. For this literate woman who had the leisure time and ability to write eight-page letters, the correspondence offered a textual shelter beyond the barrier of the prison-home—a shelter in which she could write her own story, move around with freedom, and even return with the new-found power of a secure allegiance with her sister.

<sup>43</sup>Anne recounts other tactics often evoking the day-to-day power games of their relationship. She refuses to greet her husband at the door after he has been away, since he had ignored her as she stood waiting to greet him: “[E]ver since he came from London I keepe my resolution I never go to kiss him nor ever run out to meete him when he has beene abroad the ramble he went last he was a weeke abroad, and when he came home he had beene half an hour in the house before I saw him, for being in my closett there I stayed, till I heard him pass by the doore and say wheres my wife, then I came out and mett him as I alwayes do with a cheerfull face and he exprest himself kindly to me and was full of discourse what he had scene and where he had beene, and so continued in good humore, the next day sayes he Mrs D I was a long time yesterday before I saw you [i]t was not used to be so, no my deare I replied, for I having studdied neere twenty year how to live with you so as be most easy to you I, I do now find that you seeke no other thing in all your concern but to avoid trouble, and having so many yeares when I have with true love and joy to see you come home, run out to meete you with open arms, and found my self often rudely repulsed, or so coldly received that I have gone away with my eyes full of tears I have at last overcome that folly and for the rest of my life since I find it was a trouble to you as well as grief to me, to stand in your way, when you had other things in your head, or were out of breath as you used to say” (Anne Dormer to Elizabeth Trumbull, 28 September [1688]).

Indeed, if Anne was not allowed to confide with her neighbor under a thatched roof, she shows us that her class was able to use writing to deepen relationships among sisters, a strategy that held her in good stead even after her husband's death, when it was her father who tried to control her life and movements. The reader watches the intimacy with Elizabeth build as the letters insist on the love between them. When, with the final letter, we anticipate Elizabeth's imminent return, the narrative concludes with climactic pathos. The promise of this reunion of the sisters, this alternative love, has been a unifying structure of the letters' narrative, a balance of solidarity or female community against the weight of the woman abuse in Anne Dormer's marriage.

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## The Fall of Troy and the Rise of Elizabethan Drama: Empowering the Audience

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THE ENGLISH REFORMATION, along with urbanization, commercial development, and other major social and cultural changes, both reflect and affect a multifaceted contestation of authority among genres and modes of discourse in the sixteenth century. Robert Weimann finds the Elizabethan period marked by clashes “between diverse authorities engaging in rivalry for the more persuasive image, logic, truth, and form of saying things,” as “the claims on God-given legitimacy of secular and ecclesiastical institutions...were irretrievably undermined.”<sup>1</sup> Rather than accept the authority of a document, according to its type and status, before it was actually read, audiences tended to approach representations as sites “on which authority could be negotiated, disputed, or reconstituted.”<sup>2</sup>

Classical epic became one such site of contest. Humanism fostered both reverence and skepticism towards epic authority. For instance, epic’s most important theme, Troy, came to justify and celebrate a *translatio imperii* through the legendary Trojan, Brut, and to represent patriotically the expanding power of Britain. The authority of the Trojan connection was reconstituted to deepen the resonance of British identity and the legitimacy of its elites, as in George Chapman’s partial translation of the *Iliad* (1598), dedicated to the earl of Essex.<sup>3</sup> But William Camden’s *Brittania* (1586) had already questioned this connection on historical grounds. At the end of the period, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1601/02), Heather James suggests, emphasizes how the matter of Troy had become a site for ideological contest, a site for the reconstitution of authority according to competing interests.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–3, 113. On Virgil’s authority see Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson, Shakespeare and Early Modern Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup>James, *Shakespeare’s Troy*, 93–118.

The distinctive power of Elizabethan drama is often located in its deconsecrating ability to represent and test competing values and authorities.<sup>5</sup> A particularly apt case for understanding such Elizabethan theatrical de-authorizations is a relatively little-noticed topos of classical epic's Troy theme that is taken up in plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare, because it involves, from its first appearance, representation of both epic recitation and divergent response thereto. That is the narration of the most crucial episode of all, the fall of Troy. In Homer and Virgil this scene offers a self-reflexive moment when the epic thematizes its own reception. The Troy-recitation topos shows that the drama's challenge to epic authority itself found roots in classical epic's own hesitations about its authority. It reveals with a particular emphasis on audience response how, on the one hand, the distinctive authority claimed by the theater<sup>6</sup> differs from and opposes epic authority, but on the other how this opposition seizes upon the epic's own admission of its limited authority, in moves that at once emulate and undermine. Further, study of different renditions of this self-reflexive theme also helps us to glimpse a distinctive female gendering of the process of de-authorization, one that is central to the Troy-recitation topos in both epic and drama: the auditors who destabilize epic authority and figure dramatic authority tend to be either female or feminized.

The fall of Troy is told only partly and piecemeal in the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* by characters rather than by narrators. The former summarizes two episodes sung by Demodocus, the Phaiakian minstrel; the latter quotes Aeneas, who speaks at length in Dido's court. These passages of indirect discourse or quoted description are followed by responses divided between the collective and the powerfully subjective and idiosyncratic. The latter responses seem to put in question the two epics' authority to guide response. They validate the existence and importance of individual responses that cannot be anticipated or guided by author or reciter, and that could actually undermine heroic values.

Depictions of response to recitation of the fall of Troy in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590), Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1586), and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and *Hamlet* (1601) take further the classical epic's hesitations about its authority. The two plays imply that the transactions between players and playgoers in the early modern theater are often ones in which meaning is not authoritatively dispensed but freely disseminated, available for pluralistic development by

<sup>5</sup>See e.g. David Scott Kastan, "Proud Majesty Made a Subject: Representing Authority on the Early Modern Stage," *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 109–28.

<sup>6</sup>See Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); and Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

individual auditors as they are taken up in the flux of everyday life.<sup>7</sup> They also reveal ideological uses of the authority of classical learning, such as consolidating national identity and state power. They deauthorize classical epic partly through their treatments of the Troy-recitation topos, and locate the theater's strength in its dispersal of authority, its authorization of the audience.

The *Odyssey* achieves the epic effect of authoritativeness in a paradoxical way, with sophisticated narrative self-consciousness.<sup>8</sup> It bears many characters' narratives within it, most prominently Odysseus's four-book account of his adventures. Encompassing its tapestry of narratives, only the complexly orchestrated *Odyssey* itself reliably discloses the truth about the divine, human, and natural worlds. As Laura Slatkin says, Odysseus and his narratives are *polymetis*, resourceful and subtle in myriad ways, but only the poem itself is *panmetis*.<sup>9</sup>

The authority of the *Odyssey* over its interpretation appears to be compromised during its most daring and self-conscious gambit, when it depicts heroic song as not only preserving the glory of heroic deeds but as actually enabling the hero. It depicts two contrasting responses to Demodocus's public narration of the Trojan Horse and Odysseus's role in the final victory at Troy.

Then he sang of the town sacked by Akhaians  
pouring down from the horse's hollow cave,  
this way and that way raping the steep city,  
and how Odysseus came like Ares to  
the door of Deiphobos, with Menelaos,  
and braved the desperate fight there—  
conquering once more by Athena's power.<sup>10</sup>

The response of the Phaiakians to Demodocus's song yields *charis* (joy, 9.5) and "*terpsis*," "pure pleasure in stories of heroic action," as Charles Segal points out; the other response, Odysseus's, is an "intense, painful *involvement*...through memory in the sufferings of war."<sup>11</sup> Odysseus's

<sup>7</sup>For a similar distinction see M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup>Laura Slatkin, "Composition by Theme and the Metis of *The Odyssey*," *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays*, ed. Seth L. Schein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 228. See also Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

<sup>9</sup>Slatkin, "Composition by Theme and the Metis of *The Odyssey*," 237.

<sup>10</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, 2d ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 8.537–43.

<sup>11</sup>Charles Segal, "Bard and Audience in Homer," *Homer's Ancient Readers: the Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, ed. Robert Lamberton and John H. Kearney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10.



involvement is fruitfully traumatic, forcing him at this point not only to reveal his name to the Phaiakians, but actually to rediscover or reclaim his identity for himself after many years of wandering and adventures. That rediscovery is fulfilled in his four-book narrative. His response to Demodocus's song about the fall of Troy is therefore both crucially important in the story and a signal example of the power of the heroic minstrel Demodocus's authority, and by implication the authority of the *Odyssey* itself.

The simile used to describe Odysseus's response, though, develops a striking pathos for victims of heroic exploits, and also clearly genders Odysseus's response as feminine.

The splendid minstrel sang it. And Odysseus  
let the bright molten tears run down his cheeks,  
weeping the way a wife mourns for her lord  
on the lost field where he has gone down fighting  
the day of wrath that came upon his children.  
At sight of the man panting and dying there,  
she slips down to enfold him, crying out;  
then feels the spears, prodding her back and shoulders,  
and goes bound into slavery and grief.  
Piteous weeping wears away her cheeks:  
but no more piteous than Odysseus' tears,  
cloaked as they were, now, from the company.<sup>12</sup>

Odysseus is not weeping primarily for all the orphans and the widow slaves he has created by sacking cities—like that of the Kikones, which he casually mentions a few lines later. But the simile does suggest it is entirely possible that a third kind of response to the *Odyssey*, a strongly compassionate, female-gendered, and non-heroic one, could occur: one that places a major stock in trade of epic poets, the heroic pursuit of martial glory, in the context of non-combatants' lifelong misery, a response stemming perhaps from an auditor's habitus, including gender, or from personal associations and experience such as Odysseus himself clearly brings to bear. After all, the mere possibility of a powerful subjective response like Odysseus's represents a potential challenge to a poem's ability reliably to dispense truth and pleasure.

Even as it claims maximum authority, then, the account of Odysseus's response establishes the incomplete and circumscribed nature of epic authority, of its ability to represent true heroism and bind its audience in an appreciation thereof with a suitable perlocutionary effect. Some responses may not be suitable and yet be valid. By opening itself here to a glance that is both feminine and non-heroic, and by acknowledging the

<sup>12</sup>*The Odyssey* 8.544–55.



sheer depth and unpredictable contingency of response to epic themes, the *Odyssey* at this moment breathtakingly stands down.

Odysseus's counterpart in the *Aeneid* is Dido. Of course in dozens of ways it is Aeneas who recapitulates Odysseus. He recounts his adventures to Dido and the Tyrians just as Odysseus does his to the Phaiakians. And both visiting heroes receive crucial aid from these generous hosts, who later both suffer disastrously because of those visits. More specifically, Aeneas's tears and wonderment in response to the Tyrian gallery of Trojan War paintings in book 1 clearly hail from Odysseus's response to Demodocus, even though those paintings do not depict the fall of Troy. But when it comes to experiencing a traumatic and feminine-gendered as well as subjective response to an account of the fall of Troy, one that calls in question epic authority, Odysseus prefigures Dido.

Dido is eager to hear about Troy and Aeneas. But Cupid has begun his work of slowly bringing her to erotic madness before Aeneas begins the account of Troy's destruction and his subsequent wanderings, and this insidious corruption of her affections operates both during and through the agency of Aeneas's account. Aeneas ended his speech

Too late. The queen is caught between love's pain and press. She feeds the wound within her veins; she is eaten by a secret flame. Aeneas's high name, all he has done, again, again come like a flood. His face, his words hold fast her breast.<sup>13</sup>

Aeneas's weighty, two-book speech carries tremendous epic authority. He speaks of disasters martial and marine, but also of his own and others' heroic actions as well as his divinely ordained destiny to found an empire that will have no foreseeable end: "Aeneas' house will rule all coasts, As will his son's sons and those born of them."<sup>14</sup> Dido carefully attends to some heroic aspects of the story and its teller: "How confident his looks, how strong his chest and arms!... What fates have driven him! What trying wars he lived to tell!"<sup>15</sup> But her response varies from the pleasure, pathos, edification, and allegiance intended by such a heroic recitation. She undergoes a thrilling and painful experience that is hers alone. Dido's subjective experience is to be spurred to love both by the content of that story and by Aeneas's person and narrative execution.

Heroic attitudes may find infatuation to be an appropriate female response to a male warrior's accounts of his exploits. But at the same time such a response—from a head of state no less—undercuts epic authority. Dido later becomes intemperate, but she is never blamed or condemned in the poem. Her response suggests that epic narration cannot reliably

<sup>13</sup>*The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam, 1971), 4.1–5.

<sup>14</sup>Virgil *Aeneid* 3.129–30.

<sup>15</sup>Virgil *Aeneid* 4.12–16.

hold its dignity, dispense its traditional meanings, and seat its ideological power. Queen Dido is never able to appreciate Aeneas's epic quest, and his abandonment of her is central to the *Aeneid's* self-interrogation.

The scene then implicitly deauthorizes the *Aeneid's* own epic praise of male heroism, and for many readers so does the rest of Dido's story. In his *Heroides*, Ovid depicts a rather more reasonable Dido than Virgil's, one who after being abandoned by Aeneas debunks his heroic virtue.<sup>16</sup> And if the *Aeneid's* principal narrative of the background of events leading to the establishment of a great empire with supposedly noble ends is ineffective, perhaps those ends are either suspect in themselves or subject to perversion both human and divine.

By once again presenting divided response, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* strikes a balance between Virgil's piety and Ovid's irreverence, and provides a bridge to understanding dramatic uses of the Troy-recitation topos. *The Faerie Queene's* depiction of response to recitation of the fall of Troy seems poised between nostalgia for epic authority and hope for its reconstitution in the heroine's Protestant vocation. Spenser parodies Aeneas's account by presenting a lewd narrator, Sir Paridell, who praises his own Trojan lineage in order to seduce one of his auditors, Dame Hellenore. Since these names recall those of Paris and Helen, Paridell's account seems perversely to employ the destruction of Troy in an attempt to recapitulate the original abduction of Helen that precipitated it. Here Spenser acknowledges the tremendous authority of classical epic in humanist education, which promoted use of the classics in professional and personal life. He registers an anxiety about the misuses of epic authority and the degrading uses to which classical eloquence can be put. Yet Paridell's special auditor Hellenore has her own agenda, and makes use of the opportunity Paridell affords her: she is desperate to leave her possessive, unloving husband. The truly divergent response, though, is not Hellenore's but, ironically, the one that attempts to wrest meaning back to a kind of orthodoxy—Britomart's.

Spenser rolls into one Dido, Odysseus, and Aeneas in this woman warrior, allegorically a heroine of Christian faith and chastity. She is pursuing her prophesied destiny to reunite Britain through marriage, arms, and government, and to found a royal lineage that will stretch through Queen Elizabeth herself. For her heroic duty need not mean the rejection of love, as it does for Aeneas. Paridell's account supplements Britomart's knowledge of her ancestor, the Trojan Brut who founded Britain, and rekindles

<sup>16</sup> E. g., "Where is the mother of the son you own? Her husband left her, and she died alone. This tale provoked my tears—so let me burn!" *Ovid's Heroides*, trans. Harold C. Cannon (London: Unwin, 1971), 55 (lines 83–85). Writers diverse as Ausonius and Sir Walter Raleigh challenge Virgil's version and defend Dido. See *Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Douglas Brookes-Davies (London: Dent, 1947), ix–xi.

the passion of her calling. She completely ignores the epic narrator's seductive intention, finding an elevated truth in his account that he himself cannot appreciate. Her response is therefore exemplary but nevertheless powerfully subjective, since she finds that it addresses her in particular.

Whenas the noble *Britomart* heard tell  
Of *Troian* warres and Priams citie sackt,  
The ruefull story of Sir *Paridell*,  
She was empassiond at that piteous act,  
With zelous enuy of Greekes cruell fact  
Against that nation, from whose race of old  
She heard, that she was lineally extract;  
For noble *Britons* sprong from *Troians* bold,  
And *Troynovant* was built of old *Troyes* ashes cold.<sup>17</sup>

By calling London "Troynovant," Spenser participates in the Elizabethan boosterism that sought to improve the national pedigree by connecting it to the authority of ancient epic. It is here revealed to stem from the power of individual interpretation based on Protestant faith and revealed providence such as that imparted to Britomart earlier by Merlin. Britomart's triumph of interpretation here prepares her to meet a greater, impending challenge in the tapestries and masque of the House of Busirane. There her success in reuniting lovers depends on her ability to interpret more truly than the evil fashioner himself.<sup>18</sup> *The Faerie Queene* emphasizes the importance of the auditors' powers of interpretation to make meaning, represents that power in female auditors, and resituates epic authority ideologically, bringing it into an arena of political and religious contest.

By depicting a female extending support to epic authority in the Troy-recitation episode, Spenser emphasizes on the one hand that Queen Elizabeth still presides over a patriarchy, but on the other his affirmation of women's ability to hold positions of authority within patriarchy. But even Spenser's liberal, relatively female-friendly notion of epic authority never gets consolidated, as episodes and characters continue to proliferate and Britomart's story never completed. In that respect Spenser's Ovid trumps his Virgil.<sup>19</sup>

If Britomart, one of Spenser's homages to Elizabeth's rule, reads against the grain in order to recuperate epic authority for political ends, Marlowe's *Dido* pays homage to Elizabeth by deflating that authority. And versions of response to the fall of Troy in both *Dido* and Shakespeare's

<sup>17</sup>*The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche (New York: Penguin 1978), 515.

<sup>18</sup>Susanne Lindgren Wofford, "Gendering Allegory: Spenser's Bold Reader and the Emergence of Character in *The Faerie Queene* III," *Criticism* 30 (1988): 1–21.

<sup>19</sup>On this passage see John Watkins, *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 162–65.

*Hamlet* define the power of the theater by contrast to epic authority, as a power less to dispense and more to disseminate meanings that circulate within and beyond the theater. The epic's marginal, though significant, hesitations about its authority become a basis for the assertion of a different kind of theatrical authority.

By diminishing Aeneas's stature, making him a pawn of divine will and a traumatized refugee without identity ("Troy is not. What shall I say I am?") and subject to delusions ("see: King Priam wags his hand! He is alive..."),<sup>20</sup> Marlowe renders *translatio imperii* an unattractive idea. What ruling elite would wish to claim this Aeneas as a precedent? Moreover, unlike the *Aeneid*, this version offers Aeneas's own demoralized responses to his account of Troy's fall. He begins with the improbable resolve to speak with pitiless "Achilles' tongue," but requires encouragement to continue and finally breaks off before finishing, explaining "sorrow hath tired me quite."<sup>21</sup> Where Odysseus's subjective and traumatic response gives rise to a new heroic initiative, Aeneas's subjective and traumatic response points him toward despair. Clearly his account does not carry the authority to inspire him to heroic action or to its appreciation. Where the *Aeneid* counts on the authoritative effect of Aeneas's speech on Virgil's intended audience if not on Aeneas's own audience (Dido), Marlowe's reduction of Aeneas's heroic stature renders such an effect on the theatrical audience doubtful.

But while his Aeneas's weakness divests his Troy story of its reverential and prophetic aura, Marlowe presents a gracious, glamorous, and fully competent Dido, one whose alternate name, Elissa, associates her with Queen Elizabeth. Marlowe empowers Dido in this scene by deferring her erotic enchantment until after Aeneas's account of the fall of Troy. Aeneas's account and its Elizabethan relevance to *translatio imperii* is thereby placed in a contest of authority with the public image of England's virgin queen. In doing so, Marlowe identifies theatrical authority not as a matter of dispensing authoritative meaning so much as a power to stage contests of authority—in this case, a contest perhaps relating to that in which Elizabeth and her male courtiers themselves were engaging.

Further, Marlowe's scene emphatically empowers the auditor Dido in relation to the performer Aeneas, illustrating thereby a process in which meaning is produced by players and playgoers together in the theater. In a brilliantly ironic stroke, Marlowe removes the authority to validate heroic dignity from his disabled Aeneas and places it in the hands of Dido. She is ready to recognize and praise heroic suffering and struggle, even if Aeneas himself is not; it is she, the auditor, who grants authority to Aeneas's

<sup>20</sup>Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queene of Carthage*, in *The Complete Plays*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett (London: Everyman, 1999), 252–53 (2.1).

<sup>21</sup>Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, 255, 259.

words. Like Britomart she finds value where the speaker does not, and one might even say that, in effect, like Britomart she recuperates epic authority to rekindle a new epic quest—Aeneas's. But her validation takes place not primarily because of her reverence for his mission, but for a contingent and pragmatic factor: her duty as a host and her desire to be Aeneas's patron.<sup>22</sup>

Like some actual early modern playgoers, Dido the auditor keeps her own agenda in mind as she listens.<sup>23</sup> She has seen how far this Aeneas has fallen—at their meeting he begins by asking her to tell him who he is. “Warlike Aeneas, and in these base robes?” she replies, then gives him her dead husband's robe and affirms that “Aeneas is Aeneas, were he clad in weeds as base as ever Irus ware,” referring to the boastful beggar whom Odysseus maimed in a brawl.<sup>24</sup> She insists that reluctant Aeneas sit on her throne, toasts his good fortune, commands him to “Remember who thou art. Speak like thyself; Humility belongs to common grooms,” and then finally to “Look up and speak” about his trials.<sup>25</sup> As Aeneas speaks, Dido provides enthusiastic and sympathetic responses—a performance of her own, really—in order to boost the reciter's morale and facilitate a cathartic cure.

Dido's exclamations are consistent with the goal of displaying sympathy for Aeneas and she thereby hospitably encourages him to continue what she takes to be both a profoundly important account and a quasi-therapeutic process. So when she is melting with pity and asks Aeneas to stop, she can be understood to be mirroring his crippling sorrow, giving him strength by helping him to confront his feelings, and participating in a grief that is continually threatening to overcome him. When Aeneas does despondently break off, she along with other listeners immediately peppers him with questions, that he might continue. The attempt is not entirely successful, and the words Dido speaks to close the scene indicate she is taking a new tack in her effort to bring her guest around: “Trojan, thy ruthful tale hath made me sad: Come, let us think upon some pleasing sport, To rid me [i.e., and especially you] from these melancholy thoughts.”<sup>26</sup>

Dido's responses seem appropriate for an Elizabethan playhouse. They focus on suspense, pathos, and moral judgment, and are promptly

<sup>22</sup>On the similarity between Dido and Aeneas's early relationship and that of Jupiter and Ganymede see Jonathan Goldberg, “‘Play the Sodomites, or Worse’: *Dido, Queen of Carthage*,” in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Richard Wilson (London and New York: Longmans, 1999), 83–95.

<sup>23</sup>See Charles Whitney, “Ante-Aesthetics: Towards a Theory of Early Modern Audience Response,” in *Shakespeare and Modernity*, ed. Hugh Grady (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 40–60.

<sup>24</sup>Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, 253–54.

<sup>25</sup>Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, 254–55.

<sup>26</sup>Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, 259.

vocalized. If Dido can be taken here as an Elizabethan playgoer, the implication is that the theater has the power to authorize and empower its audiences with provocative and moving representations that accommodate their variable uses and desires; that the theater's authority lies in its potential to become a space for the unpredictable dissemination, circulation, or contest of meaning rather than for the imposition of authoritative truths; and that audiences participating creatively in this process bear a kind of femininity.

Shakespeare's theatrical adaptation of the scene in *Hamlet* concerns performance even more explicitly. It also deauthorizes epic authority to accommodate that of the theater audience, which is represented by Hamlet, the most famous though fictional Elizabethan playgoer, who undergoes a deeply subjective and ambivalent response to heroic action. But Shakespeare nevertheless takes epic authority more seriously than Marlowe. This can be seen by a preliminary glance at his earlier treatment of response to the fall of Troy in *The Rape of Lucrece*, which offers striking parallels to *Hamlet*'s.

*Lucrece* exhibits not precisely the Troy-recitation topos but the closely related picture-gallery-viewing in the *Aeneid*'s Carthage (see above). Grieving Lucrece studies a detailed painting or tapestry of the fall of Troy "for means to mourn some newer way."<sup>27</sup> As with examples above, Lucrece's more elaborate response is highly subjective, a personal application whose free-ranging, moralizing pathos potentially destabilizes the process of transmitting heroic meaning. Her first complaints are relatively conventional, though exaggerated, as she gives voice to the silent sufferers. Then she probes more deeply, discovering how Sinon, plotter of the Trojan Horse, is like her deceitful rapist, and she actually defaces his image with her nails, frustrated that she cannot really hurt him. How horrible is Priam's slaughter, yet he was unwary, just like herself. It is through this subjective glossing that Lucrece's response does validate epic authority, however. She likens the demise of Troy to her loss of chastity, ("my Troy").<sup>28</sup> Lucrece has already resolved to demand that her husband revenge her rape and to kill herself; that decision is validated by meditation on the city that was precursor to her Rome, which set an example by putting its own destruction above dishonor. In that sense Lucrece's creative application reconstitutes epic authority.

In two ways the poem underscores the distinctively and actively feminine nature of Lucrece's Troy-interpretation-validated heroism. The first sets Lucrece's heroism in opposition to a destructive world of masculine competition and aggression. Husband and rapist are comrades-in-arms

<sup>27</sup> *The Rape of Lucrece*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997), line 1365.

<sup>28</sup> *Rape of Lucrece*, line 1547.

whose emulation grows destructive as the latter steals the former's treasure; Lucrece's lurid sense of the siege and fall of Troy focuses on cruelty, deception, error, and horror, with only the corporate body Troy itself offering a worthy model for action. Lucrece emerges as a woman whose sensibility, revealed most clearly in the way she reconstitutes epic authority in her meditation upon Troy, allows her to redefine the true nature of heroism.

The second defines a crucial but limited role for Lucrece in the poem's more overt reconstitution of epic authority, its celebration of the founding of the Roman republic. The Argument and the last stanza indicate that the outrage and pity sparked by Lucrece's suicide resulted in the destruction of the Roman monarchy, of which Tarquin the rapist was a scion, and establishment of the republic. That process was conceived and executed by men devaluing Lucrece's initiative and protecting their right to possess their wives.<sup>29</sup> And Lucrece herself does not apprehend the political dimensions of her rape; she wants only personal revenge. Yet in this poem it is Lucrece's response to the fall of Troy that lends epic authority to republicanism. The response connects the violation of her chastity with forces that destroy the Roman body politic, represented by its antecedent, Troy. Lucrece's interpretation of Troy's destruction provides a crucial and enriching political context that legitimizes Rome's political reform. *Lucrece* defines a powerful authority possessed by a feminine epic audience to, on the one hand, re-interpret and emulate epic tradition in heroic action, and on the other to authorize through interpretation of epic a kind of politically conscious heroic action that is nevertheless still affirmed to be distinctively masculine.

*Hamlet* finds no way either fully to jettison epic authority as Marlowe's *Dido* does, or to reconstitute it as *Lucrece* does. Like that of Lucrece, Hamlet's response to representation of the fall of Troy is deliberative and idiosyncratic, focused on applying the representation to a shattering personal crisis that has public implications. In both cases such response is part of a new interior, audience-centered landscape of complex feeling and self-questioning. Our theater aficionado asks the touring First Player for a passionate speech, specifying "Aeneas' tale to Dido...where he speaks of Priam's slaughter," an episode concerning a son's revenge for his father and therefore dramatizing Hamlet's similar task.<sup>30</sup> The speech awakens Hamlet's guilt for not having already exacted revenge. This is not

<sup>29</sup>Stephanie Jed, *Chaste Thinking: "The Rape of Lucrece" and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). To a degree this is true of Shakespeare's version as well: e.g., Brutus says "Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so to slay herself, that should have slain her foe." *Rape of Lucrece*, lines 1826–27. For a more positive assessment of the republican theme see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Between the Lines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 298–310.

<sup>30</sup>*Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt et al., 2.2.426–28.



in the first place because of the speech's content, but the Player's own vigorous execution, as if heroic action itself could be contained rather than represented in the theatrical medium.

Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit  
 That from her working all the visage wann'd,  
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,  
 A broken voice...?... What would he do  
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
 That I have?... I,  
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
 And can say nothing; no, not for a king,  
 Upon whose property and most dear life  
 A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?<sup>31</sup>

It is often overlooked how the Player's speech prepares for the climax of the play: the reluctant revenger Hamlet seems to infer that since the Player's account of Pyrrhus's determined revenge on Priam has made him, Hamlet, feel guilty, a dramatic representation of Claudius's crime would also make him feel guilty, act guilty, and by that action resolve Hamlet to murder him. The idea of a mousetrap, *The Murder of Gonzago*, in this way stems from Hamlet's response to the Player's speech, and underscores that in *Hamlet* the theater—represented by that speech—authorizes its audience, accommodating and addressing individual playgoers' contingent concerns, and providing seeds for their creative actions (as well as goads for their guilt).

But whereas Marlowe's play *Dido* undermines epic authority partly through parody, *Hamlet's* treatment of the Troy-recitation topos offers a more serious and apprehensive view of the theater's lack of traditional authoritativeness. Although the audience may be free to play with the materials it finds in the theater, this play is still asking, as *Lucrece* does, whether epic authority can be reconstituted to inform the purposes and the identity of its central character. But where *Lucrece* succeeds in her goals of suicide and revenge, Claudius's murder does not follow on Hamlet's successful trap, because neither Hamlet nor the play has been able to fulfill, accept, or reject heroic injunction and example.

Hamlet himself seems trapped between two heroic performances, those of his father's ghost and the First Player. The ghost invokes a crude heroic ethos that seems incongruous in a Renaissance court; on the other

<sup>31</sup> *Hamlet*, 2.2.528–33, 537–39, 544–48.



hand, Aeneas, whose part the First Player assumes, abhors the revenge he describes, and never avenged his king and kinsman Priam's murder. He had a higher destiny, one that a good player could surely intimate in the passion of his speech. In this contest Hamlet stands between a spiteful, if heroic, injunction and Aeneas's impossible heroic ideal.

In his entrapment within an alien heroic world, Hamlet is like Virgil's Dido, and of course as the auditor of the First Player, who is portraying Aeneas, Hamlet stands in Dido's place. Given her similar history, she in fact is another heroic example for Hamlet. The *Aeneid* introduces her by recounting how her fiancé Sychaeus was murdered by her brother Pygmalion, and Sychaeus's ghost bids her flee with her country's treasure to found a new land. Dido's heroic past and her entrapment at the hands of Venus, as well as her de-authorizing and subjective response to a recitation of the fall of Troy, provide contexts for Hamlet's predicament.

And Hamlet, finally, does fulfill the rule noted in this paper about heterodox responses to the fall of Troy, that they come from females or from feminized males,<sup>32</sup> for among the names with which Hamlet berates himself in his response are "whore," "drab," "scullion," and of course "unpregnant."<sup>33</sup> At this point, with regard to gender, Hamlet can only view in a negatively feminine way his resistance to epic authority, that is, his reluctance to carry out the ghost's injunction, an injunction figured here as the First Player's histrionic example. If the theater can be defined to include the whole circulation of authority between players and playgoers in the dramatic transaction, in Hamlet the theater's feminine-gendered liberation from epic authority appears also to be an exile.

<sup>32</sup>The exception is Marlowe's Aeneas, who is not feminized but whose countenance is associated with the lower class.

<sup>33</sup>*Hamlet*, 2.2.263, 564, 565, 545.

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# Tradition and Originality in El Greco's Work: His Synthesis of Byzantine and Renaissance Conceptions of Art

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**D**OMENICOS THEOTOKOPOULOS (1541–1614), usually called El Greco, had one of the most unusual “career paths” of any artist of his era.<sup>1</sup> In less than a decade, he transformed himself from a Byzantine icon painter into one of the most innovative artists of the western European Renaissance. His Spanish contemporaries had no difficulty in acknowledging the significance of his origins. Thus, the court poet Paravicino declared “Creta le dió la vida y los pinceles” (Crete gave him life and the painter’s craft).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, most North American and western European scholars of the modern era have maintained that his initial experiences as an icon painter had little relevance to the later phases of his career, and they have characterized his mature work as a deliberate and thorough “break” with his origins.<sup>3</sup> It cannot be denied that El Greco radically transformed both his working methods and the character of his art during his years in Italy (1568–77). Yet, there are no good reasons to suppose that his evident fascination with Italian art impelled him to reject his origins. In opposition to the prevalent analysis of El Greco exclusively

<sup>1</sup>This article is based upon a paper of the same title, which I presented at the RMMRA Conference, Fort Collins, Colo., 2001. I have taken into account numerous suggestions, generously offered by various members of the audience. I also benefitted from stimulating discussions with Martha Wolff, Cynthia Kuniej-Berry, Frank Zuccari, and Faye Wrubel. Furthermore, I wish to thank the Community Associates of the Art Institute of Chicago for a grant which funded some of the research presented here.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted from a sonnet dedicated to the memory of the artist by Fray Hortensio Félix Paravicino (1580–1633), the preacher to King Philip III and the most famous orator of his time:

Creta le dió la vida y los pinceles  
Toledo, mejor patria donde empie\_a  
a lograr con la Death, eternidades.  
(Crete gave him life and the painter’s craft  
Toledo, a better homeland, where he began  
to attain through Death eternal life.)

This sonnet is reprinted in Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, *Fuentes literarias para la historia del arte español*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1923–41), 5:434.

<sup>3</sup>Manuel B. Cossío, *El Greco* (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1908), 501–12 and passim, argued that Byzantine art could not be related to El Greco’s later work. Cossío proposed that

within the categories of western European art, some scholars have sought to interpret the paintings of his Spanish years primarily by reference to Byzantine art and culture.<sup>1</sup> Given the character of the dominant scholarship on the artist, it perhaps is not surprising that many advocates of this position have tended to overlook other sources for his mature work. Nevertheless, I think it is essential that we develop an understanding of the artist that acknowledges his diverse experiences.

In this paper, I seek to contribute to this goal by discussing examples of significant work, which reveal a synthesis of Byzantine and Renaissance artistic conventions and forms. In his first major commissioned work, the *Assumption of the Virgin*, El Greco not only demonstrated his mastery of

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El Greco used Italianate forms to visualize significant aspects of Spanish life. The first monograph and catalogue dedicated to the artist, Cossío's book helped to shape later scholarship. Since its initial publication, Harold Wethey, *El Greco and His School*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), has been regarded as the definitive catalogue of his work. Wethey eloquently argued that El Greco should be considered a quintessentially Western European artist, and he refused to accept any icons in his corpus, including ones that were inscribed by him (1: 5–6, 52–64, and *passim*). Roberto Longhi, "Una monografia su El Greco e due suoi inediti," *Paragone* 14 (March 1963): 49–57, criticized Wethey's insistence that El Greco did not execute any icons. Jonathan Brown, "El Greco and Toledo," in *The Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art, El Greco of Toledo*, exhibition catalogue (traveled to Madrid, Museo del Prado; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; and Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1982–1983), 76–80, 134–39, maintained that El Greco's work should be evaluated primarily in terms of Western European artistic traditions, as did José Álvarez Lopera, *El Greco: la obra esencial* (Madrid: Silex, 1993), 22–23, 26–29, 40–42, 105–12, 131–34, 220–6, 260–4, and *passim* (henceforth cited as Álvarez Lopera, Greco). The bibliography on El Greco is extensive, and I have cited here only some of the most important studies. For detailed review of the bibliography on El Greco, see Halldor Soehner, "Der Stand des Greco-Forschung," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 18/19 (1955–56), 47–75; Jonathan Brown, "El Greco, the Man and the Myths," in *Toledo (Ohio), Museum of Art, Greco of Toledo*, 15–33; and José Álvarez Lopera, *De Ceán á Cossío: la fortuna crítica del Greco* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>For example, José Ramón Mélida, *El arte antiguo y El Greco* (Madrid: Hauser y Menet, 1915), 2, 5–6, 12–20, argued that it was essential to interpret El Greco as a Byzantine artist. Among later twentieth-century advocates of this position, Pál Kelemen was perhaps the most articulate and impassioned. In *El Greco Revisited: Candia, Venice, Toledo* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 94–104, Kelemen tried to recreate the artist's early years in Crete, even though he did not have access to documents, which were only discovered in subsequent decades. Moreover, he explained that El Greco utilized Byzantine stylistic devices and iconographic motifs in his Spanish paintings (114–53). David Talbot Rice also wrote extensively on the Byzantine aspects of El Greco's work. Among his publications are "El Greco and Byzantium," *Burlington Magazine* 70 (1937): 34–9; "El Greco's Adoration of the Name of Jesus," *The Listener* (16 March, 1961): 494–95; and *Art of the Byzantine Era* (New York: Praeger, 1963), 232, 260. Also see Robert Byron and David Talbot Rice, *The Birth of Western Painting* (London: Routledge, 1930), 162–219. All these authors maintained that El Greco was not influenced in any significant way by Italian art. More recently, Stella Papadaki-Oekland, "El Greco's 'Byzantism.' A Reconsideration," in *El Greco of Crete*, ed. by Nicos Hadjinicolaou (Iraklion: Municipality of Iraklion, 1995), 409–24, has pointed out Byzantine sources for aspects of El Greco's style, but she also acknowledges the importance of Italian influences. David Davies, "The Byzantine Legacy in the Art of El Greco," in *ibid.*, 425–45, maintains that El Greco's Catholic altarpieces can be understood by reference to concepts from theological writings, venerated by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Italian Renaissance principles, but he also incorporated elements, ultimately inspired by his training as a Byzantine icon painter. In a technical study of this monumental altarpiece, I discovered that he devised unique ways to mark this very distinctive work as his personal creation. In addition, I will discuss several versions of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation*, which, in my opinion, must have been painted solely by El Greco. Considering the significance of his production of multiple copies of the same composition, I suggest that the organization of his artistic practice attests to a profound synthesis of Greek Orthodox veneration of eternally valid prototypes with western Renaissance ideals concerning artistic originality.

A brief review of the development of El Greco's career will provide a context for these case studies. Theotokopoulos was trained as a Byzantine icon painter in his birthplace, Candia (now called Iraklion), the largest city on Crete. Before his twenty-fifth birthday, he had become the head of a highly successful workshop for the production of icons.<sup>1</sup> All of the works which he produced in Crete fully corresponded with traditional Byzantine practices. In opposition to Roman Catholic doctrine, the Greek Orthodox Church held that icons manifested the Divine Presence. Artists were expected to create images that conformed to prototypes, which were regarded as having constant validity.<sup>2</sup> Thus, El Greco's *Saint Luke painting the Virgin Mary* (early 1560s, now in Athens, Benaki Museum) accords with the standard Byzantine formula for this scene, exemplified by an anonymous fourteenth-century icon of the subject.<sup>3</sup> In analyzing the Benaki Museum icon, scholars have maintained that such features as the rounded forms of the legs and the rudimentary indications

<sup>1</sup>El Greco declared the date and place of his birth in testimony made in a legal suit of 1606. See Francisco de Borja de San Román, "De la vida del Greco: nueva serie de documentos inéditos," in idem., *El Greco de Toledo, vida y obra de Domenico Theotocópuli* (Toledo: Zocodover, 1982), 340–41. Documents concerning his early activity as a painter on Crete were published by C. D. Mertzios, "Domenicos Theotocopoulos: nouveaux éléments biographiques," *Arte Veneta*, 15 (1961): 217–19 and by Marie Constantoudaki, "Domenicos Théotocopoulos (El Greco) de Candie à Venise: documents inédits (1566-1568)," *Theaurimata*, 12 (1975): 292–308.

<sup>2</sup>Anthony Cutler, "The Pathos of Distance: Byzantium in the Gaze of Renaissance Europe and Modern Scholarship," in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450–1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 23–45. Also see Alexi Lidov, "Miracle Working Icons of the Mother of God," in Athens, Benaki Museum, *Mother of God, Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, exhibition catalogue (2000), ed. Maria Vassilki, 47–57.

<sup>3</sup>For a color reproduction of this icon, now located in the Ikonen-Museum, Recklinghausen, Germany, see Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, *El Greco, Identity and Transformation*, exhibition catalogue (traveled to Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni and Athens, National Gallery & Alexandros Soutzos Museum, 1999–2000), ed. by José Álvarez Lopera, 226. For a color reproduction of El Greco's *Saint Luke Painting the Icon of the Virgin Mary* in the Benaki Museum, see *ibid.*, 226.

of space provide strong premonitions of his later work.<sup>1</sup> Despite these features, El Greco's painting is remarkably similar to the fourteenth-century icon. Slight variations in the appearance of icons inevitably occurred; numerous other Cretan painters of the second half of the sixteenth century also employed motifs inspired by Italian art.<sup>2</sup> However, in contrast to western European Renaissance artists who took pride in their breaks with tradition, Byzantine artists and theorists regarded such variations as minor distractions from the eternally significant qualities of icons.<sup>3</sup> In the *Dormition of the Virgin* (1567, Dormition Church, Syros), one of the last works which he created before leaving his homeland, El Greco visualized Greek Orthodox beliefs about the passing of the Virgin Mary from earth to heaven.<sup>4</sup> In the lower foreground, Christ is shown receiving the soul of the Virgin, who is also depicted above as the Queen of Heavens. The *Dormition* prominently features Italian decorative elements, such as the very ornate candelabra in the foreground. But my students, who insist that the Syros icon "looks just like" all the other Byzantine images that they have seen, are basically right.

In late 1567, El Greco emigrated to Venice, the capital of the empire which included Crete. During the second half of the sixteenth century, many other Cretan artists also went to Venice, in the hope of gaining commissions in that prosperous city. However, unlike El Greco, the other Cretan painters who moved there did not substantially alter their styles or working methods. They simply incorporated more Italian motifs into a consistent Byzantine framework. None of these painters accepted Renaissance ideas about the relevance of change to the creation of art works.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, El Greco fully absorbed the distinctive Italian Renaissance conceptions of the nature of artistic production. As is well known, the

<sup>1</sup>For a review of scholarship, see the entry by M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides in Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 356–67.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, "Cretan Painting During the XV and XVI Centuries: The Long Path Towards Domenikos Theotokopoulos and His Early Production," in Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 83–91.

<sup>3</sup>See Cutler, "Pathos of Distance," esp. 37–45. Chryssanthi Baltoyanni, "The Mother of God in Portable Icons," in Athens, Benaki Museum, *Mother of God*, 139–55, and Anne-marie Weyl Carr, "The Mother of God in Public," in *ibid.*, 325–37, provide informative case studies of the repeated use of spiritually significant compositions.

<sup>4</sup>The Syros *Dormition of the Virgin* is studied in depth by Myrtili Archeimastou-Potamianou, "Domenikos Theotokopoulos: 'The Dormition of the Virgin,' a Work of the Painter's Cretan Period," in *Greco of Crete*, ed. Hadjinicolaou, 29–44.

<sup>5</sup>Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 76–8, provides a concise and perceptive analysis of ways that El Greco distinguished himself from other Cretan artists active in Venice. On the careers of other sixteenth-century Cretan artists, see Edoardo Arslan, "Cronistoria del Greco 'Madonnero,'" *Commentari*, 5, (1964): 213–32; Manolis Chatzidakis, *Etudes sur la peinture postbyzantine* (London: Variorum, 1976), esp. 5–31; and Marisa Bianco Fironi, "Pittori cretesi-veneziani e 'Madonneri': nuove indagini ed attribuzioni," *Bollettino d'arte*, 73 (1983): 71–84.

Italian Renaissance art world emphasized originality.<sup>1</sup> Thus, during the Counter Reformation, Catholic religious leaders demanded that artists develop formal and iconographic innovations in order to stimulate the interest (and ultimately the faith) of viewers. Like other leading Renaissance artists in Catholic countries, El Greco sought to distinguish himself by inventing new and unusual interpretations of traditional religious subjects.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he revealed his adherence to Renaissance ideas about the interaction of time and art by adopting the free, bold handling of paint, characteristic of the Venetian school.<sup>3</sup> This style, devised by such artists as Titian and Tintoretto, created the impression of spontaneity through roughly textured, "loose" brushwork and other means. In the *Pietà* (now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art) and other works of the early 1570s, El Greco revealed his mastery of the Venetian manner.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, his success in adopting the current Renaissance style may have made it difficult for him to make a living in Italy. Although Italians bought icons from Greek artists, they were reluctant to entrust foreign artists with commissions for paintings in a contemporary style.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in 1577, El Greco emigrated to Spain. Most probably, he hoped to obtain employment in the large scale artistic projects being undertaken by Philip II.<sup>6</sup> Unsuccessful in his attempt to gain recognition at court, he must have been delighted to receive a major commission, even though it required that he leave Madrid, the dynamic new capital city.

In 1577, Don Diego de Castilla entrusted the artist with the major project of his career: an ensemble of altarpieces, states, and architectural frames for the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo, a prestigious convent

<sup>1</sup>Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940) remains a classic study of ideas about art in the Italian Renaissance. On El Greco's absorption of Italian Renaissance artistic theory, see Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 128-39.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 113-17, discusses the artist's response to needs of the Counter Reformation Church. For an analysis of several major religious projects, see Richard G. Mann, *El Greco and His Patrons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup>On El Greco's use of Venetian techniques, see, among other sources, Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 21-4; Alfonso E. Perez Sanchez, "La vicenda di El Greco: un 'legame' di eccezione tra Venezia e la Spagna," in *Venezia e la Spagna*, ed. Lucia Corrain (Milan: Electa, 1981), 79-102; and Álvarez Lopera, *Greco*, 44-62.

<sup>4</sup>On the *Pietà*, see Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 24-25, fig. 19 and 2: 65. In terms of technique, the *Pietà* could be compared to many of Titian's later religious paintings. For instance, consider *Agony in the Garden* (ca.1563, El Escorial, Nuevos Museos); on this painting, see Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, 3 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1969-1975), 1: 68-69 and plate 126. See also *Christ crowned with thorns* (c. 1570/1576, Munich, Alte Pinakothek); on this altarpiece, see Wethey, *Titian*, 1: 83 and plates 133-45.

<sup>5</sup>The difficulties which El Greco had in attempting to realize his professional ambitions in the highly competitive Italian "art world" are discussed by many scholars. For concise but thorough discussion of this matter, see Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 5-11 and Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 78-94.

<sup>6</sup>This suggestion by Cossío, *Greco*, 103-10, has been accepted by many later scholars, including Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 10-11; Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 91-4; and Álvarez Lopera, *Greco*, 65-71.



of Cistercian nuns in Toledo.<sup>1</sup> Before the end of the year, he had completed *The Assumption of the Virgin* (signed and dated 1577, now in The Art Institute of Chicago, figure 1),<sup>2</sup> which visualizes Roman Catholic beliefs concerning the event that he previously had represented from a Greek Orthodox point of view in the Syros *Dormition*. Originally, the *Assumption* was displayed in the most important opening of the main retable: the center of the lower story, immediately above the high altar. Surmounting the *Assumption*, in the attic, was the *Trinity* (now in Madrid, Museo del Prado).<sup>3</sup> Between these two narrative paintings, the elliptical image of the *Veil of Veronica* (Madrid, private collection)<sup>4</sup> was supported by two gilded putti, standing in the broken pediment of the architectural frame of the *Assumption*. Still displayed in the main retable are the two full length images which originally flanked the *Assumption*: *Saint John the Baptist* (on the left) and *Saint John the Evangelist*.<sup>5</sup> In the upper compartments on the side wings of the main retable were images of the founders of the Cistercian Order: *Saint Benedict* (Madrid, Museo del Prado)<sup>6</sup> and *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (present whereabouts unknown).<sup>7</sup> For the lateral altars, El Greco painted the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Santander, private collection)<sup>8</sup> and *Resurrection of Christ* (still in situ).<sup>9</sup> El Greco also provided designs for the architectural frames of all the altarpieces and for the five statues on the main retable.<sup>10</sup> This impressive ensemble of works

<sup>1</sup>Documents concerning El Greco's work for this project were published by Francisco de Borja San Román y Fernández, "Documentos del Greco referentes á los cuadros de Santo Domingo el Antiguo," in idem., *El Greco de Toledo* (see note 5), 411–26. In testimony made on 14 September, 1579 in a legal suit, concerning the *Espolio* (Toledo, Cathedral Vestry), El Greco stated that all the paintings for Santo Domingo had been completed and installed. This document was published by Manuel R. Zarco del Valle, "Documentos inéditos para la historia de las bellas artes en España," *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, (Madrid, 1870), 45: 604–05. The documentation for the commission for Santo Domingo el Antiguo is analyzed further by Mann, *Greco and Patrons*, 20–3.

<sup>2</sup>Because it is dated 1577, Cossío, *Greco*, 125–26, pointed out that the *Assumption* must have been the first of the paintings, completed by the artist for Santo Domingo.

<sup>3</sup>Oil on canvas, 300 cm. x 178 cm. (118.8 in. x 70 in.). See Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, fig. 50; 2: 5–6, no. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Oil on panel (oval), 76 cm. x 55 cm. (30 in. x 21.67 in.) This panel was ornamented with an elaborate cartouche. See Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, fig. 70; 2: 7, no. 6A.

<sup>5</sup>Each of these paintings (oil on canvas) measures 212 cm. x 78 cm. (83.5 in. x 30.75 in.) On *Saint John the Baptist*, see Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 6, no. 5 and Gudiol, *Greco*, fig. 59. On *Saint John the Evangelist*, see Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, fig. 49; 2: 6–7, no. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Oil on canvas, 116 cm. x 80 cm. (45.5 in. x 31.5 in.) See Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 6, no. 3 and Gudiol, *Greco*, fig. 64.

<sup>7</sup>Oil on canvas, 113 cm. x 75 cm. (44.5 in. x 29.5 in.). See Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 6, no. 4 and Gudiol, *Greco*, fig. 63.

<sup>8</sup>Oil on canvas, 210 cm. x 128 cm. (82.67 in. x 50.4 in.). See Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, figs. 28, 51; 2: 7, no. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Oil on canvas, 210 cm. x 128 cm. (82.67 in. x 50 2/5 in.) See Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, figs. 52–53; 2: 7, no. 8.

<sup>10</sup>The architectural and sculptural elements were executed by Juan Bautista Monegro, who increased the height of all the frames and thus altered the proportions intended by El





Figure 1. Domenico Theotokópulos, called El Greco. Spanish, b. Greece, 1541–1614. *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1577, oil on canvas, 401.4 x 228.7 cm., Gift of Nancy Atwood Aprague in memory of Albert Sprague, 1906.99, unframed. Reproduction, The Art Institute of Chicago

helped to secure El Greco the reputation as the leading artist active in Toledo.<sup>1</sup> This was fortunate because only a few years after the completion of this project, his hopes for royal patronage were ended by the king's extreme dissatisfaction with *The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* (1580–82, now in the Chapter House, El Escorial), an altarpiece commissioned for the basilica attached to the palace and monastery of El Escorial.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, Don Diego and other leading Toledan ecclesiastics would be his primary clients.

The *Assumption of the Virgin* was not only the most imposing of the altarpieces produced for Santo Domingo but also one of the largest pictures of El Greco's entire career.<sup>3</sup> Both the monumental scale of the *Assumption* and its prestigious original location immediately above the high altar were justified by the relevance of the theme to the funerary functions of the main chapel. Through his patronage of this project, Don Diego secured the right to convert the sanctuary into a burial chapel for himself, his mistress, and their son.<sup>4</sup> According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the Assumption contributed to the salvation of the faithful, because it enabled the Virgin Mary to sit next to Christ and to intervene with him for mercy on their souls.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the reunion of her soul with her body

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Greco. The statues were executed in wood, subsequently gilded. On top of the pediment of the main retable are statues of the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Charity, and Hope (from left to right). Statues of Old Testament prophets are placed above the outermost pilasters of the lower story of the main retable. On the architectural frames and the statues, see Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 67–8, fig. 361; 2: 4, 158–60; and Mann, *Greco and Patrons*, 22–3, 44–5.

<sup>29</sup>See, among other sources, Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 34–6; Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 117–23; and Richard G. Mann, "El Greco's Altarpieces for the Chapel of Saint Joseph: Devotion, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in Counter Reformation Toledo," in *The Word Made Image: Religion, Art, and Architecture in Spain and Spanish America, 1500–1600*, ed. Anne Huxley (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1998), 48–9.

<sup>2</sup>*The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* (oil on canvas, 448 cm. x 301 cm., 176.33 in. x 118.5 in.) was deemed inappropriate for the basilica and replaced by an altarpiece of the same subject by Romulus Cincinnatus. The failure of this royal commission is discussed by many sources, including Cossio, *Greco*, 193–223; Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 12, 39–41; 2: 140–41, no. 265; and Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 98–100. For reproductions of El Greco's altarpiece, see Gudiol, *Greco*, 94–95.

<sup>3</sup>Among El Greco's other works, the *Assumption* for Santo Domingo was exceeded in size only by *The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice* (see note 30) and by *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (oil on canvas, 480 cm. x 360 cm., 189 in. x 141.75 in., Toledo: Santo Tomé, 1586–1588).

<sup>4</sup>By September 1579, the monuments of Don Diego and his son, Don Luis de Castilla, had been constructed on the Gospel side of the main chapel, directly opposite the tomb of his mistress, Doña Mara de Silva. For more on the funerary purposes of the chapel and for biographies of the individuals buried there, see Mann, *Greco and Patrons*, 2–20.

<sup>5</sup>This doctrine was elaborated by numerous popular devotional writers of the era. See, for example, Alonso de Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum, quarta y ultima parte* (Toledo, 1584), fols. 77/v–8/r, 79/v, and Luis de Estrada, *Rosario della Madonna e sommario della vita di Cristi* (Rome, 1588), 267–80. For a concise discussion of the theological significance of the Assumption, see also Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*, ed. F. C. Husenbeth, 4 vols. (London: Virtue, 1929), 4: 173–80.

was believed to prefigure the universal resurrection at the time of the Last Judgment.<sup>1</sup>

In creating the principal altarpiece of the main altar, El Greco drew inspiration from representations of the subject by Italian Renaissance artists, but he did not slavishly copy any of them. His *Assumption* most often has been compared to the monumental altarpiece which Titian created for Santa Maria dei Frari, Venice (1516–18).<sup>2</sup> By far the largest altarpiece yet produced in Venice, the Frari altarpiece gained Titian recognition as the leading artist in the city; thus, it had much the same importance for Titian that the Santo Domingo altarpiece had for El Greco.<sup>3</sup> In the Frari altarpiece, Titian formulated the modern iconography of the subject by “insisting upon the dramatic ascent of the Virgin, in contrast to the symbolic and static treatment of earlier artists.”<sup>4</sup> Through his representation of the Virgin, El Greco most obviously revealed his admiration for the Frari altarpiece. As Titian had, El Greco depicted her in a continuous spiral pose, which not only energized her figure but also visualized the belief that she did not need the assistance of angels to ascend to heaven. Also in accord with Titian, El Greco shows her bending her outstretched arms at the elbows and lifting her hands upwards; her open palms eloquently express her wonder at the event.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, El Greco imitated Titian's construction of space—depicting the heavenly and earthly groups from distinct viewpoints. This method helps to evoke the distance between the Virgin and the Apostles, but El Greco compromises this effect by allowing part of the Virgin's robe to extend downwards, so that it almost touches the head of an Apostle. The simultaneous expansion and contraction of space infuses El Greco's composition with a subtle tension, which enhances its dramatic impact. Furthermore, El Greco greatly increased the scale of the figures, so that they seem to dominate the pictorial surface. While Titian formed the Apostles into a continuous semicircle, El Greco arranged them into two distinct groups, separated by the empty tomb, which projects sharply for-

<sup>1</sup>On this and other beliefs associated with the Assumption and on the iconography of this event during the Counter Reformation era, see Émile Mâle, *L'art religieux de la fin du XVIe siècle, du XVIIe siècle, et du XVIIIe siècle, étude sur l'iconographie après le Concile de Trente* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 360–65 and Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: the Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 88–102.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Cossío Greco, 132–8; José Camón Aznar, *Dominico Greco*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1950), 1: 273–79; Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 34; Mann, *Greco and Patrons*, 37.

<sup>3</sup>On Titian's *Assumption*, see Wethey, *Titian*, 1: 12, 74–76, plates 17–19, 21, 22, and Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 300–4.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted from Wethey, *Titian*, 1: 75. Titian's role in defining the iconography of the Assumption also is well analyzed by Humfrey, *Altarpiece*, 301–4.

<sup>5</sup>Louis Réau, *Iconografía del arte cristiano*, trans. Daniel Acoba, 2 pts., 5 vols. (Barcelona: Serbal, 1996–98), pt. 1, vol. 2, 638–39, points out that earlier artists had shown her with her hands together in a gesture of prayer.

ward at an oblique angle. By organizing the Apostles in this way, he prevented them from being concealed by the tabernacle, which extended almost two meters above the altar table.<sup>1</sup> As Wethey noted, there were numerous Italian precedents for the placement of the tomb on a diagonal, including altarpieces by Andrea del Sarto (two examples now in Florence, Pitti Gallery, 1527/29 and 1531) and by Giuseppe Porta, called Salviati (Venice, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, ca. 1550).<sup>2</sup> Significantly, El Greco omitted one of the most theatrical features of Titian's altarpiece: the group of God the Father and accompanying angels, who "zoom down" to greet the Virgin. By showing her gazing upwards beyond the limits of the frame, El Greco may have intended to link the Virgin to the *Trinity*, displayed in the attic of the retable.

Several of El Greco's modifications of Titian's composition enriched the devotional significance of the scene. Through the strong foreshortening of her figure, El Greco created the illusion that the Virgin was swaying outwards. Therefore, when the *Assumption* was displayed above the main altar, she would have seemed to extend protectively above the tabernacle, containing the consecrated Host. This effect would have visualized her role as the protector of the Sacraments and emphasized her status as Mother of God. Furthermore, underneath her feet, El Greco added a crescent moon, the primary symbol of the Immaculate Conception. This belief, which held that the Virgin had been created before God separated light from dark, was gaining rapidly in popularity in Spain during the sixteenth century, but it was still opposed by many Catholics elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

Saint James the Greater, who is shown kneeling in the right foreground, has been described aptly as a "recast version" of Michelangelo's

<sup>1</sup>Both El Greco's design for the tabernacle and the structure actually executed by Juan Bautista Monegro have been lost. According to documents discovered by San Román and García Rey, Don Diego allowed Monegro to make some significant changes to El Greco's plans, even though El Greco opposed these. El Greco had intended that the tabernacle would be relatively simple and "transparent," so that his painting easily could be seen through it. Monegro made the structure heavier and more elaborate by adding eight ornate columns to it. There is no indication that he modified the height of seven Castilian feet (equivalent to approximately 195 cm.) intended by El Greco. On the relevant documents, see Francisco de Borja de San Román y Fernández, *El Greco en Toledo ó nuevas investigaciones acerca de la vida de Dominico Theotocópuli* (1910), reprinted in idem., *El Greco de Toledo* (see note 5), 44, 144–54 and Verardo García Rey, *El Deán de la Santa Iglesia de Toledo, don Diego de Castilla, y la reconstrucción e historia del Monasterio del Santo Domingo el Antiguo* (Toledo: Medina, 1927), pp. 87–9. On the impact of original conditions of display upon the original composition of the painting, see also Wethey, *El Greco*, 1: 34 and 2: 4; and Mann, *Greco and Patrons*, 40–1.

<sup>2</sup>Wethey, 1: 34, 92n 125.

<sup>3</sup>Useful studies of the history and iconography of the cult of the Immaculate Conception include Manuel Trens, *La Inmaculada en el arte español* (Barcelona: Plus Ultra, 1952) and Mireille Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: College Art Association, 1957). By the time that El Greco painted the *Assumption*, the crescent moon often was incorporated into Spanish depictions

representation of Saint Bartholomew in the Sistine Chapel fresco of the *Last Judgment*.<sup>1</sup> Closely corresponding with Michelangelo's image of Bartholomew are the profile view of James's head and the depiction of his torso and arms in the midst of a complex spiral movement. His ability to rival the Florentine's skillful depiction of musculature is particularly evident in James's exposed leg and his neck. While in Rome, El Greco is supposed to have bragged that he could replace Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* with a superior work.<sup>2</sup> El Greco's appropriation and transformation of Michelangelo's Bartholomew can be understood as a partial fulfillment of this boast. Thus, it is fitting that the paper attached to James's book bears a unique inscription, proclaiming the artist's justifiable pride in his achievement: domhvnikos qeotokovpulos krh;s ov deivxas ,a f o v z .

In devising the *Assumption*, El Greco also appropriated figures from paintings which he created during his years in Italy. For example, Saint John the Evangelist, who stands on the left with his back to the viewer, is a reversal of a prominent figure in the right foreground of the version of *Christ Healing the Blind* now in Parma, Galleria Nazionale (ca. 1570/76).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in the group of Apostles on the right side of the *Assumption*, he incorporated figures from the group that appears immediately to the right of Christ in the versions of the *Purification of the Temple* now in Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art (ca. 1568/70) and Minneapolis, Institute of Arts (ca. 1570/75).<sup>5</sup> Through these "quotations" from his earlier works, El Greco indicated that he regarded the paintings of his Italian period as equivalent in significance to the creations of (then) more famous Renaissance artists.

of this event. See the discussion by Suzanne Stratton, *La Inmaculada Concepción en el arte español*, trans. José L. Chueca Cremades (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1998), 43–4.

<sup>42</sup>The quoted phrase is from Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 122. The derivation of El Greco's figure of Saint James the Greater from Michelangelo's Saint Bartholomew was proposed by Allan Braham, "Two Notes on El Greco and Michelangelo," *Burlington Magazine*, 108 (1966): 307–8.

<sup>2</sup>According to the Italian connoisseur Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (1614), ed. Adrianna Marucchi and Luigi Salerno, 2 vols. (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1956), 1:232, El Greco claimed "si buttasse a terra tutta l'opera, l'haverebbe fatta con honestà et decenza non inferiore a quella di bontà di pittura" (If this entire work were cast to the ground, he would be able to remake it with honesty and decency not inferior to it in the good quality of the picture).

<sup>3</sup>Transcribed with the alphabet of Western European Romance languages, the inscription is: "Doménikos theotokópoulos kr\_s ó deíxas 1577" (Domenikos Theotokopoulos, Cretan displayed this in 1577). As Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 111 explains, the phrasing of the inscription is unique in El Greco's oeuvre.

<sup>4</sup>El Greco's "reuse" of this figure from the Parma *Christ Healing the Blind* was first noted by Cossío, *Greco*, 137. For a reproduction of the Parma painting, see Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, fig. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Cossío, *Greco*, 137–38. On the *Purification* in Washington, D.C., see Jonathan Brown and Richard G. Mann, *Spanish Paintings of the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Cen-*

As he created this altarpiece, El Greco also synthesized devices inspired by his Byzantine heritage with features based upon Renaissance sources. From his training in the icon tradition, El Greco would have understood that a picture was simply a two-dimensional surface, not a window into a convincing virtual reality. Thus, in the *Assumption*, he avoided any indication of spatial depth and converted the clouds into a flat backdrop. Throughout the altarpiece, he overlapped figures so thoroughly that it often is difficult to determine their exact locations. Furthermore, he employed intense illumination to dissolve contours between adjacent figures. Thus, for example, at the left side of the painting, the head of an Apostle, who looks intently out from the background, seems to be located further forward than the head of the full length figure (turned with his back to the viewer), whose body clearly occupies the foreground plane. The treatment of space in his religious paintings usually has been attributed to the influence of early-sixteenth-century Italian Mannerists upon his mature work, even though he stressed the flatness of the picture surface more emphatically than those artists did.<sup>1</sup> Already in the Syros *Dormition*, El Greco compressed space by overlapping compositional elements and employing intense illumination in contours between figures. Thus, his use of these devices in the *Assumption* recalls his initial work as an icon painter.

The quickness and directness with which El Greco executed this monumental altarpiece, indicate his confident state of mind as he undertook his first large-scale project. Over the greyish-brown preparatory layer, he initially established the contours of all the figures with wide bands of reddish brown paint. Still visible on the surface, these lines now serve to reinforce the forms. Only a few minor variations from the shapes defined by the contours can be detected by the "naked eye." The most significant of these involves the outstretched (proper) left foot of the angel at the far right of the upper section. Faint lines indicate that the artist intended to position this foot frontally, so that it would have extended forward into the viewer's space; perhaps realizing that this effect might distract one's attention from the Virgin, he turned the foot to the right. X-radiographs reveal a small number of additional minor changes.<sup>2</sup> The boy at the lower

*turies*, The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67–72 (color plate on 69). On the version in Minneapolis, see Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art, *Greco of Toledo*, 227 (plates 14 and 15), entry by William B. Jordan.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 53–8. Brown, "Greco and Toledo," 134–39, analyzes the distinctive formal qualities of the artist's style, but he concludes that El Greco's Spanish paintings need to be understood exclusively within the context of Mannerism. For a discussion of works by Pontormo (1494–1557), Il Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540) and other relevant Italian Mannerist artists, see S. J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1500–1600*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1986), 175–240.



left of the Virgin constitutes the only notable addition, visible in the X-radiographs. His head was painted over that of another figure, possibly representing a cherub, who was placed lower. The need to cover the earlier form explains the exceptional thickness of the green paint, used to define the drapery enveloping the boy's shoulders.

Further evidence of the artist's confidence is provided by his dynamic handling of paint. An intensive examination of the entire surface of the altarpiece, undertaken by the author and conservators affiliated with the Art Institute, revealed the vitality of El Greco's techniques. Using an hydraulic lift, we were able to get close to all parts of the surface and to see details, invisible from the gallery floor.<sup>1</sup> A brief discussion of a few representative sections will serve to clarify some of El Greco's distinctive methods. In the draperies of the Apostles in the lower section, one can see the marks left by the coarse bristles of the brushes which the artist used to build up the thick layers of paint. It is evident that he also used his fingers and the butt end of his brush to manipulate the paint. The artist's fingerprints are especially numerous in the draperies of Saint John (the figure who stands with his back to the viewer, at the left) and Saint Peter (the bearded figure standing at the far right). As he "built up" Peter's right hand in relief above the surface of the drapery, El Greco used impressions of his fingertips to shape the knuckles, and he indicated other parts of the fingers by scribbling into the paint with butt end of his brush. In depicting ears, noses, and eyes, El Greco endowed translucent red colors with the thickness and texture of heavy impasto. This may seem a minor detail, but it is significant because, during the Renaissance, other artists usually applied this translucent red in smooth, unmodulated glazes.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the heavenly scene above, El Greco generally applied paint smoothly and

<sup>2</sup>The X-radiographs were made in November 2001 under the supervision of Frank Zuccari and Cynthia Kuniej-Berry. The original X-radiographs are on file in the Paintings Conservation Department, The Art Institute of Chicago. Four modifications of the positions of body parts can be noted in the X-radiographs in the lower section of the altarpiece. On the right, the head of the bald Apostle initially was placed a few centimeters higher, and his upraised hand was a few centimeters to the left of its final position. In the group of Apostles on the left, the upturned head, nearest to the center, was located a few centimeters further to the right; moreover, the upraised hand of the figure with his back to the viewer was placed slightly lower. The X-radiographs also reveal numerous slight variations in placement in the upper section; most of these involve a shift of one centimeter or less.

<sup>1</sup>Since 1988, the *Assumption* has been displayed in a large and impressive frame, based upon the central section of the main retable at Santo Domingo. The lower edge of the painting is approximately six feet above the floor of the gallery, as would have been the case in the church. Because of the height at which it is displayed, many details of the artist's technique are not easily perceived by a viewer standing on the gallery floor. Cynthia Kuniej-Berry accompanied me in the hydraulic lift and generously shared her insights with me. I also benefitted from discussions with other conservators, including Frank Zuccari, Timothy Lennon, and Faye Wrubel. Adrienne Jeske coordinated the complex arrangements for the examination of the altarpiece. Robert Hashimoto documented our findings in photographs, preserved in the Paintings Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago.

thinly; he even allowed the reddish brown preparatory ground and the weave of the canvas to show through in many places in the upper section. Thus, his technique served to distinguish the heavenly and earthly realms. The liveliness and freedom, with which El Greco applied paint in this altarpiece, demonstrate his mastery of the characteristic techniques of the Venetian school during the second half of the sixteenth century. In particular, he must have been inspired by the works of Tintoretto, who emphasized the stroke “as spontaneous gestural performance” and thus endowed it with a “new primacy over illusionism.”<sup>1</sup>

Examining the upper reaches of the painting, I was most excited to discover the artist’s fingerprints recorded on the tips of the Virgin’s outstretched left hand.<sup>2</sup> (*Her* left hand is on the viewer’s right.) As I have indicated, there are many places in the altarpiece, where the artist seems to have manipulated the paint with his fingers. While he made no attempt to obscure the resulting prints, he did not highlight them by coordinating them with important features of the composition. But, here, in the Virgin’s left hand, he was not simply using his fingers as a painting tool. Instead, he systematically recorded his prints by impressing them carefully on the tips of the fingers of the most important figure in the composition.

I realize that the artist’s intentions can only be a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, I propose that the prints on the Virgin’s hand served to identify the *Assumption* as El Greco’s personal creation. Although they would not have been seen by viewers below, they would at least have enabled the artist to express his satisfaction and pride in the creation of this major work. In this regard, it is significant that the prints were placed upon a figure, obviously derived from a famous work by Titian. These prints would have complemented the unique inscription displayed in front of a “recast version” of a figure by Michelangelo. Together, the prints and the inscription would have asserted El Greco’s mastery of both the Venetian and Central Italian traditions. Of course, the prints may have additional layers of meaning. For instance, it is possible El Greco intended his fingerprints to express his own devotion to the Virgin Mary. However, there is no evidence to suggest that El Greco was notably pious, and, in my opinion, it is unlikely that he would have felt inspired to make a declaration of personal faith in this painting.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Even during his final period, Titian continued to apply glazes in this way. On Titian’s techniques, see Wethey, *Titian*, 1: 34–9.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 33. Nichols provides an insightful analysis of Tintoretto’s techniques; for discussion of techniques which seem comparable to those in El Greco’s works, see esp. 33, 107, 135.

<sup>2</sup>This discovery was confirmed by Cynthia Kuniej-Berry, Frank Zuccari, Timothy Lennon, and Martha Wolff. Robert Hashimoto documented this discovery through photographs (on file in Paintings Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago).



No traces of the artist's fingerprints could be found on the Virgin's (proper) right hand, which were painted with exceptional smoothness. The distinction in the treatment of the two hands might be explained by reference to traditional connotations of right and left. In the Christian world, the right hand had long been associated with heavenly matters and goodness, while the left was linked with earthly things and even evil.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Christ and the saints always were shown using the right hand to bless and to perform other actions that benefitted the faithful. In this context, the artist, who had been raised in a culture which regarded holy figures as literally embodied in icons, probably would have felt that placing his prints on the right hand would have shown disrespect for the Virgin.

By marking the *Assumption* as his personal creation, El Greco revealed that he had absorbed the Italian Renaissance conception of art as the expression of individual genius. However, he did not entirely abandon Greek Orthodox beliefs about the functions of art. Thus, I propose that he adopted the Byzantine practice of basing new works of art on esteemed prototypes to the very different circumstances of the western European art market.

<sup>3</sup>The controversies concerning the artist's personal faith (or lack of it) far exceed the scope of this article. El Greco's provisions for his funeral and for other memorial services constitute his most significant public demonstration of faith. These arrangements were not exceptional for a man of his social class. The relevant documents were published by San Román, *Greco en Toledo*, 89–91, 194–97, and 199–202. Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 79–80, summarizes most of what is known securely about the artist's personal beliefs. Despite – or perhaps because of – the lack of secure information, there has much speculation about this topic. Some writers have characterized him as a mystic. Maurice Barres, *Greco ou le secret de Tolède*, (1911), rev. ed. (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1923), esp. 86–114, and David Davies, *El Greco* (London: Phaidon, 1976), 6–10, are among the sources presenting this point of view. Other commentators have sought to characterize him as a modern agnostic or even as an atheist, who disdained the religious institutions for which he worked. Julius Meier-Graefe, *The Spanish Journey*, trans. J. Holyrold-Reece (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 80–106 and *passim.*, and Fernando Marías and Agustín Bustamente García, *Las ideas artísticas de El Greco* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981), 204–19, are among those who have characterized the artist in this way. There is no evidence to support “extreme” interpretations of the artist's relationship to the religion of his time. To the present writer, it seems probable that El Greco's faith was typical, rather than exceptional, for his era. Nevertheless, as I have explained in *Greco and Patrons*, I think that El Greco would have been concerned with creating works of art that responded to the spiritual requirements of his clients. In this respect, his career needs to be analyzed with the objectivity that characterizes most studies of religious art by other Renaissance artists. Thus, for example, scholars have been able to discuss how Titian's Frari altarpiece fulfilled the needs of the emerging cult of the Assumption, without considering his own personal feelings about this devotional movement; see Humfrey, *Altarpiece in ... Venice*, 301–4, with previous bibliography.

<sup>1</sup>For an informative analysis of an influential ecclesiastic's association of the left hand with the earthly matters and of the right with the heavenly ones, see Edwin R. Gorsuch, “Emotional Expression of a Manuscript of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*: British Library Cotton Tiberius A XIV.” *Semiotica* 83 (1991): 227–249. Rudolf Wittkower, “El Greco's Language of Gestures,” *Art News*, 56, no. 1 (March 1957), 45–8, discusses El Greco's carefully considered use of hand gestures.

Although he was most stimulated by opportunities to create large scale pictorial ensembles, as he did at Santo Domingo, he supported himself in part through the production of numerous replicas of popular religious subjects, which he sold to individuals and churches in Spain and the Americas. His efficiency in producing many exact copies of a very limited number of compositions has led some modern art historians to call him the “Henry Ford of Toledo.”<sup>1</sup> During his visit to El Greco’s studio in 1611, Francisco Pacheco (1564-1654), who was active both as a painter and a theorist, noted with interest El Greco’s habit of making replicas of all his compositions.<sup>2</sup> Pacheco strongly praised the high quality of the small scale versions, which were still preserved in the studio.<sup>3</sup> In analyzing the numerous versions of popular religious subjects, modern scholars have tried to identify significant, qualitative features, which would enable them to distinguish “original” examples from workshop pieces. Thus, paintings in poor condition have tended to be described as workshop replicas, primarily because they do not look as convincing as other versions. However, advances in the conservation and scientific examination of paintings make it necessary to reevaluate the attribution of some works, previously assigned to the workshop on the basis of appearance.<sup>4</sup>

The problems involved in the classification of replicas will be considered here through an analysis of one of his most popular images of Saint Francis of Assisi. During his lifetime, El Greco was esteemed as the most effective and prolific painter of that saint. Thus, Pacheco, who served as an official inspector of art works for the Inquisition, asserted that El Greco should be acknowledged as “el mejor pintor deste Santo que se hubiera conocido en este tiempo...porque se conformó mejor con lo que dice la historia” (the best painter of this saint that has been known in this time... because he conformed most fully to that which history tells us).<sup>5</sup> Citing the renown of his paintings of Saint Francis, many scholars have asserted that El Greco must have originated the theme of the penitent Francis, which enjoyed great popularity in the Counter Reformation era and largely replaced the historical scenes, which had predominated in earlier centuries.<sup>6</sup> It is virtually impossible to determine priority in the development of the iconography because many of the relevant works by El Greco

<sup>1</sup>On this characterization of the artist, see Wittkower, “Greco’s Language,” 45.

<sup>2</sup>Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura* (1649), ed. Bonaventura Bassegoda i Hugas (Madrid: Cátedra, 1990), 440–1.

<sup>3</sup>Pacheco, *Arte*, 440–41. The inventories of the artist’s estate, made in 1614 and 1621, listed many small scale replicas, undoubtedly including some that Pacheco had seen in 1611. San Román transcribed the 1614 inventory in *Greco en Toledo*, 205–11, and the 1621 inventory in “vida del Greco” 357–75.

<sup>4</sup>The changes in attribution, due to the results of treatment by conservators, can be exemplified by the case of the *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation*, now in Dallas, Meadows Museum of Art, discussed below.

<sup>5</sup>Pacheco, *Arte*, 698.

and others can not be dated securely on documentary grounds. Nevertheless, the prevalence of the theme in Italian art of the late sixteenth-century makes it likely that El Greco was influenced by works which he saw during his years in Venice and Rome.<sup>1</sup> Although he probably did not invent the iconography, he developed a distinctive treatment of the subject. For instance, the subtlety and restraint of the facial expressions and hand gestures distinguish his representations of Francis from paintings by sixteenth-century Italian artists, such as Muziano, Cigoli, and Annibale Carracci, who handled the theme in a very theatrical fashion.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, El Greco simplified the subject by omitting the landscape vista, usually included in Italian examples, and he intensified the meditative mood by limiting the color range largely to browns and greys. As several commentators have emphasized, his austere, emotionally intense images of the saint eloquently articulated many of the ideals of the Catholic Reformation in Spain.<sup>3</sup>

Modern commentators have acknowledged that representations of Saint Francis constituted a very important part of El Greco's production — making up approximately ten percent of his oeuvre. However, experts have not agreed about exactly how many images he personally executed.

<sup>6</sup>The Stigmatization is the only incident of Francis' life, which continued to be represented frequently during the Counter Reformation period. Among the sources crediting El Greco with originating the iconography of the penitent Saint Francis are Cossio, *Greco*, 376; Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 342; Paul Guinard, *El Greco*, trans. James Emmons (New York: Skira, 1956), 86–8; Walter Nigg, *Maler des Ewigen*, 2 vols. (Zurich: Artemis-Verlag, 1961), 1: 221–26; Wethey, *Greco*, 1:60; José Gudiol, "Iconography and Chronology in El Greco's Paintings of Saint Francis," *Art Bulletin*, 44 (1962), 201–3; John B. Knipping, *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands: Heaven on Earth*, 2 vols. (Leiden: De Graff, 1974), 1: 147–50; George Galavaris, "El Greco's Image of St. Francis of Assisi," in *Greco of Crete*, ed. Hadjinicolaou, 383–96. For further discussion of representations of Saint Francis in the late sixteenth century, see Pamela Askew, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (1969): 280–306 and Mâle, *art religieux*, 171–9, 210–3, 478–83.

<sup>1</sup>Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "Une vision mystique du Greco: Barrés et le secret de Toledo," in *Greco of Crete*, ed. Hadjinicolaou, 608–9, has suggested that El Greco was influenced by such paintings as Girolamo Muziano's *Saint Francis in Meditation* (Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte). Among other artists, Annibale Carracci created numerous paintings of Saint Francis in meditation, including a widely distributed engraving, *Saint Francis at Prayer* (1585), which depicts a full-length figure of the saint, holding a cross and gazing at a skull in his lap. (See Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, 2 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1971), 1: 42–3; 2: 12 and plate 23a..

<sup>2</sup>For an example by Girolamo Muziano (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte), see Hadjinicolaou, "Vision," 609. For paintings of Saint Francis by Cigoli, see Domenico Sparacio, *Storia di S. Francesco d'Assisi*, with a preface by Michele Faloci-Pulignani (Assisi: Casa Editrice Francescana, 1928), reproductions on 164 (Rome, Galleria Nazionale) and 171 (Florence, Uffizi). For illustrations of some of Annibale Carracci's paintings of Saint Francis, see Posner, *Carracci*, vol 2, plates 20 (Rome, Galleria Capitolina), 28 (Rome, Galleria Borghese), 29 (Venice, Accademia).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, *San Francisco de Asís en la escultura española* (Madrid: Tipografía artística, 1926), 30–9; Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 342–65; and José Gudiol, "Iconography," 195–203.

The numbers of pictures of Saint Francis, which have been catalogued as autograph works by El Greco, have ranged from 135 (Camón Aznar) to 24 (Wethey).<sup>1</sup> Since its publication in 1962, Wethey's catalogue has been regarded as a definitive compilation of authentic works.<sup>2</sup> Wethey defined a convincing corpus of paintings by deattributing many obvious copies and forgeries. However, my review of representations of a very popular Franciscan theme indicates that he also eliminated from the artist's oeuvre important autograph pictures.

In the process of reclassifying many works, Wethey proposed that the workshop produced many more pieces than had been supposed by earlier scholars. Thus, although he assigned only twenty-four images of Francis to El Greco, he maintained over one hundred pictures of this saint were executed by his workshop or followers.<sup>3</sup> The preserved documentation about El Greco's workshop is fragmentary, and, thus, it is impossible to be precise about the scope of its production. Nevertheless, it is clear that his workshop was relatively small in comparison both with the shops for the production of icons in his native Candia, in which he had been trained, and with the studios of major Venetian artists, whose manner of painting he successfully sought to imitate.<sup>4</sup> In 1597, the artist's son, Jorge Manuel, was first recorded as a painter in the workshop, and he became a full partner in his father's business in 1603.<sup>5</sup> Francesco Preboste, who accompanied El Greco from Italy and served as his business manager, also is known to have worked occasionally as a painter in the studio until 1607.<sup>6</sup> Thus, at least

<sup>1</sup>Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 2: 1383–9, assigned 135 paintings of Francis to the artist. Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 117–26 proposed that El Greco painted only twenty-four images of the saint, including ten which involved substantial collaboration with the workshop. In his checklist of paintings executed by the artist, Álvarez Lopera, *Greco*, 277–94, included thirty paintings of Francis. On the basis of my current research for a new catalogue of El Greco's work, I suggest that he produced fifty-one paintings of Saint Francis, including eleven that involved substantial collaboration with the workshop. In addition, I would assign at least nine paintings of the saint solely to the workshop.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Brown, "Myth and Man," 31 on the status of Wethey's catalogue.

<sup>3</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 218–39. Wethey assigned sixteen paintings entirely to the workshop and considered forty-six to be copies by close, contemporary followers; he identified another fifty-three as copies produced in the second half of the seventeenth century or later.

<sup>4</sup>The relatively small size of El Greco's workshop also was noted also by José Álvarez Lopera, "El Griego de Toledo," in Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes, *La Anunciación de El Greco: el ciclo del Colegio de María de Aragón*, exhibition catalogue (traveled to Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1997), 26–8. However, Álvarez Lopera makes very different conclusions about the scope of the workshop production than I present here. On El Greco's relationship to contemporary Cretan artistic practices, see Chrysanthi Baltoyianni, "The Place of Domenicos Theotocopoulos in 16th-Century Cretan Painting, and the Icon of Christ from Patmos," in *Greco of Crete*, ed. Hadjinicolaou, 75–86.

<sup>5</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 115–6. For fuller discussion, see Elizabeth du Gué Trapier, "The Son of El Greco," *Notes Hispanic*, 3 (1943): 1–46.

<sup>6</sup>San Román, *Greco en Toledo*, 35–7, 170, 174–75. Although Preboste's activity as a studio painter is documented, it is impossible to identify which examples he produced.

two painters were consistently employed in El Greco's workshop between 1597 and 1607, and, other students and assistants probably contributed to the output of the shop during at least some of these years.<sup>1</sup> Yet, however efficient Jorge Manuel, Preboste, and other assistants may have been in replicating El Greco's compositions, it seems unlikely that they could have produced all the paintings which have sometimes been assigned to them.<sup>2</sup>

The large number of paintings of Saint Francis attributed variously to El Greco, his workshop, and his followers attests to the widespread demand for his distinctive representations of this popular religious figure. Yet, for all their paintings of Saint Francis, El Greco and his workshop utilized only ten compositional types.<sup>3</sup> Among these, one of the most popular was the theme which modern scholars refer to as *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation*. In this composition, the full-length figure is shown in profile view, kneeling with his hands crossed on his chest. Turned to the right, the saint gazes intently at the crucifix, which leans against a skull on a large, altar-like rock. Signifying devotion to God and renunciation of worldly things, the crucifix and skull are standard attributes of penitent saints in paintings by El Greco and other artists of the Counter Reformation era.<sup>4</sup> The small book, placed next to the crucifix and skull, is probably a breviary; a paper, projecting from it, marks the place of the day's service.<sup>5</sup> The saint is shown inside a cave or grotto, which may represent the cell that he built on Mount La Verna.<sup>6</sup> The outer world has been reduced to a small view of the sky at the upper right. The hardy ivy vine in the upper left corner provides the only note of bright color; this plant, widely recognized in the Renaissance era as a symbol of salvation and eternal life, occurs in many of his images of penitent saints.<sup>7</sup>

At least eighteen versions of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* have been identified, including examples assigned by modern scholars to

<sup>1</sup>Luis Tristán was recorded as an apprentice in the studio between 1603 and 1606; see Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 116.

<sup>2</sup>Wethey, *Greco* — still considered the definitive catalogue of his work — assigned 109 paintings solely to the workshop. Wethey also maintained that an additional 89 paintings were produced primarily by the workshop, but retouched by the artist. Thus, the workshop was considered to have been responsible (wholly or in part) for 198 pieces. In comparison, only 186 paintings (from the entire span of the artist's career, covering more than 55 years) were classified as entirely autograph. Wethey also catalogued 247 pictures as works of followers or copyists.

<sup>3</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 114–26 identified the names for the types which have been accepted by all later commentators. These include *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation*, *Saint Francis Standing in Ecstasy*, *Saint Francis' Vision of the Flaming Torch*, *Saint Francis and Brother Leo Meditating on Death*, three compositions of *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*, and three variations of *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*.

<sup>4</sup>Engelbert Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, 8 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968–1976), 6: 272–4, 301, vividly analyzes the significance of the crucifix and skull in representations of Francis and other penitent saints by El Greco and other artists.

<sup>5</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 115.

<sup>6</sup>As suggested by Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 115.

El Greco; his workshop; his son, Jorge Manuel Theotocopoulos; and contemporary and later followers. Among these, only the one now in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (ca. 1597/1607, oil on canvas, 147 cm. x 105 cm., 58 in. x 48.5 in.) has been regarded consistently by all modern scholars as an outstanding autograph work.<sup>1</sup> This painting is in superlative condition, and, as Wethey noted, the “rather free illusionistic brushwork and the white highlights produce a brilliant effect.”<sup>2</sup>

The picture now in Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes (ca. 1587/1597, oil on canvas, 105.5 cm. x 86.5 cm., 41.25 in. x 34 in.) was overlooked by art historians until 1938, when the bombing of the convent in which it was located provoked international commentary.<sup>3</sup> Describing its quality as mediocre, Wethey classified it as a workshop piece, minimally retouched by the artist. Furthermore, he claimed that it had been repainted “with such thoroughness as to leave little of old pigment visible.”<sup>4</sup> However, Sánchez-Lassa’s scientific examination of 1998 established that there are only minimal losses of original paint.<sup>5</sup> Despite Wethey’s doubts, the Bilbao painting now generally is regarded as an autograph work.<sup>6</sup> Such details as the cord of the robe, the skull, and the book are handled in this picture with the subtle naturalism, characteristic of El Greco’s religious paintings of the late 1580s and early 1590s. In the Bilbao painting, both Francis and the sculpted image of Christ on the cross have fuller, relatively more classicizing proportions than do those figures in the later picture in San Francisco. Although not quite as bold and free as in later versions, the brushwork, nevertheless, is loose and varied.

<sup>7</sup>Mirella Levi D’Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: botanical symbolism in Italian painting* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1977), 131, identifies the symbolism of the ivy vine. Among El Greco’s paintings of other penitent saints, which include an ivy branch, are *Saint Jerome in Penitence* (Madrid, Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando; see Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 303); *Saint Mary Magdalen in Penitence* (Museu de Montserrat; see Barcelona, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, *El Greco: la seva revaloració pel Modernisme català*, exhibition catalogue [1996–97], plate 7); and *Saint Peter in Tears* (Mexico City, Museo Soumaya; see Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 290).

<sup>1</sup>San Francisco, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, *The Samuel H. Kress Collection*, catalogue by William B. Suida (1955): 70–1; Gudiol, “Iconography,” 202; Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 47, figs. 267–8; 2: 121–2, no. 219; Colin Eisler, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools Excluding Italian*, (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), 194–5, no. K1971, fig. 95; Álvarez Lopera, *Greco*, 289, no. 213; Galavaris, “Greco’s Image of St. Francis,” 386–7.

<sup>2</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 122, no. 219.

<sup>3</sup>The painting was originally located in the Carmelite Convent of Cuerva (province of Toledo). The circumstances of the modern “recovery” of this altarpiece are discussed by Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, “El Greco: Some Recent Discoveries,” *Burlington Magazine*, 82 (1945): 296.

<sup>4</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 122, no. 221.

<sup>5</sup>On the examination of 1998, see Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 407, no. 54.

<sup>6</sup>Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 293 (color reproduction), 406–7, no. 54 (with extensive bibliography), and Gudiol, *Greco*, 151–2, color fig. 125, provide thorough discussion of the painting. On the artist’s technique ca. 1587/1597, see Wethey, *Greco*, 1:44–6 and Gudiol, *Greco*, 126–69.



The *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* now in Dallas, The Meadows Museum of Art, Southern Methodist University (ca.1595/1610, oil on canvas, 76 cm. x w. 63.5 cm., 29.88 in. x 25 in.) was first noted in the El Greco literature in 1962, when it was recorded by Wethey. Describing its “general effect” as “flat and dark,” he catalogued it as an inferior product of the artist’s workshop.<sup>1</sup> Because of Wethey’s dismissive remarks, it was overlooked in subsequent scholarly literature, until it was offered for sale in 1999.<sup>2</sup> The restoration of the picture, shortly before the auction, revealed it to be an autograph work in very good condition. Utilizing a wet-on-wet method, the artist applied paint on the Meadows Museum canvas much more thinly than in any of his other paintings of the subject; the only elements painted in relief are the highlights on the hands and a few other important areas. The “simplified techniques” and lack of incidental detail suggests that the Dallas painting functioned either as a *modello* (preparatory oil sketch) or as a *ricordo* (autograph record) of one of the larger versions.<sup>3</sup>

The version of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* now in the Art Institute of Chicago (ca.1590/1604, figure 2) has been attributed variously to the artist, his workshop, and the artist in collaboration with his workshop. Throughout the first six decades of the twentieth century, the Art Institute picture was regarded consistently as an outstanding autograph work of the artist.<sup>4</sup> In his influential catalogue of 1962, however, Wethey maintained that it had been produced largely by the workshop, with very minimal participation of the artist. In support of this classification, he maintained that the “dull” colors lacked the brilliance, characteristic of the artist’s works.<sup>5</sup> The treatment of the picture in 1976 largely succeeded in restoring the original color scheme.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, other condition problems (including some notable areas of loss and abrasion) have continued to detract from the effect of this version. Thus, it is understandable that some recent scholars also have expressed doubts about the

<sup>1</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 227–8, no. X-300.

<sup>2</sup>New York, Christie’s, *Spanish Old Master Paintings*, sale catalogue, 29 Jan., 1999, 33–9, no. 199 (color reproduction), entry by William B. Jordan.

<sup>3</sup>Jordan, Christie’s sale catalogue, 36, no. 199. Several other small scale replicas of larger compositions, produced by El Greco ca. 1595/1610, with the same qualities as the Dallas painting have been designated by scholars as *modelli* or *ricordi*. In this respect, one can compare the Dallas picture to *The Holy Family with Saint Anne and Infant John the Baptist*, now in Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (ca. 1595/1600, oil on canvas, 53.2 cm. x w. 34.4 cm., 20.88 in. x 13.5 in.); see Brown and Mann, *Spanish Paintings*, pp. 72–7, color reproduction on 75.

<sup>4</sup>Cossío, *Greco*, 576, no. 139; August Liebmman Mayer, *Dominico Theotocopuli, El Greco* (Munich: Hanfstaengl, 1926), 43, no. 267; Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 364; 2: 1385, no. 580; Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño, *La pintura española fuera de España* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1958), 203, no. 1388.

<sup>5</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 122, no. 220.

<sup>6</sup>Report of Examination and Treatment, 1976, in the files of the Paintings Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 2. Domenico Theotokópulos, called El Greco. Spanish, b. Greece, 1541–1614. *Saint Francis*, 1590–1604, oil on canvas, 92.6 x 74.6 cm., Robert A. Waller Memorial Fund, 1935.372. Reproduction, The Art Institute of Chicago.

attribution to El Greco. Álvarez Lopera has agreed with Wethey, while Jordan assigned it solely to the workshop.<sup>1</sup>

I find that both in the overall treatment of the theme and the specific techniques employed, the Chicago *Saint Francis* is comparable to autograph paintings and clearly distinguishable from workshop pieces. Charac-

<sup>1</sup>Álvarez Lopera in Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 54, no. 406; Jordan in Christie's sale catalogue, 39, no. 199. However, the painting has been described as an authentic work by the following sources: Tiziana Frati, *L'opera completa del Greco* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1969), 108, no. 102b; Albert Châtelet, *Cent chefs-d'oeuvre du Musée de Lille* (Lille:



teristic of authentic paintings by the artist is the skillful and convincing articulation of anatomy of both the principal figure of the saint and the sculpted image of Christ on the cross. Furthermore, the facial expression and hand gestures are deeply felt and convincing.<sup>1</sup> Examination of the painting under intensive illumination, both with magnifying glasses and with a binocular microscope, made it possible to appreciate fully the lively and varied brushwork, which, in some places, has been obscured by yellow varnish and later retouches.<sup>2</sup> The techniques, utilized in the Chicago *Saint Francis*, correspond with those employed in works of undoubted authenticity, including small scale versions of other subjects, executed ca.1595/1610, such as the pictures of the *Annunciation to the Virgin Mary*, now in Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes and in Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.<sup>3</sup> The saint's hands and many parts of his habit are defined with energetic, crisscrossed strokes, evidently applied with thick, coarse brushes, which El Greco utilized throughout his years in Spain. Attempts by the workshop to imitate strokes of these types usually resulted in a confused jumble of lines, not the coherent depictions of fabric and of body parts, generated by El Greco's masterful handling of paint.<sup>4</sup> Thickly applied, red translucent paint in the contours of the facial features and around the fingernails also is typical of the artist. As he did in many of his other paintings of penitent saints, El Greco utilized exceptionally thick, roughly textured paint to create the brightly colored ivy.<sup>5</sup> By applying

Société des Amis du Musée de Lille, 1970), 58, no. 21; Gudiol, *Greco*, p. 351, no. 164; Edi Baccheschi, *Il Greco: tutti i dipinti* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1980), 24, no. 21-F (illus. 26); Madrid, Museo Municipal, *Tesoros del Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao: Pintura, 1400-1939*, exhibition catalogue by Juan J. Luna (1989-1990), 35, no. 3. In the second edition of his catalogue, José Camón Aznar rejected Wethey's classification of the Chicago painting; see *Dominico Greco*, 2d rev. ed., 2 vols. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1970), 1: 383, 390, fig. 277; 2: 1371, no. 584 and reaffirmed his opinion that the Chicago *Saint Francis* is an autograph piece.

<sup>90</sup>Halldor Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 9/10 (1958/1959), esp. 147-51, emphasizes the inability of the workshop to imitate the artist's skillful handling of anatomy and his convincing expressions and gestures.

<sup>2</sup>The author and conservator Cynthia Kuniej-Berry studied the painting in the Art Institute Paintings Conservation Studios in July 2000 and October 2001. We examined the painting with infrared reflectography and reviewed X-radiographs (on file in the Paintings Conservation Department). The binocular microscope facilitated our analysis of the brushwork and paint consistency.

<sup>3</sup>Ana Sánchez-Lassa, "La Anunciación del Greco: análisis compartivo," in Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes, *Anunciación*, 59-73, provides a detailed study of the replicas, now in Bilbao and Madrid, including numerous illustrations. Another helpful study of El Greco's techniques is Carmen Garrido, "Estudio técnico de cuatro Anunciaciones de El Greco," *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, 8 (1987): 85-108. For a comparative study of autograph and workshop techniques, see Susanna Pauli Griswold, "Two Paintings by El Greco: *Saint Martin and the Beggar*," *Studies in the History of Art*, 41 (1993): 132-55.

<sup>4</sup>On the difference between brushstrokes of the artist and of his shop, see Soehner, "Greco," 147-48. A characteristic example of the workshop technique is *Saint Francis' Vision of the Flaming Torch* (formerly in Madrid, Heredia-Spinola collection), see Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 154, fig. 7.

paint very thinly in some parts of the saint's habit, the artist was able to exploit the canvas weave to suggest the rough fabric.

The *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* in Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts (ca.1595/1607, oil on canvas, 121 cm. x 91 cm., 47.5 in. x 36.5 in.) was described by Wethey as a workshop replica, without any intervention by El Greco.<sup>1</sup> Although the museum still catalogues this picture as an autograph work, several recent scholars have accepted Wethey's classification.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, the Lille picture was produced by the workshop with substantial and noteworthy participation by El Greco. The roughly textured brush strokes, which cover most of the saint's robe and cloak, imitate the master's distinctive techniques, but their stiff regularity "betrays" the hand of an assistant. In contrast, the liveliness and varied density of the paint in the face, hands, and still life indicates that El Greco was responsible for these important areas of the composition. Moreover, the subtle expressiveness of the facial expression and hand gestures are characteristic of the artist's best work.

As Soehner suggested, the picture in Zumaya, Museo Zuloaga, was produced by the workshop, without intervention of the artist.<sup>3</sup> Among the features which Soehner noted as characteristic of workshop pieces are the "impersonal" brushwork, simplified light effects, and the widely spread fingers.<sup>4</sup> Soehner and Wethey have justly attributed to El Greco's son the *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* in Toledo, Hospital of Saint John the Baptist Outside the Walls (oil on canvas, 90 cm. x 70 cm., 35.25 in. x 27.5 in.).<sup>5</sup> Typical of Jorge Manuel's paintings are the idiosyncratic facial features; the elongated, claw-like fingers; and the sharply faceted

<sup>5</sup>In this regard, the Art Institute painting can be compared, for example, to *Saint Jerome in Penitence* (1600), now in Madrid, Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (see note 76).

<sup>1</sup>Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 227, no. X-298. Prior to the publication of Wethey's catalogue, it had been classified as an authentic work by Cossío, *Greco*, 596, no. 290; Mayer, *Greco*, 44, no. 272; and Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 360, 365, fig. 245; 2: 1385, no. 574. Published the same year as Wethey's monograph, Gudiol, "Iconography," 202, described the Lille canvas as an authentic work.

<sup>2</sup>The Lille painting is characterized as an autograph work by Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs, *Trésors de la peinture espagnol*, exhibition catalogue, (1963), 152–53, no. 53 (reproduction); Châtelet, *Lille*, 58–9, no. 21 (reproduction); Hervé Oursel, *Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lille* (Paris: Dessain et Tolra, 1984), 138, no. 11 (color illus.); and Arnould. Brejon de Lavergnée, Annie Scottez-De Wambrechies, and Odile Dussart, *Musée des beaux-arts de Lille: Catalogue sommaire illustré des peintures*, 2 vols. (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1999–2001) 145, no. 1893. Frati, *Greco*, 108, no. 102-e assigns it to the workshop. Gudiol, *Greco*, did not include the Lille painting in his comprehensive catalogue of the artist's oeuvre. Álvarez Lopera omitted it from his list of authentic examples of the composition; see Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Greco*, 406–07, no. 54.

<sup>3</sup>Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 214, no. 166. Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 362, 365, fig. 247; 2: 1385, no. 579, considered it an autograph work. Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229, no. X-307, considered it to be a copy.

<sup>4</sup>Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 147–51, establishes that these are distinctive features of pieces produced by the workshop in the later part of El Greco's career.

drapery folds, which conceal the body parts.<sup>1</sup> At least eleven other versions of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* by followers and copyists repeat El Greco's composition.<sup>2</sup> In these examples, El Greco's composition has been elaborated through the inclusion of an extensive landscape view and additional, naturalistically rendered, still life details. Furthermore, the comparatively smooth, even application of paint in these examples notably differs from the lively, varied brushwork of autograph pieces. Nevertheless, they are historically of great interest because they attest to the enduring popularity of El Greco's prototype.

This review of the versions of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* indicates that at least four (now in San Francisco, Bilbao, Dallas, and Chicago) were painted by El Greco without participation of the workshop and that one (Lille) was created by the shop under the immediate supervision of the artist, who made significant contributions to it. El Greco's several powerful versions of the same subject differ from typical Renaissance copies, which are easily distinguishable from the originals. Most modern com-

<sup>5</sup>Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 225, no. 228; Wethey, *Greco*, vol. 1, fig. 270, 2: 227, no. X-297.

<sup>1</sup>These and other characteristic features of Jorge Manuel's style can be noted, for example, in the signed *Pentecost* (oil on canvas, 103.5 cm. x w. 51.4 cm., 40.75 in x 20.25 in.), New York, Sotheby's, *Important Old Masters*, sales catalogue, 30 January, 1997, no.154 (color reproduction). Trapier, "Son of El Greco," 1-46, remains the most comprehensive study of Jorge Manuel's career.

<sup>2</sup>The following is a checklist of versions of *Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation* by followers and copyists: (1) Granada, formerly Seminario de los Jesuitas, present whereabouts unknown; dimensions not available. See Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 228, no. X-30. (2) London, sold Sotheby's, 3 July, 1996 (oil on canvas, 75.5 cm. x w. 65.5 cm., 29.75 in. x 25.75 in.). See London, Sotheby's, *Old Master Paintings Including Pictures from the Fattorini Collection and Pictures from the Collection formed by the British Rail Pension Fund*, sale catalogue, 3 July, 1996, 230, no. 257, reproduction. (3) Los Angeles, University of California Museum of Art (oil on canvas, 76 cm. x 52 cm., 30 x 20.5 in.). See Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 359, 365, fig. 244; 2:1385, no.572; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229-30, no. X-309. (4) Madrid, Fundación Lázaro Galdiano (oil on canvas, 140 cm. x 94 cm., 55.25 in. x 37 in.). See Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 2: 1386, no. 587; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229, no. X-305. (5) Madrid, formerly Ministerio de Gobernación, present whereabouts unknown (oil on canvas, 140 cm. x 130 cm., 55.1 in. x 40.5 in.). See Cossío, *Greco*, 571, no. 114; Camón Aznar *Greco*, 1: 359, 365, fig. 243; 2: 1385, no. 573; Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 230, no. 273; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2:228, no. X-302. (6) Medina Sidonia, Mariano González Aguilar (oil on canvas, 138 cm. x 103 cm., 54.34 in. x 40.5 in.). See Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 357, 365, fig. 242; 2: 1385, no. 571; Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 230, no. 275; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 228-29, no. X-303. (7) Oviedo, private collection (oil on canvas, 63 cm. x 56 cm, 24.75 in. x 22 in.). See Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," 230, no. 275; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 230, no. X-310. (8) Paris, Zareh Nubar collection (oil on canvas, 57 cm. x 43 cm., 21.5 in. x 17 in.). See Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 227, no. X-299. (9) Princeton, University Museum of Art (oil on canvas, 60 cm. x 51 cm., 23.75 in. x 20.25 in.). See Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229, no. X-306. (10) San Sebastián, Museo Municipal de San Telmo (oil on canvas, 110 cm. x 96 cm., 43.5 x 34 in.). See Camón Aznar, *Greco*, 1: 364, fig. 249; 2: 1386, no. 585; Soehner, "Greco in Spanien," no. 276; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229, no. X-308. (11) Saragossa, Museo Provincial (oil on canvas, 119 cm. 93 cm., 47 in. x 36.5 in.). See Soehner, "Greco," 172, 230, no. 277, fig. 27; and Wethey, *Greco*, 2: 229, no. X-304.

mentators have described his production of replicas as a tedious activity, undertaken only out of financial necessity.<sup>1</sup> However, as an artist trained in the Byzantine tradition, he may have regarded the creation of repetitions of existing compositions as a venerable occupation. Because the Greek Orthodox Church held that icons manifested the Divine Presence, new images were expected to conform to prototypes, which had constant validity.<sup>2</sup> However, in contrast to Byzantine practice, El Greco sought to demonstrate his powers of invention by formulating distinctive compositions, to serve as the basis of numerous autograph replicas. Furthermore, he emphasized his personal “intervention” in the production of each image through his dynamic and varied handling of paint.

In the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which he produced at the beginning of his career in Spain, El Greco revealed his absorption Venetian methods of painting. The unique inscription, prominently featured in the foreground of the altarpiece, and his fingerprints, systematically recorded on the hand of the Virgin, suggest the sincerity of his commitment to the Renaissance conception of an art work as the unique creation of a gifted individual. Through his later production of numerous autograph replicas of popular compositions, El Greco managed to synthesize Renaissance ideas about artistic originality with Greek Orthodox beliefs concerning the eternal validity of revered prototypes.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Soehner, “Greco,” 147–74; Elizabeth C. G. Packard, “A Problem in Technical Research: The Walters ‘St. Francis’—A Contribution to El Greco Studies,” *Walters Art Gallery Journal*, 23 (1960): 51, 62–71; Wethey, *Greco*, 1: 114–119; and Brown, “Greco and Toledo, 102–3.

<sup>2</sup>Cutler, “Pathos of Distance,” 23–45 and Lidov, “Miracle Working,” 47–57.

# ALLEN D. BRECK AWARD WINNER

MARIE KELLEHER,  
“CLERICS, CONCUBINES, AND THE CASE FOR  
A LEGAL HISTORY OF WOMEN”

This article does not appear in the current volume of *Quidditas*

# BOOK REVIEWS

Lucrezia Tornabuoni de' Medici. *Sacred Narratives*. Ed. and trans. Jane Tylus. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 286 pages plus notes and index.

Recently issued from Chicago's series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* is Jane Tylus's translation and edition of biblical narratives and religious songs by Lucrezia Tornabuoni (1427–82). Wife to Piero, mother of Lorenzo ("il Magnifico") de' Medici, and grandmother to two popes (Leo X and Clement VII), Tornabuoni was a capable politician and businesswoman in her own right, as may be seen in the substantial surviving correspondence to, from, and about her. She was also a poet who wrote popularized versions of Bible stories (*storie sacre*) and spiritual songs (*laudi*) for performance in private settings and which she shared with Poliziano and Pulci, among others. Her neglect by literary and cultural historians for over five hundred years has been unfortunate and unjustified indeed, as this splendidly crafted volume attests.

Tornabuoni's five known *storie sacre* and her nine identified *laudi* appear together in this translation, constituting the most complete edition of her poetry to date in English or Italian. Tylus's introduction, a substantial and informative essay entitled "Gender and Religion in Fifteenth-Century Florence," emphasizes "the inextricable link between female religiosity and social and cultural practices of Renaissance Florence" (26). This link, which fostered women's particular familiarity with popular sacred legends, folk songs, and romances, is one possible explanation for the lack of attention of Tornabuoni's writings by literary historians and critics, who have historically followed the humanists' lead and focused primarily on Latinizing princely culture rather than on the vernacular and popular production of Florentine writers. As Tylus points out, Tornabuoni's poetry lacks linguistic innovation and was written quietly in the shadow of such Tuscan giants as Pulci, Poliziano, Ficino, and Lucrezia's own son Lorenzo. She probably knew little Latin, and her sources—the Bible, the songs of strolling *cantari*, and the sacred plays (*sacre rappresentazioni*) performed on holy feast days—had different cultural functions from those of the revived ancient genres and the prodigious formal experiments favored by the humanist avant-garde. Humanist writers "gentrified" (26) these popular forms when they adopted them, but Tornabuoni practiced them as she found them, vibrantly circulating in the streets and churches of Florence, unselfconsciously popular in their diction and their traditional orientation. Readers of Tylus's translation will marvel that it has taken so long for editors and teachers to surmount that humanist, male, and elite cultural bias, for Tornabuoni's retellings of the stories of Susanna, Tobias, Judith, Esther, and John the Baptist, and her songs on the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and Christian salvation are eloquent and

compelling, delightfully engaging examples of Quattrocento Florentine vernacular culture.

Tornabuoni's sacred narratives, as Tylus makes clear through well-apportioned footnotes and commentary, are not simple translations. They deviate skillfully from their biblical sources, incorporating elements from popular literature and apocrypha in ways that underscore both the Florentine civic context in which Tornabuoni was writing and the special significance these particular stories may have had for a Medici woman. The story of John the Baptist was an obvious choice in the city where he is patron saint; and the tale of Tobias, notes Tylus, "served as a handbook for proper sexual relations between newly married couples" (73) among Tornabuoni's contemporaries. But having made these predictable choices of subject matter, Tornabuoni tailored the stories to her concerns with family, maternity, political loyalty, and the difficulties women confront in a world controlled officially by powerful men. For example, she "seems to be at pains to rescue Salome...from the denigration to which she was often subjected" (219) for having obeyed her vengeful mother in asking Herod for the head of John. Her story of Tobias expands the role of Tobias's wife Anna, on the one hand assigning her a berating speech criticizing her blind husband for his inaction, and on the other sketching in loving detail Anna's patient, maternal longing for her absent son. Taken together with Tornabuoni's renderings of the stories of Susanna, Esther, and Judith (which similarly deviate from the Vulgate and vernacular Bibles), these revisions of the John and Tobias stories contribute to a sense that Tornabuoni used the devout texts coherently to mediate her reflections on her own complicated position as a woman in the most powerful family of Renaissance Florence. Thus emerges in her *storie* an emphasis on women's use of the subtle forms of power Tornabuoni terms "meddling" (*frammettersi*) to achieve legitimate political and charitable aims. If Susanna remains a figure of innocent and steadfast chastity vindicated by a God, Judith combines her stunning beauty with personal initiative and nerves of steel to kill the giant Holofernes and save her people, while Esther profits from her privileged position as beloved queen to disobey her husband, dramatically approaching him unsummoned with a request that he save the Jews from the wicked king Haman's persecution. Having nearly fainted as she neared the throne, she "turns to the king with a sweet laugh. / And she said to herself, 'Now I will have vengeance: / O my Lord, teach me how to speak; / so I will know how to utter words that will persuade.'" Tylus's notes indicate departures from the biblical sources and, where possible, signal plausible apocryphal and vernacular texts Tornabuoni may have used, thus providing in addition to the translation an illuminating picture of Tornabuoni's own textual culture and her literary skills. Introductions to each of the *storie sacre* trace their biblical and medieval traditions and



offer valuable points of departure, both for teaching and for further critical work on Tornabuoni and the stories themselves. A similar introduction precedes the section of *laudi*, placing this form in its textual tradition and opening ways of understanding its significance.

The nine *laudi* in translation transmit, however faintly, a culture of sound and song in which Tornabuoni's poems circulated along with others as a vital component of popular religious participation. Tylus conveys well the spiritual excitement and musical momentum of these simple ballads, as for example in "Vienel messaggio et lo spirito saggio," which she renders: "Here comes the messenger, / and the wise spirit! // He comes from celestial kingdoms / Where sweet new sounds are heard, / They are joyful and not discordant, / They issue from the high choirs; / He comes in the form of vapors / And rays of luminous light" (270). These translations of the *laudi*, as of the *storie sacre*, are sensitive and sure, with footnotes on difficult passages giving excerpts from the original so that readers may consider alternative renderings for themselves. Though we still await a full edition of these works in the author's original language, readers of Italian, too, will find Tylus's versions, her informed commentary, and her bibliography an excellent starting point for further study of Lucrezia Tornabuoni.

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Richard Utz. *Chaucer and the Discourse of German Philology: A History of Reception and an Annotated Bibliography of Studies, 1793–1948*. Making the Middle Ages 3. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002. xxi + 446 pp.

It might be considered a mistake to read a review of a book before writing one's own evaluation. *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* has called Richard Utz's comprehensive and impressive work a *Wissenschaftskrimi* (an academic thriller), and I wholeheartedly agree. Utz meticulously researched and eloquently chronicled the development of Chaucer studies in Germany and their intriguing connections to philology and politics. This study, ambitiously conceived and excellently executed, lists in its first chapter, "Philology vs. Enthusiasm," the major thesis and its five corollaries: "the emphasis of this study's narrative sections is less on a complete, linear reception history of Chaucer in the German-speaking world...but rather on how German Chaucerians built a particular discourse through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, skills, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing,

feeling, and believing” (16). Utz provides five additional objectives: (1) to study “a belatedly institutionalized and minor ‘New’ philology” in the form of English studies in Germany and Austria, through which the author wishes to “counterbalance” a modern tendency toward “cultural nationalism” (16); (2) to show that the turf wars that current critical theory and philology engage in are “eerily” similar to the battles philologists fought in the nineteenth century to gain acceptance and the upper hand in academia (17); (3) to “historicize” the various subcategories of philologists and to demonstrate that they are not objectively removed from contemporary events but often intimately bound up with them (18); (4) to demystify “nationalist disciplinary mythographies about the British, the American, and the German roles in the history of Chaucer studies” (18); (5) to “spark renewed interest in a joyous linguistic and methodological pluralism for Chaucer criticism” and to call for a balance between philology and post-structuralism in the training of students (20).

Chapter 2, “Literary Enthusiasm, ‘Pre-March’ Nationalism, and Nascent Scientism,” delineates the first fifty-odd years of Chaucer reception between 1793—the publication date of the first scholarly entry written on Chaucer in Germany—and 1848, the date of the German “March Revolution.” Because English was not a university discipline then, most texts on Chaucer are penned by middle class school teachers or private scholars (23). Their work evidences “signs of a cultural nationalism which highlights the parallels between the victorious emergence of an English national and Chaucer’s decisive role in that emergence with German intellectuals’ own desire for unifying the German nation beyond the already existing unity guaranteed by its common language” (26). Those scholars emphasize the Germanic aspects of Chaucer, especially in linguistic features.

In Chapter 3, “Toward Philological Discourse: 1849-1870,” Utz demonstrates convincingly how much the outlook of Chaucer scholars mirrors the national climate; due to political disillusionment, scholars start to stress Chaucer’s “abstract and timeless poetic” qualities (45) and view him as a “well-measured, apolitical, and objective observer of his own times” (47). As Chaucer’s stock rises in Germany, some scholars find connections between the “German and English medieval pasts” (48), not the least because of the gearing up for the Franco-Prussian War, which was also fought on paper between German and French Chaucerians. The first and almost complete translation of the *Canterbury Tales* by Wilhelm Hertzberg (1866) was instrumental “to promote Chaucer’s fame among German-speaking audiences” (54) and to help establish English Studies as a university subject. Like the Shakespeare translators Schlegel and Tieck, Hertzberg changed or deleted much of Chaucer’s earthy or explicit language.

Chapter 4, “The Age of *Chaucerphilologie*: Institutionalization, Hegemonic Expansion, and Decline (1871–1932),” the heart of this book, is

subdivided into five sections, each concentrating on major figures. The sixty years in this chapter illustrate how the “quick growth” of philology after 1871 and its “gradual decline after 1918” parallel the “ascent” of the unified German Empire after victory in the Franco-Prussian War and its gradual descent after defeat in World War I (61). Utz argues that Germany’s colonization of foreign territories corresponds to the “German philological invasion” (67) of non-German literatures, especially Anglo-Saxon and Middle English (a similar trajectory can be seen in *Beowulf* studies). As philology established itself as the scientific way to study language and literature, so did German become the language of its discourse, and Chaucerians writing in German fashioned themselves superior to native speakers of English. With attitudes like this, Utz concludes, philology’s reputation shifted from “a broadly conceived, comparatistic, and innovative scholarly practice to an overly rigid, anti-enthusiastic, and ‘damningly unambitious’ enterprise” (69).

Utz identifies Julius Zupitza and Bernhard ten Brink as the founding fathers of *Chaucerphilologie*, both of whom were interested in chronology, influence, and sources, a fact hinting at the sway of “biological evolutionism and Darwinism” (85). In writing his literary history, ten Brink was criticized for being too narrowly philological because of “his single-minded forcing of Chaucer’s texts into a linear narrative dominated by the positivistic twin paradigms of naïve biographism and occasional poetry” (99). The second fascinating subsection illustrates the collaboration as well as the competition of the German philologists and their British counterparts Bradshaw, Skeat, and Furnivall. Although the German scholars collaborated with British academics because they needed access to manuscripts and documents in British libraries, in their hegemonic grip on Chaucer studies, some refused to show their British colleagues certain academic courtesies and to regard them as philologists. This competition in the microcosm of Chaucer studies matches the increasing rivalry in the (inter)national macrocosm of Germany and Britain. The third subsection chronicles the attempts of German philologist Ewald Flügel at “Germanizing and philologizing” the English Department at Stanford University from 1892 on (131). Flügel’s major project was “an all-encompassing dictionary of Middle English for the vocabulary of Chaucer” (146). In the fourth subsection, dedicated to the German school teacher John Koch, Utz shows both how Koch’s considerable contributions to Chaucer studies have been left unrecognized in recent Anglo-American assessments on Chaucer scholarship and how Chaucer studies declined in the Weimar Republic. The chapter ends with the soap-opera-like “personalization of philological conflicts” in the verbal dueling of Viktor Langhans and Hugo Lange.

The fifth and last chapter, “New Enthusiasms and Philology’s Longevity,” underscores the changing literary and political ideologies from

1933 to 1948 in two scholar pairs. Wolfgang Clemen's novel work, *Der junge Chaucer* (1937–38), illustrates a shift away from pedantic philology to cultural investigation undergirded by interdisciplinary sources, on the one hand; on the other hand, it proves that Clemen did not genuflect "before the ruling ideology during the Third Reich" (211). The same cannot be said of Will Héraucourt's *Die Wertwelt Chaucers* (1939), which "(re)invent[s] Chaucer as the pre-eminent German(ic) poet" (218) and presents "the one flagrant example of a symbiosis of philology and Nazi ideology in the history of German *Chaucerphilologie*" (219). Curiously, as Utz points out, Anglo-American assessments of Chaucer scholarship since 1949 frequently cite and positively evaluate this work. The second scholar pair comprises Hans Glunz and Ernst Curtius. In 1934, Glunz published his 600-page book titled, *Die Literaturästhetik des Mittelalters*, a widely lauded and pioneering study on the significance of poetry in medieval art that incited the ire of Romance philologist Curtius who set out to destroy Glunz with a 199-page review of the book and to set the record straight with his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* in 1948. To many, "Curtius transformed German positivistic philology" by applying "this originally national(istic) methodology to an allegedly transnational goal, a 'timeless European mythology'" (248). Curtius's still important position in medieval studies attests to this mythology.

After having read about 150 years' worth of intriguing scholars and their scholarly intrigues, one wishes the author would have kept going for a few more decades. The author, however, does provide a substantial and valuable 150-page annotated bibliography. Utz's two reasons for attaching the bibliography are to correct factual errors in existing bibliographies and to make accessible older studies that are often neglected or omitted, "which has increasingly marginalized most non-Anglophone Chaucer criticism, especially since the two World Wars" (xvii).

Himself a philologically trained transplant from Germany, Utz is uniquely qualified to have written this outstanding and balanced account. While the amount of technical German vocabulary may be intrusive, albeit unavoidable, to the non-German speaker, this book is not meant for German Chaucerians alone; Anglophone scholars should also find this an exciting and enlightening read concerning the interactions of Chaucer studies, philology, and politics. Moreover, the scope of this book hints at the larger disciplinary development of literary studies at the university level from philology to new criticism to post-structuralism and suggests, in the Epilogue, that a well-rounded scholar should be versed in all three.

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Melitta Weiss Adamson, ed. *Regional Cuisines of Medieval Europe: a Book of Essays*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

This is a very welcome publication. Despite medieval food being something of a growth industry recently, its regional dimension has not received much attention. Books and articles either concentrate on a single country or do little to discourage the inference that western Europe shared a single cuisine. Beyond western Europe, publication has been sparse (the most important exception being the recent publication of Maria Debińska's *Food and Drink in Medieval Poland* in English). There remain some gaps in the Europe presented by this collection: nothing on Scandinavia, and a big gap between Italy and Constantinople. Nevertheless, to have brought so many regions together in a single volume is an achievement for which we owe Dr. Adamson and her contributors considerable gratitude.

Perhaps inevitably, the chronological focus of the chapters varies: most are "Medieval," but Italy is "Medieval and Renaissance." The chapter on the Low Countries is a translated article by Johanna Maria van Winter, originally published in German. Ostensibly covering only the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when cookbooks appear, it in fact begins with household accounts of the fourteenth century onwards. From these sources it is possible to track changes between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, as for instance an increase in butter consumption, and a wider availability of imported spices. Nonetheless, the bulk of the middle ages is omitted. This chronological dislocation means that a reader wishing to compare and contrast the various regions will often be at a disadvantage.

The range of this collection extends beyond the middle ages, at both ends: it begins with a chapter on the classical tradition, often seen as the foundation of the cuisines of the middle ages (whether it really was is a question not attracting much attention from the contributors). It is rather surprising, however, that Dr. Adamson, an expert on medieval Germany, has written the chapter herself, given the number of scholars active in Greek and Roman food history. Again, it is a surprise that the chapter does not deal with the regional variations that are the focus of the collection, although it does survey Byzantine diet which, as Adamson points out, continued the classical tradition when it began to die out elsewhere in the former Empire. Despite these caveats, her chapter will provide useful background for readers who are not themselves food historians.

As an early medievalist, I was gratified that the chapter on Britain does not neglect the early middle ages. This is no more than one would expect from Constance Heiatt, an Anglo-Saxonist as well as an expert on Middle English cookery texts. With respect to these latter, she emphasises the sim-

ilarities with Arabic and Italian cuisines, rather than French influences. She also identifies what may be specifically British features, such as flowers and fantastic “subtleties.” My only reservation would be that “British” and “English” seem to be taken as synonymous. It is true that medieval sources from Scotland and Wales are very scarce, but this need not mean that their diet and cookery were the same as those of England.

The chapter on northern France is by Terence Scully, concentrates on the later period, as usual because that is when the surviving texts originated. However, he is not under the illusion that culinary texts and cookery are coterminous. He points out that the texts relate only to elite cookery, finer points, and unusual recipes; the basics are taken as read. He also draws attention to the important role of oral transmission in medieval French cookery, an observation that must apply with similar force to other regions. Although there is a wide range of recipes in Scully’s texts, he shows that they are very standardised, with the same recipes reappearing in most collections, no doubt a feature of their belonging to the kitchens of a highly sophisticated, and competitive, aristocracy. He also pursues the regional theme of the book by comparing northern French cuisine with Italian.

From southern France, by contrast, only a single medieval cookbook survives, but Carole Lambert, who has edited it, as well as writing the chapter here, exploits it thoroughly, comparing it with sources from other regions in order to isolate its distinctive features. There are similarities with Italian and Catalan cuisine, largely due to Arab influence. Numerous contrasts can be drawn between the north and south of France, perhaps most obviously in the use of Mediterranean ingredients, but less predictably in the extensive use of the oven in southern cookery.

Arab influence again accounts for much of the difference between north and south in Italy. For the north, Simon Varey’s chapter is based on close examination of Platina’s *De honesta uoluptate*. This is a very different work from the recipe collections of the north, as much scholarship as cookery. Platina clearly knew his Apicius well, and was a man of the renaissance rather than the middle ages. Beyond Platina’s text, Varey is able to demonstrate regional variations within mainland Italy, each court having its own favourite dishes, and competing in magnificence with its neighbors. This is a significant contrast with France, let alone England, where the number of courts was much more restricted.

No medieval cookbook survives from Sicily, but Habeeb Salloum is able to identify many features of Sicilian cuisine which can only be due to Arabic influence, looking at historical sources, later cookery, and the Sicilian language. The influence of Sicily’s Norman conquerors, by contrast, was negligible.

Spain, the other main area of Arab influence in Europe, is also fortunate in having a fourteenth-century poem listing the culinary specialities

of various parts of the country. With this starting point, Rafael Chabrán examines the geographical, ethnic and religious diversity of medieval Spanish cuisines. Not only Arabs but Sephardic Jews made an important contribution. Of all Spain's cuisines, Catalonia's is the best documented, and also the most cosmopolitan, due to its links with the kingdom of Naples and its extensive trading activities.

In Adamson's own chapter, on German-speaking lands, she does food history a service by pointing out that the "barbaric" diet of the early Germans is largely a product of the prejudices of Tacitus and Caesar, drawing a contrast with "civilized" Roman cuisine. In medieval sources we meet with similar contrasts between aristocracy and peasantry. Peasants of course feature only as the butt of ridicule, but that need not mean that information about their diet is inaccurate. Adamson assembles a much more rounded picture of medieval German cuisines than would be obtained from cookbooks alone. She suggests a shift in emphasis in the tenth and eleventh centuries from animal foods to cereals.

No concluding chapter sums up the contrasts, or connections, between the regions covered here, but some points emerge from a reading of the book. In the first place, the Mediterranean area seems to have been much more receptive to wider influences than northern Europe. This may have been partly due to the attitudes of peoples used to thinking of themselves as being at the centre of the civilized world. Climate must also have played a part; it is much easier to adopt exotic fruits or spices if one can grow them at home. And if one cannot, extensive trade links make it easier to obtain them. The spice trade certainly reached northern Europe, but supplies must have been unreliable and for most people prohibitively expensive, until the "voyages of discovery" brought the trade under western European control. Secondly, it is clear that the picture of fashions, including culinary ones, moving in a fairly straightforward manner from Italy to France and from France to England is hopelessly over-simplified. Some seem to have jumped straight from Italy to England, while the range of influences on the north was much wider than has usually been allowed for. However, the more exotic influences did not extend far down the social scale. By bringing these and other fascinating points before the reading public, Melitta Weiss Adamson et al. have done us a service we can best repay by pursuing further studies within the regional framework they have established.

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Linda Woodbridge. *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

The clearly stated purpose of Linda Woodbridge's very useful but flawed book is to explore the "bizarre lack of fit" between the "historical record" of poverty in the English Renaissance and "contemporary representations of vagrancy"(2). Simply put, literary representations of vagrancy did not accurately depict the actual miserable conditions of the vagrant poor in early modern England. Instead, literary works tended either to demonize the vagrant poor as welfare cheats or to idealize them as carefree vagabonds with the common end result of inhibiting the distribution of pity and charity. Woodbridge goes as far as to claim that "rogue literature" like Thomas Harman's *Caveat for Common Cursetors* (1566) and its misrepresentations about cheating beggars "influenced"(4) the remarkably influential Poor Law statutes of the late sixteenth-century. For Woodbridge, these poor laws—at least the "parish boundaries" they established—are "imprisoning devices" that allowed the state to manage the poor. Much early modern literature, then, offered "additional shackles" to these "imprisoning devices." In that these statutes provided the template for modern social welfare—a state-sponsored, tax funded bureaucracy able to determine the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor at a local level should be primarily responsible for distributing "charity" and "poor relief"—the implicit claim is that these literary "shackles" are still at play in our view of poverty and poor relief. A modern social worker's access to a client's home "continue[s] the institutionalized surveillance that churchwardens and overseers of the poor had practiced in Harman's day" (72). Woodbridge's book, in short, offers a specifically literary contribution to a counter-ideological drumbeat that began pounding sometime ago in response to the work of mid-century historians like W.K. Jordan who valorized early modern Protestant poor relief, ignoring the complicated elements of social control implicit in any "charitable" act.

Somewhat surprisingly, Woodbridge often writes as if exposing the ideological investments of Harman and other "officials" in treating the poor is a dramatically new plea for justice: "I here unmask imposture"(6). Many readers, I suspect, will find this rhetorical stance inspiring; I do not. "Charity" and "compassion," including the scholar's own, need to be historicized and theorized, not simply indulged. Because of this rhetorical posture, Woodbridge tends to distort the revisionist nature of many of her frequently used secondary historical sources, suggesting that historians like Paul Slack and Ian Archer are similarly interested in *newly* exposing Tudor ideology rather than charting a more complex course between older versions of early modern charity and the nuanced findings of contemporary social history. On a related note, Woodbridge often simply

reinforces R.H. Tawney's thesis that the Reformation's attack on "Catholic" good works lessened pity and charity while citing Slack who, along with many others, has severely complicated this notion. All this, I should add here, is strangely at odds with one the book's chief virtues: a very good seventeen page Appendix that summarizes recent historical work in early modern charity and poor relief. The explicit cries for social justice also occlude some of Woodbridge's best insights: "That so much cultural energy went into redirecting pity and compassion to the deserving rather than the undeserving is a measure of how much pity and compassion were at large in society, how great was the temptation to indiscriminate charity and clemency"(16). Indeed, but rather than pursue this crucial paradox at the heart of sixteenth-century England the book prosecutes the "crimes" of this "compassionate" culture even as it repeatedly denies any intention to find "blame."

Woodbridge is much better at considering matters of literary genre, particularly the jest book, rather than broad cultural study. Chapter 1 persuades me that Harman's *Caveat* is structurally connected to jest books and should not be regarded purely as "protosociology"(47). Harman's strange moments of "humor" juxtaposed to human suffering, Woodbridge demonstrates, are determined by his work's relationship to the jest book. Such a good and challenging thesis, however, need not be repeated seven or eight times in a single chapter.

In Chapter 2 Woodbridge turns to the writing from the 1520s and 1530s, often understudied by literary scholars, and exquisitely identifies a "a salient example of a *literary* move having wide-reaching social consequences"(85) in Simon Fish's *A Supplication for Beggars* (1529). This Protestant polemic draws on jest books and comically casts Catholic clergy as "beggars and vagabonds" and thus energizes already powerful sentiments against vagrants.

As Woodbridge reminds us throughout, the vagrant poor "became such figures of terror not because they were *big* bogeymen so much as because they were *everybody's* bogeymen" (175). The vagrant poor became the "Other" that reformers, humanists and nationalists alike used to define themselves. The crucial and connecting Henrician texts used to see the shaping of these "bogeymen" in the various discourses are *Twelve Merry Jestes of the Widow Edith* and *A Man Called Howlglas*. Woodbridge reads their influence intelligently. In Chapter 3, Woodbridge points out that humanists like Erasmus and More drew on "jokey tricksters" to depict, understand, and ultimately dismiss the vagrant—with a laugh. Dispossessing vagrants in the manner of the jest book, Chapters 4 and 5 conclude, helped in developing a new sense of domesticity and nationhood.

Woodbridge's rereading of the sixteenth-century discourses of poverty prompts her to cast a vote in the long and ongoing dispute about the

politics of *King Lear*; in contrast to much other writing in the period, the play is “politically and socially radical”(205). I was hoping that Woodbridge’s knowledge of the jest books would newly illuminate this text as it had done with so many others. Unfortunately, Woodbridge disengages the jest books in this last chapter and those with even a cursory knowledge of the scholarship on *King Lear* and poverty will find nothing new here.

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J. A. Burrow. *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xi + 200 pp.

Is it a wink or a blink? Twentieth-century social scientists have turned this question into a theory of nonverbal communication (NVC), a theory with legs long enough to run all the way back into the Middle Ages. In this book, J. A. Burrow turns the quest to decipher the semiotic meaning of gestures into a learned study of nonverbal signs in medieval vernacular literature. His focus begins with the Middle English poetry in which he is expert (Chaucer, Langland, Gower and the Gawain Poet), but expands to French courtly poetry, and (as he puts it, “more rashly,” p. 5) further afield to Dante’s *Commedia*. The resulting book brings together previous work by medievalist art historians (such as M. Barasch) and literary scholars (notably R. G. Benson, whose work on “body language” in Chaucer Burrow describes as disappointingly broad). In this investigation, Burrow tries to refine previous scholarship into a more precise understanding of both what we are looking at and what informs our gaze.

After an introductory chapter, concerned largely with theoretical questions that I will consider a bit later, Burrow has four substantive chapters: two on categories of NVC (chapter 2 is on “Gestures” and chapter 3 on “Looks”) and two on specific literary texts (chapter 4 considers two Middle English works, Chaucer’s *Troilus*, and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; chapter 5 speaks of Dante’s *Commedia*). A brief “Afterword” emphasizes the analysis of gestures as an underrepresented aspect of the study of medieval literature, ending with a reminder that the authors of these medieval poems lived in a world which was “as Le Goff put it, ‘une civilisation du geste’” (185).

This conclusion is followed by a helpful bibliography, a somewhat scanty (Cambridge University Press style) “Index of names and titles,” and, finally, by an “Index of signs” that allows one to look things up by categories, for example, “breast-beating,” “bum-baring,” “farting,” or

“poking.” To be fair, this index calls itself a guide to *signs*, not to *gestures*, but one has to wonder if all these things, however amusing to contemplate, really fit into the same category.

And really it is no wonder that this issue arises, because the major problem facing a study of this type must have to do with categories. Can all of the things that Burrow puts together here really be understood in the same context, especially when considered over time? Burrow contemplates the problem at the very beginning of the book, musing:

I would have welcomed some theoretical guidance on this general question of diachronic change in non-verbal signs, but that has proved hard to find, either from cultural historians or from modern observers. As already noticed, scholars have produced studies of gestures and looks in the Middle Ages, as in other periods. Yet the history of individual gestures over time remains largely unexplored. (6–7)

This is refreshingly candid, but I am even more perplexed by yet another, but related, problem that Burrow does not even raise: can theoretical work done on real, live populations—such as the headtossing that is found in both modern Greece and southern Italy (181)—be used to understand gestural and bodily conventions described in an antique literary context? When discussing kisses, for example, Burrow moves from monastic customs described by Aelred of Rievaulx to descriptions of contractual sealing in high medieval France to kissing in the works of Chrétien de Troyes (50–52). But is it all really comparable?

It seems to me that it is worth contemplating the possibility that the literary kiss reflects a convention that has purely literary life with no (or a significantly changed) relationship to the actual gestures of real people, even real people in the world in which Chrétien wrote. Literature is, after all, a creative process with stylistic conventions all its own. Burrow might well have spent more time reflecting on the extent to which literary creations could be understood to reflect real life, or vice-versa. Does life imitate art? Does art imitate life? Or are they potentially separate spheres? I do not know the answers to these questions, but I am very aware that social anthropologists would be much more hesitant to take a thirteenth-century Romance as evidence of the meaning of a gesture than Burrow has been to import historical and anthropological analysis into his literary criticism.

One other thing I found missing from Burrow’s study was an awareness of the important gestural language of the medieval Christian liturgy. Such attention to gestures like bowing, kissing and kneeling with very little consideration for the liturgical context in which they would have been very familiar to medieval Christians seems somehow misguided. Even the most secular of contexts in the Middle Ages is, after all, not far

removed from the world of the Mass. The silent gestures of penance and forgiveness, of submission to and union with God through the ritual of the Eucharist (just to take the most obvious and dramatic example) is a powerful emotional trope through which many of the gestures described in historical documents and re-inscribed in medieval courtly literature were understood. It would have been very interesting to have seen some speculation on the connections between sacred and secular gestures, of subtle inference, and even parody that must have been visible, even obvious, to medieval readers.

But, of course, a book of this length cannot do everything. It is only to be hoped that Burrow's fine attention to the many forms of medieval looks and gestures will spur on the study of the non-verbal among the beautiful words of medieval vernacular literature.

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