

Quidditas

*On-line Journal of
The Rocky Mountain
Medieval and Renaissance
Association*

volume 25

2004

<http://humanities.byu.edu/rmmra>

© Copyright 2006 by The Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association.
ISSN: 195-8453

Editors

Editors: Sharon A. Beehler, *Montana State University*
James H. Forse, *Bowling Green State University*
Books Editor: Jennifer L. McNabb, *Western Illinois University*

Executive Board and Editorial Advisors (2005-2006)

Jane Woodruff, *William Jewell College*, President
Kimberly Johnson, *Brigham Young University*, Secretary
Phyllis Walton, *Salt Lake City, UT*, Treasurer
Charlene Kellsey, *University of Colorado Boulder* (through 2006)
Michael Walton, *Salt Lake City, UT* (through 2006)
Charles Whitney, *University of Nevada Las Vegas* (through 2006)
Elsbeth Whitney, *University of Nevada Las Vegas* (through 2006)
Darin Merrill, *Brigham Young University, Idaho* (through 2007)
James K. Otté, *University of San Diego* (through 2007)
Paola Malpezzi Price, *Colorado State University* (through 2007)
Katherine A. Clark, *SUNY Brockport* (through 2008)
Jolyon Hughes, *Colorado State University* (through 2008)
Andrea Knox, *University of Northumbria* (through 2008)
Jean MacIntyre, *University of Alberta* (through 2008)
Isabel Moreira, *University of Utah* (through 2008)
Jean R. Brink, *Arizona State University* (ex-officio)
Paul A. Dietrich, *University of Montana* (ex-officio)
James Fitzmaurice, *Northern Arizona University* (ex-officio)
Susan Frye, *University of Wyoming* (ex-officio)
Nancy Gutierrez, *Arizona State University* (ex-officio)
Boyd H. Hill Jr., *University of Colorado Boulder* (ex-officio)
Carol Neel, *Colorado College* (ex-officio)
Glenn Olsen, *University of Utah* (ex-officio)
Harry Rosenberg, *Colorado State University* (ex-officio)
Charles R. Smith, *Colorado State University* (ex-officio)
Sara Jayne Steen, *Montana State University* (ex-officio)
Paul Thomas, *Brigham Young University* (ex-officio)
Jack Owens, *Idaho State University*, Administrator, Board List-serve
Jesse G. Swan, *University of Northern Iowa*, Webmaster

Notice to Contributors

Quidditas is the annual, on-line journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. The editor and editorial board invite submissions from scholars whose work falls within the domain of all Medieval and Renaissance disciplines: literature, history, art, music, philosophy, religion, languages, rhetoric, or interdisciplinary studies.

Quidditas also now features a “Notes” section for short articles (2 to 5 pages) pertaining to factual research, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other matters pertaining to the research and teaching of Medieval and Renaissance disciplines. Our “Books” section seeks short (2 to 3 pages) essays describing texts and books instructors have found especially valuable in teaching upper level courses in Medieval and Renaissance disciplines. We also welcome longer literature-review articles. Membership in the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association is not required for submission or publication.

All submissions are peer-reviewed. Submissions must not have been published elsewhere. Long articles should be 20 to 30 double-spaced manuscript pages. Long articles, notes, and literature-review articles should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed.), footnote format. The author’s name must not appear within the text. A brief (200-word) abstract should accompany all long articles. A cover letter containing the author’s name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and title of paper must accompany all submissions.

E-mail submissions in Microsoft Word are accepted, but should be followed by two hard copies. Please send submissions for articles and notes to:

Professor James H. Forse, Editor
Department of History
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403
Quidditas_editor@yahoo.com

Please send submissions for our Books section to:

Professor Jennifer L. McNabb, Books Editor
Department of History
Western Illinois University
McComb, IL 61455
jl-mcnabb@wiu.edu

Authors of accepted works will be asked to supply a copy of the manuscript compatible with Microsoft Word on a CD.

Membership Information

Beginning 1 January 2007 membership in the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association is available at an annual cost of \$25, with an additional \$5 fee for joint memberships. For further information, please contact:

Phyllis Walton, Treasurer, RMMRA
3031 S. 500 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84106
waltonmar@aol.com

Annual Conference 2007

The 2007 conference of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association will be held in conjunction with the annual Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies conference in Tempe, Arizona. Dates are 16, 17, 18 February.

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 “quiddite.” In the early modern period, 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 quillets, 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.

Articles appearing in *Quidditas* are abstracted and indexed in *PMLA*, *Historical Abstracts*, and *America: History and Life*.

Table of Contents

Iconoclasm and Iconophilia in Othello

Catherine E. Winiarski <i>Allen D. Breck Award Winner</i>	2
--	---

Helena, Heraclius, and the True Cross

Hans A. Pohlsander	15
--------------------	----

The Morality of Misogyny: The Case of Rustico Filippi, Vituperator of Women

Fabian Alfie	43
--------------	----

Fama and Fortuna: Giorgio Vasari's Exemplary Lives

Peter Kanelos	71
---------------	----

Wedding Vows and Coffins: Canticles' Rhetoric, the Liturgical Form of Matrimony, and Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (1613)

Lissa Beauchamp	97
-----------------	----

Betwixt War and Peace: the Dual Function of the Bell

James K. Otté <i>Delno C. West Award Winner</i>	136
--	-----

(Editor's choice)

Charlemagne, by Albrecht Dürer



From *Wikipedia* the free encyclopedia

ALLEN D. BRECK
AWARD WINNER (2003)

Catherine E. Winarski

The Allen D. Breck Award is in honor of Professor Allen D. Breck, founder of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. As professor of history at the University of Denver, he served for 20 years as department chair. As Professor Emeritus he became the university's historian, writing *From the Rockies to the World—The History of the University of Denver*. His specialties included medieval and church history, particularly John Wycliffe. He also taught Anglican studies at the Hiff School of Theology and wrote, edited, or contributed to histories of Jews, Methodists, and Episcopalians in Colorado and books on medieval philosophy, the lives of western leaders, and the relationships between science, history, and philosophy. In addition to his involvement with RMMRA, he was a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and belonged to the Medieval Academy of America, the Western History Association, and the Western Social Science Association.

The Breck Award recognizes the most distinguished paper given by a junior scholar at the annual conference.

ICONOCLASM AND ICONOPHILIA IN *OTHELLO*

Catherine E. Winiarski
University of California, Irvine

In his book *War Against the Idols*, Carlos Eire argues that iconoclastic resistance to the Medieval Catholic Church began with the gentle scolding of Erasmus and ended as the "shibboleth" of radical Calvinism.¹ The use of images in religious instruction and practice was one of the major points of dispute between Protestant reformers and Catholic counter-reformers. Iconoclasm was certainly not confined to radical Calvinism; Anglican reformers, especially those who had spent time in continental Europe as exiles (like John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury), quickly raised the issue in their country, which had its own unique history of religious reform. The discussions of image and idolatry in Calvin and Jewel represent particular theories of the image that derive from but also revise ancient Platonic theories of the image. Reformation iconoclasm brings up issues of ontology (who or what is God?), epistemology (by what means are we to know him? Can he be represented to human senses?), and ethics (how does knowledge of God translate into moral action?). Protestant iconoclasts tend to emphasize the epistemological worth (or rather, worthlessness) of

¹See Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

religious imagery, while the Catholic iconophiles emphasize the positive moral effects to be derived from the use of images in religious instruction.

Although sparked in the 1520's and 30's, the debate between iconoclasts and iconophiles raged throughout the latter sixteenth century, well into Shakespeare's time. The iconoclastic writings of Zwingli and Calvin had a powerful legacy throughout Europe. Calvin's collected *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published in 1559. Perhaps spurred by theological arguments like Calvin's, violent stripping of church imagery and other popular agitation over idolatry took place in Switzerland and elsewhere on the continent. In England, John Jewel's dialogues with Dr. Harding on the subject of imagery, drawing very much on Calvin's arguments, were published in 1565 and again in 1611. During the English Reformation, the churches and monasteries of England were also stripped of their images by some Protestant objectors. It is clear that iconoclasm was an issue not only for elite churchmen--it also captured the hearts and minds of the general population, who were the audience of Shakespeare's theater.

The problem of the image is traced, by many Protestant theologians, to several major scriptural conflicts. The first important reference is God's pronouncement in Genesis: "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).² Gilles Deleuze describes how this conception of humanity's origin was combined with the Platonic theory of ideas in the Christian catechism: "God made man in his image and resemblance. Through sin, however, man lost the resemblance while maintaining the image. We have become simulacra."³ After the Fall, humanity became like the painting of a bed in Plato's *Republic*--a copy of a copy. The Catholic Church, at least after the second council at Nicea, inferred that images of Christ and the saints could be

² All references to the Bible are to *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*. Madison, Milwaukee, and London: U of Wisconsin P, 1969. This version was in many ways inflected by the iconoclastic thought of its English Calvinist translators.

³ Gilles Deleuze, "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy." *The Logic of Sense*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1992) 257-8.

therapeutic for the Christian seeking to restore himself to God's image. Yet, God's prohibition of image-making seems quite categorical in the second commandment: "Thou shalt make thee no graven image, nether anie similitude of things that are in heaven above, nether that are in the earth beneth, nor that are in the waters under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). This commandment forms the foundation of the Protestant resistance to religious iconography, resistance which begins on the continent with Calvin and emerges slightly later in England with Jewel and Harding.

Harding provides one justification for the use of images with a quotation from St. Basil: "I reverence also the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs, which make supplication to God for me; that by their mediation our most benign God be merciful unto me, and grant me freely remission of my sins. For which cause I do both honour the stories of their images and openly adore them."⁴ First of all, a concept of mediation is permitted in this account, where none is recognized in Calvin. The ontological distinction between God and his believers is not absolute. Saints and martyrs, as well as their images, can mediate between the human and the divine without threatening the hierarchy of beings. This order is structured more like a system of feudal vassalage than an absolute monarchy. And the mediating figures are able to multiply the power of prayer for the human believer. Thus, they create a social connection between the believer and an absent God. Such notions of "society" between God and believers are far more important in the iconophilic arguments than in the iconoclastic ones, where epistemological concerns have priority.

Harding offers up three psychological reasons why images have been approved in the Catholic Church: as conduits of Christian knowledge, as spurs to Christian behavior, and as aids to memory. Images, he says, permit the illiterate common people to acquire necessary knowledge of the deeds of Christ and the saints. Representations of these deeds summarily "quicken and move [the mind] to the like will of doing and suffering, and to all endeavor of

⁴Cited in John Jewel, "The Adoration of Images" in *The Works of John Jewel*. Ed. John Ayre, The Parker Society (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1968) 2: 657.

holy and virtuous life."⁵ Finally, images maintain the stirring memory of Christ and the saints in the mind, which, he says, is naturally prone to forgetting. Thus, images are valuable not only for the knowledge they provide of divine subjects--they also compel the viewer to act in their image. A praxis, rather than an ideology, is most at stake in this argument. Like the Catholic theologians cited by Calvin, Harding sees an ethics implied in the descriptive stories of scripture; representations of the life of Christ or the saints will necessarily compel the viewer to imitate those lives.

Harding does not make the enormous ontological and moral distinction between language and sight, word and image that the iconoclasts do. He demonstrates an equivocal position on this point: "[t]hus the use and profit of writing and of pictures is one. For things that be read, when as they come to our ears, then we convey them over to the mind; and the things that we behold in pictures with our eyes, the same also do we embrace with the mind. And so by these two, reading and painting, we achieve one like benefit of knowledge."⁶ He insists on a fundamental distinction between signifier and signified in religious symbolism, the distinction that Calvin resists. He says, "As for the holy images, to them we do not attribute that worship at all, but an inferior reverence or adoration ... The whole act whereof is notwithstanding referred not to the images principally, but to the things by them represented, as being the true and proper objects of such worship."⁷ Worship thus passes through the mediating representations to the originals, to the signifiers. The gazer "defers to Christ" when beholding the image of Christ. Harding maintains the distinction between *idolodoulia* (service) and *idolatria* (worship)--an inferior and superior worship, one for the image, the other for the original.

⁵Cited in Jewel, 661.

⁶Ibid. 660.

⁷Ibid., 662.

Jewel's rebuttal to Harding very closely resembles Calvin's iconoclastic argument in the *Institutes*. Indeed, Jewel spent some of his time in exile in Calvinist Zürich, before becoming one of the major players in the Protestant Revolution of 1559 under Elizabeth and subsequently, one of her new bishops. One of Jewel's replies to Harding is from St. Paul: "*Fides ex auditu*." Jewel translates this as 'Faith cometh (not by seeing or gazing, but) by hearing.'⁸ Although Paul does not explicitly exclude "seeing" and "gazing" as modes of conversion, Jewel infers that he does. A clear hierarchy of the senses is set up here, sight being the medium of bad influence, hearing that of good influence. Jewel suggests that the effect of spectacle may be not to stir up appropriate Christian ethics but rather "concupiscence." Images are only a temptation to sensual desires. Jewel himself says that "every thing that may delight or move the mind is not therefore meet for the church of God. God's house is a house of prayer, and not of gazing."⁹ Thus, he draws a strict distinction between the secular realm and the divine through a distinction between sight and word.

Jewel dismisses the *latria/doulia* distinction used by Harding and the iconophiles as a logical contradiction: "[a]n image may be worshipped; and yet it may not be worshipped."¹⁰ He contends that the *latria/doulia* distinction "standeth not in difference of matter, but only in words."¹¹ Here, Jewel claims, the Catholics rely on the *effect* of signification created by the word *doulia*, rather than the grasp of a real, external referent. They rely on empty signifiers. Jewel also quotes Augustine, who warns about the deceptiveness of the image: "although [images] have neither sense nor soul, yet they so strike and amaze the weak minds of people, even with the very proportion of living members

⁸Rom. x, cited in Jewel, 661.

⁹Jewel, 662.

¹⁰Ibid. 664.

¹¹Ibid. 666.

and senses, that they seem to have life and to draw breath."¹² Mimesis itself is given a negative moral valence, as it was in Plato, but on different grounds. We are liable to mistake the signifier for the signified, to infer *all* of the characteristics of life in something that bears only some. We are doomed to make a double out of an image. As Lowell Gallagher has written, "Jewel reinscribes a relation of language and referent that makes idolatry, the seduction of the double, an ineradicable threat and iconoclasm the interminable response."¹³

The Puritan anti-theatrical campaigns of late sixteenth-century England provide an intermediate connection between Shakespearean drama and Reformation iconoclasm. Many of the influential anti-theatrical pamphlets of the 1570's and 80's, like those by Stephen Gosson and Phillip Stubbes, rely on the same argument that the Reformation iconoclasts employ—that sensuous images enflame the viewer's material desires and keep him from the care of the immaterial soul. Gosson writes in *The School of Abuse*:

those wanton spectacles of light huswives drawing gods from the heavens, and young men from themselves to shipwracke of honesty, wil hurt them more then if at the epicures table they had burst their guts with over feeding. For if the bodie be overcharged, it may bee holpe, but the surfit of the soule is hardely cured.¹⁴

It is worth noting that many iconoclastic arguments were themselves implicitly anti-theatrical. Huston Diehl notes that iconoclastic arguments often condemn the Catholic liturgy merely

¹²Cited in Jewel, 665.

¹³Lowell Gallagher, "'This seal-d-up Oracle': Ambivalent Nostalgia in *The Winter's Tale*" *Exemplaria* 7.2 (1995): 477.

¹⁴Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse*. (London: Reprinted for the Shakespeare Society, 1841) 20.

by comparing it to a stage spectacle.¹⁵ Thus, there are quite a few reasons to believe that the iconoclastic debate was extremely close to Shakespeare's concerns as a theatrical image-maker and that debate may have found expression in his works. But, as many have suggested, it would be a mistake to assume that Shakespeare would simply defend image-making against iconoclastic attacks. Laura Levine suggests that "the playwright is as 'contaminated' by the anxieties of the [anti-theatrical] attacks which we think of him as 'defending' against as the attackers are themselves."¹⁶ Shakespeare, we can expect, will offer much more than an iconophilic rebuttal of iconoclasm.

As a possible instance of this type of engagement with theological debates over the status of the image, what does Shakespeare's *Othello* do to contribute to the debate? I would argue that by way of the ancient analogy between religious and marital devotion, Shakespeare presents these two theological positions (iconoclasm and iconophilia) in the characters of Desdemona and Othello. The analogy, used by Tertullian and Calvin, came from a perceived symmetry between the first half of the Ten Commandments and the second. The injunction against image-making (the second commandment) was matched with the injunction against adultery (the seventh). As Margaret Aston notes in her book on English iconoclasts, idolatry was regarded as "spiritual whoredom."¹⁷

On this basis, I read Othello and Desdemona's marriage as a figure for the believer's devotion to God. Desdemona's relationship to Othello figures one sort of relationship between the believer and the divine; Othello's relationship to Desdemona figures another. In telling the tragic story of Othello and Desdemona's marriage, Shakespeare creates a representation (or

¹⁵Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997) 25.

¹⁶Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 2.

¹⁷*England's Iconoclasts. Volume 1: Laws Against Images*. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988) 468.

icon) of the conflict between iconoclasm and iconophilia. Ironically, it is iconophilia that is charged with the most destruction.

Desdemona clearly represents an iconoclastic position. She refuses to read in Othello's dark skin (part of the material form he presents to the world) an evil or impure nature. She says, "I saw Othello's visage in his mind" (1.3.253).¹⁸ Rather than seeing his (invisible) mind in his (visible) image, she forms an "image" of him based on her contemplation of his mind. She entirely reverses the syntax of an iconophilic argument, which would understand the abstract in the image. Desdemona proclaims it is "to his honours and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate" (1.3.254-5). She conceives of Othello exactly as the iconoclastic preachers urged Christians to contemplate God--through abstract properties, rather than sensuous images. English iconoclast William Perkins, in his *Warning Against Idolatry*, claims that "the right way to conceive God, is not to conceive any form: but to conceive in mind his properties and proper effects."¹⁹ Desdemona does exactly this. And the religious language she employs—references to the soul and consecration of the soul—direct us towards this theological reading. Most notably, Desdemona is won by Othello ("converted" to belief, according to the parallel we are following) by his personal story (the word), rather than by sight. For her, faith does come by hearing rather than gazing.

Against Desdemona's iconoclastic position, Othello represents the iconophilic position—and his tragic fall shows the perils of that position. He relies on sensuous images to connect him to the abstract—he cannot bear the possibility that Desdemona's honor might be, as Iago asserts, "an essence that's not seen" (4.1.16). He relies on her body to tell him about her character and soul, as the iconophilic believer might rely on religious imagery to tell him or her about the nature of God. And so, for Othello, Desdemona's perceptible beauty denotes

¹⁸All references to *Othello* are to the Arden edition, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1999).

¹⁹Cited in Aston, 453.

imperceptible goodness. Othello is caught, it seems, within a conventional iconographic or emblematic system in which colors and other sensual qualities are associated with particular qualities in a very rigid way: whiteness denotes purity, coldness denotes chastity, heat and moisture denote lust and evil. These correspondences have a sort of divine imperative in Othello's mind; as he comes under the spell of jealousy, he exclaims, "was this fair paper, this most goodly book / Made to write 'whore' upon?" (4.2.72-3). For him, material things like the body are "made" by some divine author to carry certain meanings. Othello cannot come into contact with these abstract qualities except through his sensual perception. Desdemona is the vehicle through which Othello contacts not only abstract qualities but divinity itself: he says, "if she be false, O then heaven mocks itself" (3.3.282). God has sent her down as his representative, and all that she is reflects back on divinity itself. As his jealous rage compounds, Othello gives signifying power not only to Desdemona's physical qualities, but also to objects simply associated with her metonymically, like the handkerchief. It becomes the very substance of her honor: the handkerchief in Cassio's hand is an absolutely certain sign, to Othello, that Cassio has possessed Desdemona herself.

Othello's iconophilic tendency is very well represented in his musings over what kind of death to inflict on Desdemona. He becomes obsessed with making the punishment signify the crime. At first he thinks to poison her, but Iago suggests a more artful death: "Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed—even the bed she hath contaminated" (4.1.204-5). Othello replies, "Good, good, the justice of it pleases; very good!" (4.2.206-7). A woman punished at the very site of her crime, purifying with her death the bed she contaminated with lust, is a pleasing image to Othello; it seems to represent the very concept of justice, the equivalence between crime and punishment. Desdemona's supposed adultery (the crime) had opened up a passageway in the body illicitly; strangulation (the punishment) would then close off a passageway. The punishment here is an image, in reverse, of the crime.

Othello changes his mind about the method of execution but the determination to express the crime in the punishment remains: he says "thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be spotted" (5.1.36). Blood, the material representative of immaterial lust, will be shed and exposed to sight; exposed in this way, the blood will be able to represent the hidden crime. An invisible essence will be made visible. But Othello ultimately relents from this plan. In his soliloquy in Act 5, he says, "I'll not shed her blood / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow / and smooth as monumental alabaster: Yet she must die" (5.2.3-5).

Why does he finally choose a bloodless death for Desdemona over a bloody one? Indeed, he reverses the logic of the bloody plan—rather than making her chaste appearance (white, smooth, and cold) fit her supposed lustful essence by exposing her hot, red blood to sight, he elects to try to make her white, cold, dead body express chastity again. Othello undertakes this in the name of "the cause"—a lofty abstraction that goes unnamed. Perhaps it cannot be named because it must be shown. Othello intervenes here, as an agent in the signifying order of nature, to make Desdemona once again embody that ultimate quality he believes she has lost. He chastens her with death. Death fixes in her those qualities of stoniness and coldness which denote chastity in his iconographic system. The best image of chastity is her dead body. When it is discovered that she really *was* chaste all along, the iconographic power of the scene is only enhanced for Othello: "cold, cold, my girl / Even like thy chastity" (5.2.273-4).

Othello's iconophilic impulses reach a zenith in his staging of his own death. Here, he adds himself to the scene of pathos he has just created. His final speech and gestures present symmetrical images of love and destruction that seem designed to represent tragic pathos itself. His last words are, "I kissed thee ere I killed thee: no way but this, / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss" (5.2.355-6).

Here, two kisses frame two killings in a beautifully symmetrical way. A kiss before a killing and then a killing before a kiss. First, the tragic hero destroys what he loves ("I kissed thee ere I killed thee"); then, after tragic reversal and recognition occur,

the hero now destroys himself to love his beloved once again ("dying upon a kiss"). Othello again makes the scene of punishment express the crime: the unbloodied body of Desdemona (expressing her innocence and chastity) is embraced by the bloody body of Othello (expressing his vice and guilt). The scene is an image of innocence destroyed by vicious rage, and then vicious rage turned on itself in tragic regret. Perhaps Othello is trying to mold an image of tragedy itself. In any event, Othello is an image-maker *par excellence*, making icons of Desdemona's body and his own. Ultimately, it is dead bodies that have the most profound signifying power for him. Here I think we can see the danger of the iconophilic impulse in contrast with the iconoclastic--iconophilia kills things in order to make them fixed and reliable signifiers. *Othello* thus may be part of the Protestant critique of Catholic and/or pagan iconophilia.

To conclude, I would like to pose a hypothesis concerning the Indian/Judean crux in Act 5 of *Othello*, specifically on the possible value of viewing this textual controversy through the lens of the iconophilic/iconoclastic debate described here. Othello of the first Quarto speaks this line in his final speech: "speak ... of one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe" (5.2.341-6). Othello of the first Folio refers to a "base Judean." Which line is to be taken as authoritative? Readers and editors have been trying to solve this textual problem for years, making arguments based on cultural commonplaces about Indians and Judeans in Shakespeare's time; based on Shakespeare's discussion of Indians, Judeans, and pearls in other plays; or based on the immediate context of the line in the play itself.²⁰

I would like to suggest a synchronic reading of *both* variants, following those editors and critics who have conceded that there is no authoritative text of Shakespeare to be discovered or reasoned out. In this synchronic reading, the Indian might

²⁰For two notable opposing arguments, see J.O. Holmer, "Othello's Threnos: 'Arabian trees' and 'Indian' Versus 'Judean'," *Shakespeare Studies* 13 (1980): 145-67, and Richard Levin, "The Indian/Judean Crux in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33 (1982): 60-7.

function as a figure for extreme iconophilia. The Indians were widely vilified by Christians during Shakespeare's time and earlier for their supposed worship of images. The Judeans, on the other hand, might be a figure for extreme iconoclasm. Both groups are regarded as having thrown away Christ, the "pearl of great price." The reasons for this denial are, of course, quite different on each side. While Christ might not be categorically excluded from the pantheon in Hinduism, he would hold no special status above Vishnu, Shiva, and the other many avatars of the divine. In such an abundance of pearls, one single pearl loses its value. In Judaism, Christ would have to be denied on the ground of his competition with the one and only God of the first commandment. In an environment of polytheism, Christ would be an undistinguished god. In an environment of firm monotheism, he would be an idol.

It can be argued that Christianity, and more specifically Protestant Christianity, is suspended between pagan iconophilia and Judaic iconoclasm, just as Shakespeare's text seems to be suspended between "Indian" and "Judean." The Christian God is not as abstract as the Judaic God but not as concrete, particular, and polymorphous as the Indian God. In her book about the treatment of pagan and Judaic narratives and symbols in the Renaissance, Julia Reinhard Lupton argues that

[i]n the Reformation, Protestant faiths constituted themselves as the repetition of [the] sublime injunction [against images] by projecting the Church's reliance on images and ceremony as an insidious resurgence of paganism.²¹

Indeed, Reformation Protestantism seemed to strive for a more Hebraic Christianity in many ways. But their iconoclastic logic had to have a limit. Christianity still had to recognize Christ as the image (the one and only image) of God. And thus Christianity finds itself defined by its suspension between the poles of polytheism and monotheism, between Indian and Judean.

²¹Julia Reinhard Lupton, *The Afterlives of the Saints*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) 179.

(Editor's choice)

*from Leonard Digges, commendatory verses for the
First Folio*

So have I seen, when Cesar would appeare,
And on the Stage at halfe-sword parley were,
Brutus and Cassius: oh how the Audience,
Were ravish'd, with what wonder they went thence,
When some new day they would not brooke a line,
Of tedious (though well laboured) Catilines;
Sejanus too was irksome; they priz'de more
Honest Iago, or the jealous Moore.

Cited in Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd ed.
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 280.

HELENA, HERACLIUS, AND THE TRUE CROSS

Hans A. Pohlsander
SUNY, Albany: Emeritus

More than three hundred years stand between the empress Helena, or St. Helena, and the Byzantine emperor Heraclius. This chronological distance has not been a hindrance to a very close association of the two personalities with each other. The link is not dynastic but thematic; it is provided by the Holy Cross, or the True Cross, *i. e.* the very cross of Christ's passion. It is the purpose of this article to show the manifestation of this link in the religious literature and ecclesiastical art of the Middle Ages and in the liturgy to this day.¹

Helena was born c. 248-249 to parents of humble circumstances. The place of her birth most likely was Drepanum in Bithynia, later called Helenopolis by her son Constantine; claims of other cities, such as Trier or Colchester, must be rejected. She died c. 328-329 in an eastern city, possibly Nicomedia or Constantinople. She was buried in the imperial mausoleum on Rome's Via Labicana. Her porphyry sarcophagus, now in the Vatican Museum, is an important monument of late Roman art. When and where she accepted Christianity is not recorded; we do know that she became an energetic supporter of Constantine's pro-Christian policies. The most important and most celebrated event in her life was a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, undertaken when she was already of advanced age, c. 326-328. A persistent and cherished, but questionable tradition has credited her with the *inventio* (discovery)

¹This article is an expanded version of a paper given on 13 July 2004 at a session of the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, U.K.

of the True Cross in the course of that pilgrimage.²

References to Helena are widely scattered in such primary literary sources as Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*³ the *Chronicle* of St. Jerome,⁴ the funeral oration held by St. Ambrose for the Emperor Theodosius,⁵ the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen⁶, and the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁷ These references are supplemented by epigraphical, numismatical, and archaeological evidence. The longest and most important medieval text on St. Helena is a *vita* written c. 850-860 by the monk Altmann, or Allmann, at Hautvillers (near Rheims).⁸ This *vita* partakes of the character of a homily or panegyric and contains much that is not history. The story of the *inventio* of the Cross by Helena is also told in a number of other *vitae* and in liturgical books, both from the Latin west and the Byzantine east.⁹

²Richard Klein, "Helena II (Kaiserin)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 14 (1998), 355-75; Stephan Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross Was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend*. Dissertation, Uppsala University (Stockholm, 1991); Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: the Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden, 1991); Hans A Pohlsander, *Helena: Empress and Saint* (Chicago, 1995).

³*The Life of Constantine*. Introduction, translation, and commentary by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall in *Clarendon Ancient History Series* (Oxford and New York 1999).

⁴Rudolf Helm, ed., *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* (Berlin, 1956).

⁵Borgehammar, 60-6; Drijvers, 108-13; Pohlsander, *Helena*, 105.

⁶Drijvers, 102-04, 107-08.

⁷Raymond Davis, *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)*, *Translated Texts for Historians, Latin Series*, V (Liverpool, 1989); Louise Ropes Loomis, *The Book of the Popes* (New York, 1916, rpt. 1965).

⁸*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*, 3772: *Acta Sanctorum*, Aug. III (ed. 1867), 580-99.

⁹Pohlsander, *Helena*, 213-17. See now Mark Edwards, *Constantine and Christendom, Translated Texts for Historians*, 39 (Liverpool, 2003). The fest of the *inventio* or invention (the Latin term is very much to be preferred) of the Cross was

Works of medieval art which narrate the story of St. Helena and the True Cross are quite common. One might mention, for instance, the delicately carved Kelloe Cross of the 12th century,¹⁰ the wonderful Stavelot Triptych, also of the 12th century,¹¹ a 13th century relief on the west face of the Rheims cathedral,¹² two illuminations in a 14th century breviary in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris,¹³ or a cycle of late 15th century Byzantine wall paintings in a church in the Troodos Mountains of Cyprus.¹⁴

previously observed in the West, but was suppressed by Pope John XXII in 1660. See Pohlsander, *Helena*, 115, with n. 88. Closely associated with the *inventio* is the *verificatio* of the Cross. According to some accounts the search brought to light not just one cross but three crosses. Which was Christ's cross? St. Ambrose claimed that Christ's cross still had with it the famous *titulus*, *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*. But just a few years later the historian Rufinus reports that the three crosses were applied to the body of a gravely ill lady; the one which instantly restored the lady to full health was Christ's cross, of course. An even more miraculous version is given by Paulinus of Nola at about the same time. The crosses are applied to the body of a dead man being carried to his burial; the one which restores him to life is Christ's cross.

¹⁰ Fritz Saxl, *English Sculptures of the Twelfth Century* (Boston, 1956), 67-8 and pls. XCVI-XCVIII; Andreas and Judith A. Stylianou, *By This Conquer* (Nicosia, 1971), 49-53 and figs. 28, 28a, 28b.

¹¹ William M. Voelkle in Pierpont Morgan Library, *The Stavelot Triptych: Mosan Art and the Legend of the True Cross* (New York, 1980), 9-25 and ill. 1-9, with earlier bibliography, 26; Marie-Madeline S. Gauthier, *Les routes de la foi* (Fribourg, 1983), 50-3; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration In Italian Churches, 431-1600* (Chicago, 1990), 103-05 with fig. 79.

¹² Hans Reinhardt, *La cathédrale de Rheims*, (Paris, 1963), 168 and ill. facing 137; Stylianou, *By This Conquer*, 53-5 with fig. 29; Peter Kurman, *La façade de la cathédrale de Rheims* (Paris, 1987), v. I: 198-200 and v. II: pls. 402-04.

¹³ The so-called Breviary of Belleville, illuminated by Jean Pucelle. Two illustrations on the same folio depict the *inventio* and *verificatio* respectively, Ms. Lat. 10483-84. V. I, folio 178r. Victor Leroquais, *Les bréviaires manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France*, III (Paris, 1934), 198-210, no. 599, esp. 207, and plt. XXXI.

¹⁴ The Church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati near the village of Platanistasa. This cycle is the work of a painter named Philip Goul and dates from 1494. Andreas and Judith A. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus* (London, 1985), 39-40, 186-8, 198-205 with figs. 113-16, 125, 216 with figs. 125 and 218. Further references in Pohlsander, *Helena*, 231, n. 33.

There are many more in which, while there is no narrative, Helena is readily identified by her attributes, a large cross cradled in her arms or the three holy nails in her hand. One exceptionally beautiful manuscript illumination (*fig. 1*) is from the 1440s. Here Helena, with crown and nimbus and dressed in

fig. 1: St. Helena Before the Cross



a red mantle, kneels before a large golden cross. Her features are delicate; her hands are stretched out toward the cross, but are not touching it. The cross is silhouetted against a dark-blue sky studded with stars.¹⁵

We are on firmer ground as we turn to the life of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius.¹⁶ Having overthrown his predecessor, the tyrannical emperor Phocas, Heraclius was crowned emperor on 5 October 610 and reigned until his death on 11 February 641. At the time of his accession Heraclius found the Byzantine Empire in a precarious situation. Avars and Slavs had invaded the Balkan provinces, and the Persians threatened the eastern provinces. In 614 the Persians under King Chosroes II (or Chosrau), after a three-week siege, captured Jerusalem, massacred a good share of the Christian population, led thousands of Christians into captivity, devastated the sacred places, and--all important in the present context--took away the True Cross. Only quite a few years later was Heraclius granted a triumph over the Persians. In 627 his troops won a splendid victory at Nineveh, and in 628 the Persians were forced to make peace, setting free all their Byzantine captives and withdrawing from Byzantine territory, including the city of Jerusalem. In 630 the Persians also returned

¹⁵ Cornell University Library, 4600 Bd. Ms. 20+++; formerly MS B 50++, folio 28v. Seymour de Ricci and William Jerome Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, 3 vols. (New York, 1935-40, rpt. 1961), II, 1237. Robert G. Calkins, "A Lombard Gradual at Cornell," *Cornell Library Journal*, 6 (1968), 1-48, esp. 10-13 with plt. 6; and by the same "Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts in the Cornell University Library," *Cornell Library Journal*, 13 (1972), 1-95 at 65, no. 34; also his *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1983), 199-200 and color plt. 24a.

¹⁶ Hans A. Pohlsander, "Heraclius, byzantinischer Kaiser, 610-641," in *Biographische-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 19 (2001), 654-71. A recent and excellent biography of Heraclius is that by Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge and New York, 2003). A fine collection of specialized studies is found in Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, eds., *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, in *Groningen Studies in Cultural Change*, II (Leuven, 2002). Among the many books on Byzantine History, Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), 287-310, 328-9, 387, is to be especially recommended.

the True Cross, the very one which they had abducted in 614. On 21 March 630, according to some researchers, or on 21 March 631, according to others, Heraclius in person triumphantly returned the sacred relic to Jerusalem.¹⁷ The recovery of the Cross made Heraclius a more familiar figure in western Europe than most Byzantine emperors. There is a place for him even on the triumphal arch ("Ehrenpforte") which Albrecht Dürer designed for the Emperor Maximilian in 1515-1517. (fig. 2) Heraclius is flanked by Justinian on the left and by Charlemagne on the right, and the legend below his bust identifies him as "Eraclius Erfechter des heiligen Kreuzes" (Heraclius who recovered the Holy Cross).¹⁸

¹⁷ This, of course, was not an entire cross, but merely a fragment. Painters, however, always depict him carrying an entire cross. On the date see the following: for the year 630 see Anatole Frolov, "La Vraie Croix et les expéditions d'Héraclius en Perse," *Revue des études byzantines*, II (1953), 88-105. For the year 631 see Cyril Mango, "Héraclius, Sahravraz et la Vraie Croix," *Travaux et Memoires*, 9 (1985), 105-18.

¹⁸ This arch is a large print consisting of 192 separate woodcuts and measuring almost twelve feet high and ten feet wide. A fine colored exemplar is owned by the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin AM 535-1980. The sixth set of imperial bust, from the top, on the left side of the arch, the work of Dürer's assistant Hans Springinklee, includes, left to right, Justinian, Heraclius, and Charlemagne. Willi Kurth, *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer* (New York, 1963), nos. 273-92; Wolfgang Hütt, *Albrecht Dürer 1471 bis 1528: Das gesamte graphische Werk* (Munich, 1970), II, 1630-63; Hanna Dornik-Eger, *Albrecht Dürer and die Druckgraphik für Kaiser Maximilian I* (Vienna, 1971), 58-60, no. 34; Walter L. Strauss, *Albrecht Dürer: Woodcuts and Woodblocks* (New York, 1980), 500-507; Thomas Ulrich Schauerte, *Die Ehrenpforte für Kaiser Maximilian I: Dürer und Altdorfer im Dienst des Herrschers* (Munich and Berlin, 2001), esp. 312, nos. 17 and 392, "Herrscherfolge" 6; Susan Dackermann, *Painted Prints: The Revelation of Color in Northern Renaissance & Baroque Engravings, Etchings & Woodcuts* (Exhibition catalog: Baltimore, 2002), 123-5.

fig. 2: Justinian, Heraclius, & Charlemagne



The loss of the Cross to the Persians and its recovery by Heraclius are these events gave rise to a charming legend which is told in a Latin text called *Reversio Sanctae Crucis* and dating from c. 800. The text of this legend is here given in full, because

it is charming, and because it is the focus of this essay:

When the emperor, riding on a splendid horse and dressed in his imperial robes, came from the Mount of Olives and wanted to enter the city through the same gate through which once our Lord had entered when he came to his Passion, suddenly the stones of the gate fell down and joined to a solid wall. The emperor and his attendants were surprised and amazed. Greatly worried, they looked up and saw in the heavens the sign of the cross, glowing in fiery splendor. An angel of the Lord took it into his hands, stood above the gate and spoke: 'When the King of the heavens, the Lord of the whole world, entered through this gate, on his way to fulfill the mysteries of the Passion, he did not appear in purple and with a shiny diadem. And he did not ask for a strong horse to carry him, but riding on the back of a humble donkey he gave to his servants an example of humility.' When the angel had said this he quickly returned to heaven. Then the emperor rejoiced in the Lord because of the angel's visit, laid down the emblems of his imperial dignity, and rushed forward, barefoot and clad only in a tunic of linen. Carrying the Lord's cross in his hands, tears in his face, and his eyes turned to heaven, he made his way to the gate. As soon as he arrived there in humility, the hard stones understood the heavenly command, and at once the gate rose on its own accord and granted unrestricted admission.¹⁹

There is no mention of this miracle in contemporary Byzantine sources such as Georgios Pisides (7th century)²⁰ or

¹⁹ Rather inaccurate texts are found in Hrabanus Maurus, homily 70, *Reversio sanctae atque gloriosissimae crucis domini Jesu Christi*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CX, 121-4, and in Boninus Mombritius (Bonino Mombrizio), *Sanctuarum seu Vitae Sanctorum*, ed. nova (Paris, 1910), I, 379-81. A more accurate text has kindly been provided to me by Dr. Stephan Borgehammar of the University of Lund.

²⁰ *Poemi*, ed. Agostini Pertusi, with Italian translation and commentary, in *Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, 7 (Ettal, 1959).

Antiochos Strategos (7th century),²¹ the historian Theophanes the Confessor²² of the early 9th century is equally silent about it. Indeed, there is no mention of it in all of Byzantine literature, and the origin of the legend must be sought in the West.²³ There it is told repeatedly.

The *Deutsche Kaiserchronik* of c. 1150, the work of a nameless cleric in Regensburg, is a lengthy epic poem (17283 verses).²⁴ It contains the legend of Heraclius in lines 11138-11351. A few years later another nameless author wrote the *Buch der Könige niuwêr e* or *Prosa-Kaiserchronik*.²⁵ It offers the same material, but in a shorter form and with some variants; it is also more narrative and less didactic in nature than the *Kaiserchronik*.

In the last quarter of the 12th century the French poet Gautier d'Arras wrote *Eracle*, a verse romance of 6570 lines. In

²¹ His text is available only in a Georgian translation, ed Gérard Baritte, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 203, *Scriptores Iberici*, 12 (1960).

²² Theophanes Confessor (c. 760-817), *Chronographia*. See now the English translation and commentary by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), esp. AM 6101-AM 6132.

²³ Michael Menzel, "Gottfried von Bouillon and Kaiser Heraclius," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 74 (1992), 1-21.

²⁴ Edward Schröder, ed. in *Monumenta Germanica Historica, Dt. Chron.*, I, 1 (Hannover, 1882, rpt. 1969), 285-89; Klaus Gysi *et al.*, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, I, 2: Erwald Erb, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1160*, II (Berlin, 1965), 717-24; Eberhard Nellmann, "Kaiserchronik," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, IV (1982-83), 949-64.

²⁵ Hans Ferdinand Massmann, ed., *Buch der Koenige alter und neuêr Ee*, in Alexander von Daniels, *Land- und Lehenrechtbuch*, I: *Rechtsdenkmäler des deutschen Mittelalters*, III (Berlin, 1860), CXXI-CCXXIV; Karl August Eckhardt, ed., *Schwabenspiegel*, *Studia Juris Suevici*, I (Aalen, 1975), 174-258; Hubert Herkomer, "Das Buch der Könige alter e und niuwêr e", in *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd ed., I (1978), 1089-92; Kathrym Smits, "Zweimal Heraclius," in Hugo Moser, Heinz Rupp, and Hugo Steger, eds., *Deutsche Sprache: Geschichte und Gegenwart, Festschrift für Friedrich Maurer (Bern and Munich, 1978)*, 155-67. This article contains (156-7) the text of the Chrosroes-Heraclius episode and of the episode of Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem.

the third part of this work he tells at length of the *inventio* and *verificatio* of the Cross by Helena (lines 5093-5302) and then at even greater length of Heraclius' victory over Chosroes and of Heraclius' entry into Jerusalem: how he approaches the city with imperial pomp, how the gate, by a miracle, closes before him, how he humbles himself, how he prays for forgiveness, and how the gate, by another miracle, opens for him (lines 5303-6508).²⁶

The Middle High German *Eraclius* is an adaptation of the French *Eracle*. It was written, perhaps, some twenty years after its model, by a poet who is known only as Otte and whose precise dates and locale are not reported. In the third part of his work, for which he apparently used additional sources, he also tells the events before the gates of Jerusalem (lines 5361-5443).²⁷

Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1228/1230 - 1298), in his famous *Legenda Aurea* (first edition c. 1260), tells both the story of the *inventio* and *verificatio* of the Cross by Helena and the story of the return of the Cross by Heraclius, the former in Chapter LXVIII (feast of the Invention of the Cross, 3 May) and the latter in Chapter CXXXVII (feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, 14 September). In the former he is very much aware of different and conflicting reports on Constantine's baptism, Helena's birthplace, and the *verificatio* of the Cross. In the latter he gives an account differing little from that given above, but then adds a list of various miracles which

²⁶ Guy Ramond de Lage, ed. (Paris, 1976). W. C. Calin, "On the Chronology of Gautier d'Arras," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 20 (1959), 181-96 and by the same "Structure and Meaning in the *Eracle* by Gautier d'Arras," *Symposium*, 16 (1962), 275-87; Anthime Fourier, *Le courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Age*, I: *Les débuts (XIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1960), 179-275, esp. 209; D. A. Trotter, *Medieval French Literature and the Crusades (1100-1300)* (Paris, 1988), 130-2.

²⁷ Winfried Frey, ed. in *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik* 348. Göppingen, 1983; Edith Feistner, *Ottes "Eraclius" vor dem Hintergrund der französischen Quelle* (*Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik* 470, Göppingen, 1987; Karen Pratt, *Meister Otte's "Eraclius" as an Adaptation of "Eracle" by Gautier d'Arras* (*Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik* 392, Göppingen, 1987; Wolfgang Walliczek, "Otte I," in *Verfasserlexikon Literatur*, 7, 2nd ed. (1987), 199-203; Kurt Böttcher et al., *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, Mitte des 12. bis Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1990), 166-72; Edith Feistner, "Otte" in Walter Killy, *Literaturlexikon*, 9 (1990), 44-55.

supposedly accompanied the return of the Cross. Arranging his material according to the church calendar, he does not link the two stories.²⁸ The *Legenda Aurea* was translated into French, English, German, and Czech; it was drawn upon by other legendaries, such as the *South English Legendary*.²⁹ In German-speaking lands the popularity of the *Legenda Aurea* was eventually eclipsed by that of another legendary, *Der Heiligen Leben*.³⁰

Martin von Oppau (Troppau), also Martinus Polonus or Martinus Oppavensis (died 1278), in his *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum* (1st ed. 1265-1268), also tells the story of Heraclius:

This Heraclius, having defeated Persia and returning in glory, led the Patriarch Zacharias and all the captive Christians back to Jerusalem, carrying the Holy Cross, which he had regained from Chosroes. He was dressed in imperial fashion, but when he wanted to enter through the same gate through which Christ, carrying the burden of the cross, had gone out to his Passion, the gate was closed by divine power. Only when Heraclius had humbled himself did it open again to admit him. When the Cross had thus been restored he ordered that the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross be observed annually.³¹

It will be observed that Martin's account differs somewhat from others in that it refers to Christ leaving the city on his way to

²⁸ Editions 1-3 by Th. Graesse (Leipzig and Dresden, 1846, 1850, and 1890, rpt. Osnabrück, 1965), 303-11, 605-11; translated work by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (London, 1941, rpt. New York, 1969), 269-76, 545-6.

²⁹ For edition and critical literature see Pohlsander, *Helena*, 210, n. 49.

³⁰ Inadequate edition by Severin Rüttgers, *Der Heiligen Leben und Leiden, anders genannt das Passional*, 2 vs. (Leipzig, 1913); a new edition by Margit Brand, *et al.*, *Der Heiligen Leben*, Bd. 1, *Der Sommerteil. Text- und Textgeschichte*, 44 (Tübingen, 1966). See Konrad Kunze, "Der Heiligen Leben," *Verfasserlexikon*, 3, 2nd ed. (1980/81), 617-25; Werner Williams-Krapp, "Der Heiligen Leben," *Literaturlexikon*, 6 (1990), 122-4.

³¹ Ludwig Weiland, ed., *Monumenta Germanica Historica, Scriptores XXII*, 377-475, at 457, lines 46-50.

Calvary rather than to his entry into Jerusalem; thus the contrast between Heraclius riding on a fine horse and Christ riding on a humble donkey, and thus part of the moral, is lost.

Among the miracle plays which were popular in the late Middle Ages there is the *Augsburger Heiligkreuzspiel*. It is named after its only surviving manuscript, which can be dated to shortly before 1494.³² It consists of two parts, which were presented over two days. The first part focuses on Constantine and Helena, the second on Heraclius.³³ The anonymous author clearly thought of the Cross as a unifying element. It is to be noted, however, that he chose not to treat the prehistory of the Cross in the Old Testament.³⁴

Johannes Cuspinian (1473 Schweinfurt-1529 Vienna), humanist, physician, rector of the University of Vienna, and librarian and diplomat in the service of Maximilian I, tells it thus:

The emperor entered Jerusalem, carrying the wood of the Lord's cross. But when he was about to carry it on his shoulders to Mount Calvary he was prevented, as if by a closed gate. Then he was admonished by the Patriarch Zacharias (who had returned to his former position) that he should lay aside all his imperial regalia and imitate the way in which Christ had borne the cross. Then Heraclius took off his triumphal robes, which were interlaced with gold and jewels, and carried the cross barefoot and in humility. Completing the rest of the way, he deposited it in the very place from which it had been taken by the Persians.³⁵

³² Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg, 4o cod. H. 27, folios 47r-89v. Editions by Aldelbert von Keller, *Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert: Nachlese* (Stuttgart, 1858), 54-122, no 125, and Elke Ukena, *Die deutschen Mirakelspiele des Spätmittelalters* (Studien und Texte). Bern and Frankfurt, 1975), II, 453-559.

³³ Gerd Simon, *Die erste deutsche Fastnachtsspieltradition* (Lübeck, 1970), 20-22; Ukena, *Mirakelspiele*, I, 223-51. Heinrich Biermann in *Verfasserlexikon*, I (1977), 528-30.

³⁴ This pre-history involves the Tree of Life and the visit of the Queen of Sheba to king Solomon. It is included in the famous cycle of frescoes which Piero della Francesca completed in 1460 in the choir of St. Francesco in Arezzo.

³⁵ *De Caesaribus et Imperatoribus Romanorum opus insigne* (ed. Basel, 1561),

This version is substantially different from the one found in the *Reversio Sanctae Crucis*. There is no intervention of an angel, and Heraclius is on his way out of the city, to Mount Calvary, rather than entering it. There are no depictions of the recovery of the Cross by Heraclius or of his entry into Jerusalem in Byzantine or post-Byzantine art, just as the miracle before the gates of Jerusalem is not mentioned in Byzantine literature. But Heraclius receives his share of attention in the visual arts of Western Europe, and, predictably, it is the Heraclius of legend rather than the Heraclius of history. Two such examples are:

An entire cycle of mural paintings, dating from the middle of the 14th century and devoted to the exploits of Heraclius, is found in the village church of Fraurombach (Schlitz) in Hesse. These paintings were discovered and laid bare in 1901; they are, unfortunately, quite faded today. Among the scenes identified the following are pertinent:

1. Heraclius in combat with the son of Chosroes on a bridge.
2. Heraclius demanding of Chosroes that he accept Christianity.
3. Heraclius decapitating Chosroes.
4. Heraclius stopped by an angel before the gates of Jerusalem. (*fig. 3*)
5. Heraclius entering Jerusalem as a penitent.

191 (Cited from an exemplar in the New York Public Library. Translation mine.) The Latin version of this "Kaiserbuch" was first published in 1540, a German translation in 1541. On Cuspinian (Cuspinianus, earlier Johann Spiesshaimer), see further: Josef Ritter von Aschbach, *Geschichte der Wiener Universität*, II (Vienna, 1877), 284-309, esp. 306-07 on the *De Caesaribus*; Otto Rommel, *Wiener Renaissance* (3rd ed. Vienna, 1947), 375-92; Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist Johannes Cuspinian, Gelehrter und Diplomat zur Zeit Kaiser Maximilians I.* (Graz and Cologne, 1959); Klaus Gysi, et al., *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, IV: Joachim G. Boeckh, et al., *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1480 bis 1600* (Berlin, 1983), 173-4; Hermann Wiesflecker, *Kaiser Maximilian I.*, V (Munich, 1986), 367; Monika Franz, "Cuspinianus, Johannes," in *Literaturlexikon*, 2 (1989), 500.

The entire cycle, it has been suggested, appears to be based on the poet Otto's *Eraclius*.³⁶

fig. 3: Heraclius before Jerusalem



The Louvre holds an interesting panel painted by an Italian painter who is known as Michele di Matteo da Bologna or Michele di Matteo Lambertini, and who is believed to have been active between 1416 and 1469. (*fig. 4*) Here Heraclius is

³⁶ Gregor Richter, "Die mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien in der kirche zu Frauombach," *Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter*, 6 (1907), 113-21, 168-74, 183-88; Alfred Stange, *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik*, I (Berlin, 1934), 75-6; Dieter Groszmann and Gerhard Bott, *Hessen: Baudenkmäler (Reclams Kunstführer, Deutschland, IV, 4th ed. Stuttgart, 1972)*, 110; Georg Dehio and Ernst Gall, *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler: Hessen*, 2nd ed. (Munich and Berlin, 1982), 268; Heinrich Sippel, *Die gotischen Wandmalereien in der Dorfkirche von Frauombach im Schlitzerland (Schlitz im Spiegel der Geschichte, Heft 16, 2nd ed. Schlitz, 1989)*; Michael Curschmann, "Constantine-Heraclius: German Texts and Picture Cycles," in Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, ed., *Piero della Francesca and his Legacy (Studies in the History of Art, 48. Washington, D.C., 1995)*, 48-64; Herr Reinhold Horn, Stadtverwaltung Schlitz, has kindly provided assistance.

depicted as he is about to enter through an open gate; he is barefoot, wears an artfully embroidered penitent's shirt but also his crown, and carries a large cross.³⁷

fig. 4: *Penitent Heraclius*



³⁷R. F. 30 (MN). Lawrence Gowing, *Paintings in the Louvre* (New York, 1987), 61. This painter is known to have executed some of the frescoes that decorate the Baptistery of Siena and can be dated to 1447. See the following: Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, XVI (The Hague, 1937, rpt. New York, 1970), 233; Keith Christiansen, Laurence B. Kanter, and Carl Brandon Strehlke, *Painting in Renaissance Siena, 1420-1500* (New York, 1988), 45; Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, Alessandro Andelini, and Bernardina Sani, *Sienese Painting from Duccio to the Birth of the Baroque* (New York, 1998), 266. Two paintings by the same artist, a *Mater Dolorosa* and a *St. John the Evangelist*, dating from c. 1440, are held by the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Columbia. Dr. Joan Stark, Associate Curator, kindly provided the information.

In the West Helena and Heraclius are associated with each other in numerous works of medieval ecclesiastical art, such as two or more frescoes of the same cycle, the wings of the same triptych, or two or more illuminations in the same context. The return of the Cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius becomes a parallel to the *inventio* of the Cross by Helena. Here are some examples from France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, and Slovakia.

The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore owns an incomplete Book of Hours which stems from Rheims and dates from the end of the 13th century.³⁸ The Hours of the Cross, or Hours of the Passion, are decorated with 12 historiated initials; one of these depicts Constantine, three depict Helena, and two Heraclius.³⁹ The sequence begins with Constantine at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (folio 95r); then we see two men digging, in the presence of a crowned Helena, but no cross is visible yet (folio 98r). Next Helena adores a cross (folio 114v), and a *verificatio* follows (folio 115v). Heraclius is shown before the gates of Jerusalem in two scenes (folios 117r and 118r).

In the Church of S. Croce in Florence, the walls of the Alberti-Alamanni Chapel, the main chapel of the choir, are decorated with frescoes pertaining to our subject. These frescoes date from c. 1380, are the work of Agnolo Gaddi, and illustrate the legends of the Cross. The south wall and the north wall each are organized into a tympanum and three registers. The lowest register of the south wall depicts both the *inventio* and the *verificatio* in a single composition. In the top register of the north wall Chosroes is seen removing the Cross from Jerusalem. In the middle register Chosroes allows himself to be worshipped,

³⁸ MS W. 98. See De Ricci and Wilson, I, 784, no. 170; Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified* (New York, 1988), 92, 172, cat. no. 5 and fig. 56; Lilian M. C. Randall, *et. al. Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery, I: France, 875-1420* (Baltimore, 1989), 119-23, no. 49.

³⁹ Folio 98r, 114r, and 115v, Helena; 95r, Constantine; 117r and 118r, Heraclius.

Heraclius is visited, in his sleep, by an angel, and Heraclius and the son of Chosroes are engaged in a duel on a bridge. In the lowest register, on the left side, we see the decapitation of Chosroes; in the middle background, continuing the composition without division, Heraclius, on horseback and carrying a cross, is stopped before the gates of Jerusalem by an angel; and on the right side he approaches the gate barefoot and in penitent's dress, but still wearing his crown. (*fig. 5*) The two walls are linked together spatially and thematically; it is the Cross which links them together. The dream of Heraclius is comparable to the visions or dreams reportedly experienced by Constantine and Helena.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Of the abundant literature only a few titles are cited here: Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, V (Milan, 1907, rpt. Nendel, Liechtenstein, 1967), 817-27 with figs. 656-63; Van Marle, *Italian Schools of Painting*, III (The Hague, 1923), 539-44 with figs. 200-302; George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art: Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), 467-75 with figs. 555, 557; Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 21-6, 79-81, and pls. 25-33; Emma Micheletti, *Santa Croce* (Florence, 1982), 26-7 with ill. 45-9; Roberto Salvini, in Umberto Baldini and Bruno Nardini, *Santa Croce: Kirche, Kapellen, Kloster, Museum* (Stuttgart, 1985), 185-209; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Place of Narrative*, 99-103 with figs. 75-6, 105-10 with figs. 80-7 and pls. 10-11. A small painting, attributed to the school of Agnolo Gaddi, of Heraclius' entry into Jerusalem is held by the National Gallery in Prague, Inv. No. 0 11884. See Sbírky Národní Balerie v Praze, Sternberský Palác, *Staré evropské umění* (Prague, 1988), 60, 65, no. 52.

fig. 5; Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem



The Museo del'Opera dei Duomo in Siena holds eight painted panels which once were part of an "arliquiera" (reliquary cupboard) in the sacristy of the duomo. They are attributed to the painter Benedetto di Bondo and can be dated to the year 1412. Six panels pertain to the *inventio* and *verificatio* of the Cross by Helena and two to the return of the Cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius:

1. The Jewish elders are gathered in conference.
2. Judas is being presented to Helena, who is crowned and nimbed; she threatens to cast him into a fire.
3. Judas is, at Helena's command, lowered into a well (or brought up from the well?).
4. The digging for the Cross begins.

5. A young man is brought back to life by the touch of the True Cross.
6. The Cross is being presented to Helena.
7. Heraclius approaches Jerusalem. He is stopped by an angel; the gate has formed a solid wall.
8. A penitent Heraclius approaches the gate, which is now open.

Not only does the Cross give thematic unity to the eight panels; the two sequences of events merge into a single one.⁴¹

The Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington, D.C., holds a Franconian tapestry of the last third of the 15th century. In the center of this tapestry there is a crowned Helena, kneeling; behind her are attendants. On the right side there is a combined *verificatio* and *inventio* scene. A person revived from death is sitting on a cross, while a workman is still vigorously swinging his hoe. On the left side we see Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem; he is dismounted, wears a penitent's dress, and carries a large cross.⁴²

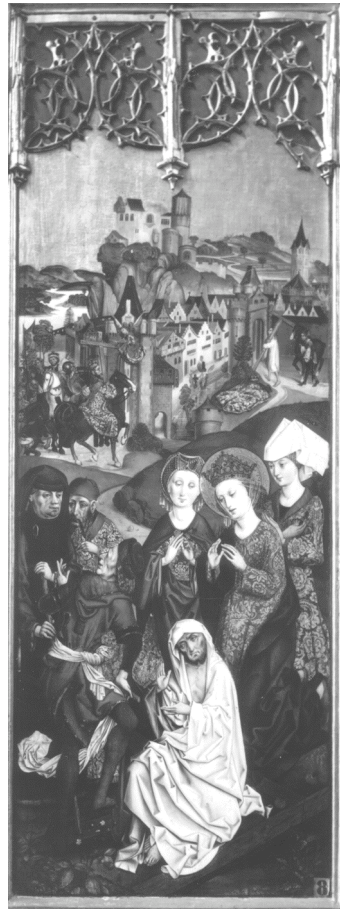
In the crossing of the Church of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg an altar of St. Catherine, donated by one Levinus Memminger, is of interest in the present context. It has been dated to c. 1485-1490 and was produced in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut. (*fig. 6*) The inside of the right wing pertains to our subject. In the foreground we see a bearded man kneeling on a cross, in the presence of a nimbed and crowned Helena; this would appear to be a variation of the *verificatio*. In the background, on the left, in a much smaller scale, Heraclius, on horseback, is stopped before the gates of Jerusalem by an angel; on the right we see him barefoot and in penitent dress

⁴¹ Van Marle, *Italian Schools of Painting*, II, 538 and fig. 347; Cesare Brandi, *Quattrocentisti Senesi* (Milan, 1949), 29-33 and pls. 12-15; Dini, Angelini, and Sani, *Sieneese Painting*, 214-17.

⁴² Accession no. 15.1. See Betty Kurth, *Die deutschen Bildteppiche des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 1926), I, 185, 270 and III, plt. 300; Heinrich Göbel, *Wandteppiche* (Leipzig, 1923-1934), III:1, 168.

approaching an open gate.⁴³ Clearly St. Helena is the major subject and Heraclius the minor subject in this panel, and the Cross provides a thematic link.

fig. 6: Verificatio of Helena, & Heraclius before Jerusalem



⁴³ Stange, *Deutsche Malerei*, IX (1958), 55-6 and ill. 97, and by the same, *Kritische Verzeichnis der deutschen Tafelbilder vor Dürer*, III (Munich, 1978), 68, no. 129.

A cycle of frescoes dating from the end of the 15th century is found in the choir of the parish church in Wiesendangen near Winterthur (Kt. Zürich).⁴⁴ It had apparently been covered over at the time of the Reformation and was re-discovered only in the course of a renovation of the church in 1913/1914. Laid bare and expertly restored, except for a few scenes lost to architectural changes, it tells the story of the Cross more fully than some other cycles. Beginning on the north wall of the choir, we "read" how Helena sails across the sea to search for the True Cross, how she interrogates the Jews, how she threatens to cast them into a fire, how she verifies the Cross (the actual *inventio* seems to have been omitted), how she venerates the Cross, and, in a unique scene, how she sails back to Constantinople, carrying the Cross.⁴⁵ On the south wall Chosroes is the subject of three scenes: he leaves on campaign, presumably to take Jerusalem and to capture the True Cross; he is seated in his palace with the Cross behind him; and finally he is killed by Heraclius.⁴⁶ The combat between Heraclius and the son of Chosroes is also shown.⁴⁷ But Heraclius' entry in Jerusalem and the Exaltation have been lost, except for a few traces.⁴⁸

Another example, also dating from the last third of the 15th century, is provided by the central panel of an altar from the workshop of the so-called Master of Liesborn.⁴⁹ (*fig. 7*) This panel,

⁴⁴ A history of the church and a detailed description of the frescoes is provided by Hans Martin Gubler, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Zürich*, VIII: *Der Bezirk Winterthur, nördlicher Teil* (Basel, 1986), 294-306 with ill. 359-64.

⁴⁵ Nos. 10-15 in Gubler's scheme.

⁴⁶ Nos. 17, 18, 28 in Gubler's scheme.

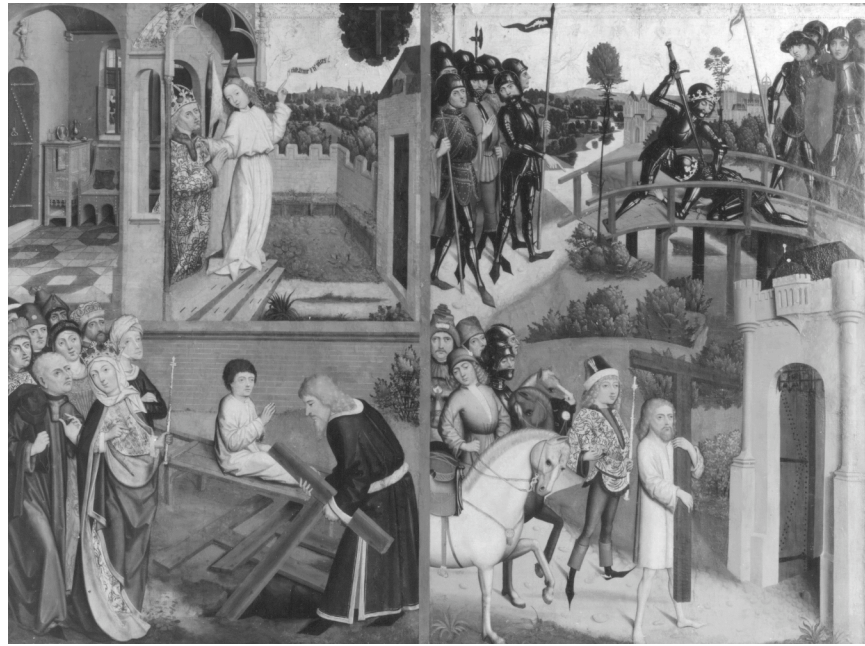
⁴⁷ No. 26 in Gubler's scheme.

⁴⁸ Nos. 29-31 in Gubler's scheme.

⁴⁹ For this master and his name-piece, some parts of which are found in the Westfälisches Landesmuseum in Münster and others in the National Gallery in London, see the following: Stange, *Deutsche Malerei*, VI (1954), 26-30 and ill. 36-44; Heinrich Theodor Musper, *Gotische Malerei nördlich der Alpen* (Cologne, 1961), 214-15; Paul Pieper in *Liesborn: Kunst und Geschichte der ehemaligen Abtei* (Exhibition catalogue,

in the Westfälisches Landesmuseum in Münster, is divided by a vertical line into halves, each half offers two scenes, one above the other, but without an horizontal dividing line. All four scenes relate

fig. 7: *Constantine, Helena, and Heraclius in four scenes*



to the legend of the Cross. In the upper left quadrant we find a variant on Constantine's vision: Constantine is kneeling in a doorway; at his side an angel points to a cross in the sky. The lower left quadrant depicts the *verificatio*; the subject of the test this time is neither a woman nor a young man, but rather a boy. Helena holds a

Liesborn, 1965), esp. 13-16; Landesmuseum Münster Westfalen, *Der Liesborner altar: Die Bilder der Nationalgalerie in London und des Landesmuseums in Münster* (Exhibition catalogue, Münster, 1966); Stange, *Tafelbilder*, I, 159-61, no. 517; Wieland Koenig, *Studien zum Meister von Liesborn* (Beckum, 1974), esp. 17-23 and ill. 1, 2; Paul Pieper, *Die deutschen, niederländischen und italienischen Tafelbilder bis um 1530. Bestandskataloge des Westfälischen Landesmuseums für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Klaus Bussmann (Münster, 1986), 212-19, nos. 84-91.

scepter in her left hand and wears a crown. The *inventio* is suggested only by an open pit, above which two more crosses are laid out. In the upper right quadrant two men, both wearing crowns, are battling each other on a bridge, while their attendants on either side of a river are watching. This should be interpreted as the combat between Heraclius and the son of Chosroes, not as the Battle of Milvian Bridge.⁵⁰ In the lower right quadrant Heraclius, on foot, barefoot, in penitent's dress, and carrying a large cross, approaches an open gate of Jerusalem.⁵¹ The inside panels of the two wings of this altar are in London's National Gallery.⁵²

In 1485 or 1486 the painters Miguel Ximénez (Jiménez) and Martin Bernat, with the former doing the greater share of the work, painted an impressive retablo of the Holy Cross for the parish church of Blesa near Montalbán in Aragon. Thirteen panels of this retablo are now exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts in Zaragoza (Saragossa).⁵³ Scenes of the Passion culminate

⁵⁰ The same scene is to be seen in the village church of Fraurombach, in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, and in the church of Wiesendangen. The Battle of the Milvian Bridge and the combat between Heraclius and the son of Chostoes are parallels, just as the *inventio* of the Cross by Helena and the recovery of the Cross by Heraclius are parallels.

⁵¹ Inv. no. 1293 LM. See Stange, *Deutsche Malerei*, VI (1954), 30 and ill. 50; and by the same, *Tafelbilder*, I, 163-4, no. 524; Pieper, *Tafelbilder*, 254-60, nos. 112-15; Koenig, *Meister von Liesborn*, ill. 101-102a.

⁵² Stange, *Deutsche Malerei*, VI (1954), 30 and ill. 48-9; National Gallery, London, *Illustrated General Catalogue* (London, 1973), 433-4, nos. 254-5; Koenig, *Meister von Liesborn*, 62 and ill. 83-4, 102b.

⁵³ Chandler Rathfon Post, *A History of Spanish Painting*, VIII (Cambridge, MA, 1941), 91-7 with figs. 34-5; José Gudiol i Ricart, *Pintura Gotica* (Madrid, 1955), 309-10 and fig. 269; José Camón Aznar, *Pintura medieval Española* (Madrid, 1966), 517 and fig. 500; José Manuel Escárraga, "El retablo de la Santa Cruz de la villa de Blesa," *Seminario de Arte Aragonés*, 13-15 (1968), 91-96 and unnumbered ill; José Gudiol i Ricart, *Pintura Medieval en Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1971), 63, 85, no. 357 and figs. 196-200; Miguel Beltrán Lloris and Belén Díaz de Rábago, *Museo de Zaragoza: Secciones de Arqueología y Bellas Artes* (Zaragoza, 1988), 158-60. The same two painters collaborated on other retables. See Judith Berg Sobré, *Behind the altar Table: The Development of the Painted Retable in Spain, 1350-1500* (Columbia, Missouri, 1989), 29, 46, 61, 102, 187.

in a Last Judgment. Four of the panels are of special interest in the present context:

1. Helena, crowned, nimbed, and richly dressed, is seated on a throne and interrogating the Jews.
2. Judas has been released from the well and is kneeling before Helena.
3. Heraclius, on horseback, carrying a large cross, and nimbed, is approaching the walls of Jerusalem. But the gate is blocked in, and an angel appears above it. Next to Heraclius, also on horseback, there is Helena, wearing rich robes and a triple crown, nimbed, and holding two large nails in her hand. (*fig. 8*)
4. An Exaltation: Heraclius and Helena, who is again identified by two large nails in her hands, adore a large cross, which is held up by two angels.

One may reasonably assume that there were two other panels that depicted the *inventio* and the *verificatio*. A nimbed Heraclius is unusual, as he certainly was never canonized. In both nos. 3 and 4 the association of Heraclius with Helena in a common theme is carried one step further than we have so far observed: they are shown, in a single composition, as contemporaries and partners in a common enterprise, notwithstanding the fact that they are separated from each other by three hundred years.

fig. 8: Heraclius & Helena before Jerusalem



But there is another example of it in the arts. We find it far away from Spain in eastern Europe, namely in the eastern part of Slovakia, formerly part of Hungary, in the city of Bardejo.⁵⁴ (fig. 9)

fig. 9: Helena & Heraclius before Jerusalem



⁵⁴ “Bardejo” or “Bardejov” in Slovak, “Bártfa” in Hungarian, and “Bartfeld” in German. The city lies at the foot of the Carpathians in a district that was settled by Germans in the 12th and 13th centuries and was known as “die Zips” (“Spis” in Slovak). See the following: Oskar Schürer and Erich Wiese, *Deutsche Kunst in der Zips* (Brünn [Brno], 1938), 3-17; Ernst Hochberger, *Das grosse Buch der Slowakei* (Sinn [Hesse], 1997), 69-75.

There the Church of St. Egidius, the city's patron saint, boasts no fewer than twelve altars, one of them an altar of the Crucifixion, painted by an unnamed master c. 1480-1490. The outside of the two wings is devoted to the themes of Helena and Heraclius. When the altar is closed the viewer can see the following scenes, reading from left to right and from top to bottom:

1. Helena interrogating the Jews, threatening to cast them into a fire.
2. The *inventio* of the Cross.
3. The *verificatio* of the Cross.
4. Heraclius triumphant being stopped by an angel and the gate being closed to him.
5. Heraclius penitent about to enter the city through an open gate.
6. The Exaltation of the Cross.

In the fifth of these scenes Helena, whom we may easily identify, joins Heraclius.⁵⁵ Again Helena and Heraclius have become contemporaries and partners.

Finally, this association has survived in the liturgy. The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is now observed, on 14 September, in commemoration of both the *inventio* of the Cross by Helena, which was formerly observed on 3 May, and the return of the Cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius.

⁵⁵ Of the original high altar only a statue of St. Egidius survives; the present high altar is neo-Gothic. The eleven side altars, of which the altar of the Crucifixion is one, are of the late Gothic period. See the following: Korné Divald, *Old Hungarian Art* (Oxford, 1931), 134, 136; Dénes Radocsay, *A Középkori Magyarország Táblaképei [Panel Painting of Medieval Hungary]* (Budapest, 1955), 269-70 and plts. CXIV, CXV; Alexander Fricky, *Bardejov: Kultúrne pamiatky* (Bardejov, 1976), 49, no. 14; J. Bozová, G. Drobníak, and F. Gutek, *Kostol sv. Egidia v Bardejove—The Church of St. Egidius in Bardejov—Die St.-Ägidius-Kirche in Bartfeld* (Bardejov, 1998), 57-63, esp. 61-3 with an excellent photograph of the outer wings. Unfortunately the authors have misinterpreted the first of the six scenes as the “Burning of the Crosses” and have disturbed the proper sequences of the scenes.

It is clear that Helena and Heraclius were both seen as pious rulers in the service of the Cross. It is this service of the Cross which allows for the inordinately close association of the two personalities with each other across the centuries. Moreover the legend of the *inventio* and *verificatio* enhanced the veneration of the cross, the single most important symbol of Christianity since the 4th century, while the legend of Heraclius effectively taught a lesson in humility.⁵⁶ The purpose of ecclesiastical art and of hagiographical writing is not to establish an historical record, but to edify the beholder.

List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1: *St Helena Before the Cross*. Lombard gradual c. 1450. Courtesy: Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collections, Cornell University Library
- Fig. 2: *Justinian, Heraclius and Charlemagne*. Detail from the triumphal arch of Maxmilian I. Courtesy: Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
- Fig. 3: *Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem*. Mural painting in the church of Fraurombach (Hesse). Photo by the author
- Fig. 4: *Penitent Heraclius*. Painting by Michele di Matteo Lamberetini. Paris, Louvre. Courtesy Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY
- Fig. 5: *Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem*. Fresco by Agnolo Gaddi. Alberti-Alamanni Chapel, Church of S. Croce, Florence. Courtesy: Scala/Art Resource, NY
- Fig. 6: *Verificatio of the Cross* (foreground) and *Heraclius before the gates of Jerusalem* (background). Inside right wing of the Altar of St. Catherine. Church of St. Lawrence, Nuremburg. Courtesy: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg
- Fig. 7: *Constantine, Helena, and Heraclius in four scenes*. Central Panel of an altar from the workshop of the Master of Liesborn. Courtesy: Westfälisches Landesmuseum Münster
- Fig. 8: *Heraclius and Helena before the gates of Jerusalem*. Panel from a retablo of the Holy Cross by Miguel Ximénez and Martin Bernat. Courtesy: Museo de Zaragoza
- Fig. 9: *Heraclius and Helena before the gates of Jerusalem*. Panel of an altar of the Crucifixion, Church of St. Egidius, Bardejo (Slovakia). Courtesy: Frantisek Gutek, Director, Saris Museum, Bardejo

⁵⁶ The chronicler Albert of Aix reports that, when the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, Godfrey of Bouillon separated himself from the general slaughter and entered the city barefoot and clad only in a penitent's dress. This story is hardly believable, but enhances the stature of Godfrey. When St. Louis of France, in 1241, received a precious relic of the True Cross from the Emperor Baldwin, he humbled himself in a manner reminiscent of Heraclius. The chronicler Matthew Paris remarks specifically that St. Louis was inspired by the example of Heraclius. When Lord Allenby entered Jerusalem on 11 December 1917 at the head of his forces he was careful to do so on foot.

THE MORALITY OF MISOGNY: THE CASE OF RUSTICO
FILIPPI, VITUPERATORE OF WOMEN

Fabian Alfie
University of Arizona

At the outset of his influential study on Rabelais, Mikhail Bakhtin makes an interesting observation. The scholar dedicates several pages to detail how the French author's critical reception changed over time. Bakhtin illustrates how the attempt to comprehend an author can frequently be stymied by the cultural changes that occur across the centuries. As scholars analyze writers of earlier periods, the investigation of the cultural and textual background can become increasingly difficult.

Although Bakhtin's study is specific to the works of Rabelais, many of his findings can be applied to the Italian comic writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Eschewing the critical embarrassment of previous generations, Bakhtin openly discusses Rabelais's references to urination, defecation, sexuality, and over-consumption, asserting that such corporeal language, which he labels as "carnavalesque," had developed within a particular cultural context in European society. The scholar also remarks that insults and degradation form a component part of "carnavalesque" literature because they symbolize the destruction of the body. For as long as the "carnavalesque" subculture remained vital, he asserts, the general readership intuitively understood Rabelais's precise literary aims.¹ During the sixteenth

¹Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trs. Hélène Iswolski (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1984), 3-20, 59-62, 64, 165.

century, Rabelais's works were highly acclaimed, but as the centuries passed, and as the culture changed, they were viewed with increasing disdain. As Bakhtin's study clearly shows, the understanding of a writer's cultural context can radically alter the scholarly perception of her or his works, and as that context becomes lost over time, such texts may appear incomprehensible.²

The critical history of the Florentine poet, Rustico Filippi (c. 1230-1240—c. 1295-1299) provides another excellent example of the loss of a cultural context and the subsequent critical confusion that can ensue. Of the fifty-nine extant sonnets in Filippi's *corpus*, twenty-nine sonnets, just under half, adeptly communicate the traditional motifs of medieval love poetry. In his amorous verse, he demonstrates acute poetic skills writing in apparent imitation of the school of his contemporaries, the so-called Siculo-Tuscans. The nineteenth-century scholars who rediscovered Filippi, and who were also well versed in the Romantic poetics of the age, wrote admiringly of his love poetry. Vincenzo Federici, for instance, described his love poetry as the genuine expressions of love and heartache.³ The other half of Filippi's poetic production, thirty sonnets, is written in the comic style. In the latter compositions, like Rabelais and others in subsequent centuries, the poet speaks of coarse sexual situations, composes unflattering caricatures of his fellow Florentine citizens, and slanders and castigates political enemies.

²A version of this paper was presented at the American Association of Teachers of Italian conference in Toronto, Canada, in November 2002. I would like to thank all the participants of that session for their feedback. I would also like to thank in particular Cynthia White, Van Watson, Jill Ricketts, Theodore Cachey, F. Regina Psaki, and the editors and anonymous readers of *Quidditas* for their invaluable feedback during the various stages of preparation of this article. Furthermore, some of the information about the Vatican Urbinati 697 manuscript was derived in part from the microfilm copy held at the Vatican Film Library, housed at the Pius XII Library of St. Louis University. I would like to acknowledge the staff of the Vatican Film Library for its assistance.

³Vincenzo Federici, *Le rime di Rustico di Filippo rimatore fiorentino del sec. XIII* (Bergamo: Arti Grafiche, 1889), xxvi.

Those same Victorian scholars who valued Filippi's love poetry stood aghast at Rustico's vivid portrayal of sexual and scatological material. Francesco de Sanctis exclaimed that there was barely a gleam of wit in Filippi's comic sonnets. Vittorio Cian regretted that Rustico squandered his talents on filth and baseness.⁴ Mario Apollonio concluded that the poet was a man of impulse, not possessed of learning and culture.⁵ We should not cast aspersions on the scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however. F. Regina Psaki notes that editing practices still routinely remove outrageous elements from medieval texts.⁶ While contemporary readers live in an age that is more open to sexual and bodily language, Filippi's poetry contains misogynous elements, which may still provoke hostile reactions similar to those expressed by earlier scholars.

As suggested by the title of this paper, it is my intention to analyze one such sonnet, which portrays a woman and her actions in a particularly repugnant manner. I hope to demonstrate that while the topos of misogyny may be distasteful—deliberately so, in fact—it was motivated by important literary and cultural debates during the last centuries of the Middle Ages. Since part of the current discussion of Rustico's poetry will analyze his relationship to the broader culture, at times my language below runs the risk of treating his age in a univocal fashion. Let me be clear that it not my intention to suggest that the cultures of the Middle Ages and Renaissance—nor, for that matter, any particular subcultures of those centuries—thought or behaved in a monolithic way.

⁴Francesco de Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature*, trs. Joan Redfern (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 45; Vittorio Cian, *La satira* (Milan: Vallardi, 1929), 136.

⁵Mario Appolonio, "La realtà nova e Folgore," *Uomini e forme nella cultura italiana dalle origini* (Florence: Sansoni, 1943), 284. See also Anthony K. Cassell, "An Abandoned Canvas: Structural and moral Conflict in the *Coraccio*," *MLN*, 89: 1 (1974), 61. Cassell notes that nineteenth-century scholars were similarly shocked by Giovanni Boccaccio's misogynistic work.

⁶F. Regina Psaki, "The Modern Editor and Medieval 'Misogyny': Text Editing and le Roman de Silence," *Arthuriana*, 7:2 (1997), 84-6.

Although I will speak from an overarching, global perspective, at the same time I do not wish to gloss over the many unique voices and viewpoints located within the various intellectual movements treated below.

Understanding the relationship between the comic and amorous styles in Rustico's poetic production sheds some light on his elaboration of traditional misogynistic motifs. Rustico's two types of sonnet, comic and amorous, reflect a split in styles in his lyric production that is profound and goes far deeper than the mere selection of thematics. Mario Marti notes that the very lexicon differs between Rustico's two types of lyrics; Filippi's comic verse is dominated by the lower linguistic register, while in his love poetry he Tuscanizes the literary terminology of the preceding Provençal and Sicilian poetic schools. There are no textual indications, furthermore, that he intended his amorous poetry to be an ironic parody. Marti gives an overarching definition of Rustico's lyric production as "two-headedness" ("bifrontismo"),⁷ an appellation that was repeated by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo,⁸ and later expanded upon by Giuseppe Marrani as "stylistic schizophrenia, or better, two-headedness."⁹ Filippi simply seems to excel at two fundamentally different styles, to the degree that they seem to have been written by two different authors.

Filippi's thirty comic sonnets have garnered him considerable scholarly attention. Critics generally consider him to be the initiator of the tradition of comic verse in Italian literature because documents written by his contemporaries described him as founding a new form of poetics; one such document shall be a

⁷Mario Marti, *Cultura e stile nei poeti giocosi del tempo di Dante* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1953), 45, 54.

⁸Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, ed., *Sonetti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), 11.

⁹Giuseppe Marrani, "I sonetti di Rustico Filippi," *Studi di filologia italiana*, 57 (1999), 33. Marrani describes Rustico's style as: "la schizofrenia stilistica, o meglio il bifrontismo."

focus of this paper.¹⁰ Rustico was not the first Italian author to compose misogynistic lyrics in the vernacular, as that honor goes to an anonymous Venetian poet who wrote a work over 755 verses long.¹¹ But, given his stature during his lifetime, Rustico appears responsible for establishing antifeminist thematics within the nascent comic movement. After Rustico, virtually all misogynistic literature in Italian was written in the comic style. Comic vernacular poetry, which has been alternately defined as “burlesque,” “jocose,” or “comic-realist,”¹² has been understood as a phenomenon of the rising bourgeoisie of thirteenth-century Italy.¹³ It was part of a pan-European literary movement, which had its roots in the Latin poetry of the Middle Ages.¹⁴ Indeed, similarly misogynistic lyrics are found in medieval Latin poetry.¹⁵

The major studies on jocose poetry authored by Vitale and Marti, already cited in this discussion, elucidate the movement. At the same time, though, they do not thoroughly explain Rustico’s double-nature, nor do they address the fact that Rustico is not the only medieval writer who demonstrates a similar split in outlook; several decades after Rustico’s death, Giovanni Boccaccio, to

¹⁰In addition to the Latin commentary to Francesco da Barberino’s *Documenti d’amore*, discussed below, Brunetto Latini addresses the poem *Favolello* to Rustico and asks him to send to an example of his “new poetry.” “Il Favolello,” in *Il Tesoretto e il Favolello* (Strasburg: J. H. ed. Heitz, 1900), v. 149-153.

¹¹Information about the work, “Proverbia quae dicuntur super natura feminarum” is derived from Gianfranco Contini’s edition, *Poeti del duecento*, v. 1 (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1960), 521-555.

¹²Aldo Francesco Massèra labels it as “burlesque” (“burlesca”), *Sonetti burleschi e realistici dei primi due secoli* (Bari: Laterza, 1940). Mario Marti calls it “jocose” (“giocosa”) and Maurizio Vitale calls it “comic-realistic” (comico-realistica”), *Cultura e stile nei poeti giocosi del tempo de Dante* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1953). Such appellations are prevalent throughout the works of all three scholars.

¹³Maurizio Vitale, *Rimatori comico-realistic del Due e Trecento* (Turin: UTET, 1965), 28.

¹⁴Marti, *Cultura e stile*, 1-18.

¹⁵Carol Pascal, “Misoginia medievale,” *Studi medievali*, 2 (1906-07), 242-8.

mention only one example, composed the antifeminist text *Il Corbaccio* alongside numerous works of amorous literature. Interest in the misogynistic *topoi* in the decades following Rustico's death cannot be explained away as the work of a series of chauvinistic individuals. They may or may not have possessed such beliefs: we cannot be certain. Another explanation is needed.

Perhaps one of the most useful texts for interpreting Rustico Filippi's stylistic choices is a Latin commentary on Francesco da Barberino's poem *Documenti d'amore* (c. 1317). Written within two decades of Rustico's death, the commentator mentions Rustico and provides a brief description of his comic works. While the actual passage about Rustico is quite succinct—only one sentence—the overall context of the citation gives insights into a medieval understanding of Rustico's poetics. The commentator attempts to justify the praise of women found in love poetry. In an aside, the commentator then distances Rustico from men who praise women, associating him, rather, with those who speak ill of women:

Quid enim Rusticus barbatus et alij quidam, laudis ex vituperiis per eos impintis contra dominas reportarunt[:]
vedeant quot et qui eorum super hiis scripta honorant.

How is it that Rustico Barbuto [Filippi's nickname] and certain others get praises from the slanders they imposed upon women; let them see how many—and who—honor their writings beyond themselves.¹⁶

The passage suggests that the commentator was familiar with Rustico's comic poetry. Rustico repeatedly engages in the *topos* of *vituperium*, the exposure and castigation of the sins, failings, and character weaknesses of other individuals.¹⁷ Yet the

¹⁶The commentator of Francesco da Barberino is cited from Francesco Egidi's edition, *I documenti d'amore*, v. 1 (Milan: Archè, 1982), 90-1. The translation is mine

¹⁷For example, in "Collui che pose nome al Macinella," he speaks of an obese man, Macinella, while in "Quando Dio messer Messerin fece" he denigrates the unsightly

commentator does more than summarize Rustico's verse in this passage. By opposing praise, *laus*, to blame, *vituperium*, the commentator carefully utilizes terminology of medieval literary criticism, clearly indicating the way to read Rustico's insulting literature. Theoreticians frequently categorized comedy and tragedy as polar opposites of one another; comedy speaks about those referents that are excluded by tragedy.¹⁸ Starting with Averroes in the history of medieval literary criticism, the two terms of praise and blame corresponded to the two styles, tragedy and comedy respectively.

According to Judson Boyce Allen, Averroes was credited with defining tragedy as the art of praising, while comedy was the art of blaming.¹⁹ In the passage above, the commentator recollects the widespread duality of praise and blame by including both terms in the description of Filippi's verse ("*laudis ex vituperiis*"). By characterizing Rustico's poetry as vituperative, the commentator furnishes a subtle critical assessment of Rustico's style that a medieval reader would have instantly recognized; in short, the commentator classifies it as comic. In the process, the commentator either ignores, or is not aware of, Rustico's laudatory, amorous sonnets.

By calling Rustico a writer of comedies, the commentator does not merely apply a stylistic label to the Florentine poet, but also subtly suggests the moral underpinnings to Filippi's style. The two styles, comic and tragic, were interpreted in line with morality during the Middle Ages. In the popularization of Averroes's theory, Hermann the German classified poetry as a subset of ethics, and deduced that, therefore, its subject matter, too,

Messerin. Except as noted, Rustico's poems are cited from Vincenzo Mengaldo's edition, *Sonetti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971).

¹⁸ Paolo Orvieto and Luci Brestolini, *La poesia comico-realistica: dalle origini al Cinquecento* (Rome: Carocci, 2000), 148.

¹⁹ Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A decorum of convenient distinction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 19-20.

must be ethical.²⁰ In other words, Allen explains, the dichotomy of praise / blame served a didactic function.²¹

Interpreting the didacticism inherent to all poetry is not exclusive to the European reception of Averroistic thought. Throughout the Middle Ages, literary treatises—including summaries of their ideas found in commentaries and encyclopedias—explained that both tragic and comic authors filled the moral purpose of praising the virtuous or of condemning the sinful.²² Matthew of Vendôme, for example, stressed that the authors' ethical responsibility could be found in the portrayal of individuals.²³ If characters were portrayed positively, Matthew wrote, then the readers should admire their virtues; if characters were drawn negatively then the readers should recognize and reject their vices.

John Dagenais asserts that medieval comic texts placed an extra-textual expectation upon the reader. Although not frequently spelled out, the expectation existed that readers would possess a common background in Christian ethics and judge the texts accordingly; as Dagenais puts it, authors “required the reader to take a stand about what he or she read.”²⁴ Martha Bayless also stresses that medieval comedies served a moral function; in they distanced the readers from the worldly order, reminding people

²⁰Allen, *The Ethical Poetic*, 18.

²¹ Allen, “Hermann the German’s Averroistic Aristotle and medieval Poetic Theory,” *Mosaic*, 9 (1976), 68.

²² Zygmunt G. Baranski, “‘Tres enim sunt manerie dicendi . . .’: Some Observations on Medieval Literature, ‘Genre,’ and Dante,” *The Italianist*, 15: supplement (1995), 43.

²³Matthew of Vendôme is cited from Aubrey E. Galyon’s translation, *The Art of Versification* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1980), book I, paragraph 59.

²⁴John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de buen amor* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), xvii.

that heaven represented the true order.²⁵ In short, *vituperium* not only denigrated other individuals, but also implicitly charged the readers to identify the vices of those persons, reject their sins, and turn away from such sins in their own lives.

In calling Rustico a vituperator of women, the commentator portrays accurately, if reductively, Rustico's poetic production. In some of his comic poetry, Filippi decries female misbehaviors. In "Io fo ben boto a Dio: se Ghigo fosse," and "Se tu sia lieto di madonna Tana," for instance, he holds a wife's marital infidelity up to ridicule. In sonnets such as these, it is not difficult to discern Filippi's moral intents; even though Rustico does not explicitly express any indignation at the women's actions, the reader can easily apply to them the Christian repudiation of sexuality.

Yet one sonnet in particular warrants close examination in the light of the commentator's statements. While fifty-eight of Rustico's sonnets are found in the thirteenth-century compendium Vatican Latin 3793, one appears elsewhere, in the fifteenth-century codex Vatican Urbinati 697.

Before continuing, the editorial treatment of the poem should be discussed. Only two editors, Vincenzo Federici and Giuseppe Marrani, include it in Rustico's corpus; both question its ascription to Rustico, and separate it from his other works.²⁶ Giving primacy to the lyrics of the thirteenth-century manuscript, the other editors omit it entirely, not even including it in an appendix, and claim the manuscript is unreliable.²⁷ Aldo Massera and Maurizio Vitale provide no additional explanation for their decision to omit the sonnet. Mario Marti goes further, describing it as "filthy and highly incorrect [i.e., textually corrupt]."²⁸

²⁵ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 203.

²⁶ Vincenzo Federici, xli and Giuseppe Marrani, 186-187.

²⁷ Massera, 320-323; Vitale, 103-107; Mengaldo, 17-18.

²⁸ Mario Marti, *I poeti giocosi del tempo di Dante* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1956), 31, describes the sonnet as: "lercio e scorrettissimo."

Though there are textual problems with the sonnet, the complete rejection of it as Filippi's is, in my opinion, unwarranted. My opinion is based upon two factors. First, it has been well established that the more authoritative thirteenth-century manuscript, Vatican Latin 3793, is missing folios precisely in the section dedicated to Rustico's poetry.²⁹ Thus, no reason exists to presume that the poetic corpus therein is integral. Second, the fifteenth-century source manuscript, Vatican Urbinati 697, clearly attributes the sonnet to "Rustico Barbuto" (f. 68r), referring to both the writer's name and nickname. The ascription of the sonnet leaves little doubt that the scribes, at least, believed it to be Filippi's. This discussion is not intended to suggest that the sonnet be treated conclusively as Rustico's, but only that it should no longer be discounted out of hand. Yet even should the attribution of the lyric be proven to be spurious, close analysis of the poem can reveal important insights about Rustico's literature. Indeed, as shall be seen below, examination of the poem will illuminate various aspects about the general topos of the castigation of female vice in the Italian Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Interestingly, the fifteenth-century scribe of Vatican Urbinati 697 refers to the poet in a manner consistent with the early fourteenth-century commentary on Francesco da Barberino. In the major collection of Filippi's sonnets, Vatican Latin 3793, the author is identified as "Rustico Filippi" (ff. 141r; 160r) or, in the compositions that follow the initial attribution, "Rustico medesimo" ("the same Rustico") (ff. 160r-171v).³⁰ That the scribe of the codex containing this sonnet, Vatican Urbinati 697, and the commentator of da Barberino's poem call him "Rustico Barbuto" and "Rusticus Barbutus" respectively, suggests a connection between the two texts. Both sources refer to the poet's name and nickname. Too much should not be made of the similarity in

²⁹Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 81.

³⁰Information about Vatican Latin 3793 is derived from Francesco Egidi's diplomatic edition, *Il libro de varie romanze volgare. Cod. Vat. 3793* (Rome: Presso la Società, 1907).

attributions, as it is tenuous and distant, and most likely coincidental. The ascription to the poet “Rustico Barbuto” is not the only characteristic that associates the sonnet to the commentary, however. In his sonnet, Filippi portrays the woman in a highly distasteful manner, similar to the castigation of women decried by the commentator. The sonnet reads:

Vogliendo contentarmi di composte,
la dona mia si tolse la cispa d’ochi:
erave manti e zimizi e pidochi,
e roгна, schianze di tign’a le coste.

E poscia, tosto che foron riposte
in sella, ov’è anche di merda rochi,
mignate e vermi colse per finochi,
e sì ne puose bene in cento poste.

Quando le cose furono assettate,
vi fece su uersare una postema,
e piscio puzolente una bigonça,

e ricetar tre di còlora e rema;
poi disce: “mangia de le composte”; aconcia
mochi e scarca, sì di gra’ van salate.”³¹

Desiring to please me with a stew, my lady pulled the rheum
from her eyes; there were also so many bedbugs and lice, and
scabies and ringworm scabs on her eyelids. And then, when
these things were placed on the toilet seat, where there are also
morsels of shit, she gathered bloodsuckers and worms like
fennels and put them in a hundred plates. When the

³¹Cited from Marrani’s edition. Vincenzo Federici provided a different reading of the sonnet, which more closely follows that found in the manuscript. Comparison of the two versions will highlight the difficulties of interpreting this sonnet. The version found in Federici’s edition reads: “Vogliendo contentarla di composte,/ la donna mia si tolse la cispa d’ochi:/ eraue manti e çimiçi e pidochi,/ e roгна, schianze di tign’a le coste./ E poscia, tosto che feson riposte/ in sella, dov’è anche di merda rochi,/ mignate e vermi colse per finochi,/ e sì ne puose bene in cento poste./ E quando le cose furono assentite,/ vi fece su uersare una postema,/ e piscio puçolente una bigonça,/ E ricetar tre di chòlora e rema;/ poi discie: “mangia de le composte; aconcia/ “mochi e scarcha, sì di gra’ vasallaci.”

ingredients were prepared, she poured over them a cesspool and a bucket of piss, and she gathered three days' worth of bile and catarrh, and she said: "eat this stew"; then she arranged snot and waste, for they too should be seasoned in such a manner.³²

At first blush, it is difficult to distinguish any particular motivation for this sonnet, ethical or otherwise. Unlike Rustico's other lyrics, which deal with certain misdeeds, this one denigrates a woman without reference to her sins. In fact, he does not overtly mention her vices nor does he represent her sinful actions. He simply describes her in an extremely revolting manner. When his lady wants to please him, he writes simply, she serves him a vile stew of bodily waste, parasites, and vermin, covered with a sauce of urine and other bodily fluids. Rustico portrays her preparing repulsive food for him by sloughing waste products off her body. In some respects, this sonnet needs no further explanation beyond the recognition of its style. Medieval literary theorists described comedies stylistically, defining their lexicon and expressions as humble, quotidian and homely; they could use the spoken language of everyday people. Furthermore, the theorists allowed for the aesthetics of repulsiveness (*feditas*), promoting even the use of scatological and sexual terminology (*obscenitas*)³³.

When viewed from a stylistic perspective, this sonnet represents a compendium of comic language. It talks of bodily matters, and uses coarse lexemes while caricaturing another individual. One of Rustico's literary aims, it should be noted, was the establishment of a comic style in Italian literature. According to Vittorio Russo, Rustico hoped to formalize obscene and realistic thematics within Italian literature.³⁴ This sonnet certainly accords

³²The translation is mine.

³³Rosella d'Alfonso, "'Comico' e 'commedia': Appunti sul titolo del poema dantesco." *Filologia e critica*, 7 (1982), 19.

³⁴Vittorio Russo, "'Verba obscene' e comico: Rustico Filippi," *Filologia e critica*, 5: 2-3 (1980), 172.

with Russo's view of Filippi's literary intentions. The sonnet, therefore, can be accurately interpreted as the accumulation of comic expressions and terminology as sanctioned by medieval literary theory. It constitutes the exercise of an artist hoping to found a theoretically possible, but not yet actualized poetics in the Italian vernacular, a poetics of comedy. But art, even the literature of repugnance, was not just for art's sake. This sonnet, precisely because of its offensiveness, implicitly promotes ethics in a manner consistent with the medieval theories of literature.

The ethical concerns underlying Filippi's poem come to the fore when we turn back to the greater context of the passage commenting on Francesco da Barberino's poetry. By returning to that commentary, I am not suggesting that it was composed specifically for the sonnet under examination, only that it provides invaluable clues to the interpretation of lyrics such as this. The commentator does not merely mention Rustico in passing, but contrasts him to those poets who praise their beloved ladies. Prior to his citation of Rustico, the commentator attempted to justify the proper praise of women, and by extension, love poetry in general. The commentator discussed the ethical dimension of praising women and contrasted the literary practice to a dictum of Saint Augustine. Although frequently cited as one of the initiators of the medieval topos of the reprehension of women, Augustine's personal and intellectual views of women were far more complex than that of simple denigration.³⁵

Yet the purpose of the current discussion is not to ascertain the saint's actual views of women, but rather, to understand the significations ascribed to him by the commentator of Francesco da Barberino and others of his time. Augustine claimed, the commentator writes, that the only appropriate conversation with women is that of chastising their sins.³⁶ The Augustinian citation

³⁵ E. Ann Matter, gen. ed., "Women," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 887-9.

³⁶ The commentator writes: "*contra quem est Augustinus scilicet quod nunquam cum eis aliter debemus loqui quam aspere*" (v. 1, p. 90).

is consonant with many other such statements made by the Church Fathers. R. Howard Bloch notes that during the early centuries of Christianity, the Church Fathers needed to enforce monastic celibacy; many did so by enumerating women's perceived faults. James A. Brundage speaks of the general condemnation of sexuality among early Christian thinkers, claiming that "the horror of sex was not a peculiar aberration of a few eccentrics among the fathers of the Church."³⁷ Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski study the long tradition of texts that attempt to dissuade men from marrying or loving women, and label it as "misogamous."³⁸ It is precisely the tradition of misogamy that the commentator must argue against in order to justify love literature.

Given the authoritative nature of many misogynous texts, even as late as the thirteenth century, people who did not look favorably on love or marriage defined, to a degree, much of traditional medieval Christianity. When the literature of love developed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, not all quarters of medieval culture smiled upon it. In the 1960s, D. W. Robertson proposed a reading of Andreas Capellanus's *De arte honeste amandi* as a conservative reaction against the innovative literature of love; it was not, Robertson maintained, a straightforward treatise on how to love properly, but rather a parody of love conventions.³⁹ Love literature, Alexander Joseph Denomy writes, was at variance with the Christian teaching and morality. Denomy claims that it is "impossible to reconcile the tenets of Courtly Love with the commandments of God, with the

³⁷R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 75; James A. Brundage, "'Allas! That Evere Love was Synne': Sex and Medieval Canon Law," in *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1993), 9.

³⁸Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: Misogamous Literature from Juvenal to Chaucer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 2.

³⁹D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962), 400.

Divine Will as interpreted by Saint Paul, with the teaching of Christ and of His Church.”⁴⁰ In short, the commentator apparently cites Saint Augustine as emblematic of certain conservative elements in his culture, which rejected the cultural innovation of love literature.

Given the proximity of the citation of Augustine to the reference to Rustico, furthermore, it seems clear that the commentator interprets Filippi’s poetry as an example of the castigation of women’s vices that the saint promoted. The assertion ascribed to Augustine also falls in line with the ethics underlying the comic style. Matthew of Vendôme, for instance, composed an example of a comic text with a misogynous intent. In his literary treatise, he provides several sample descriptions, the final one of which is a portrait of the ugly hag Beroe (Book I, paragraph 58). He depicts her bodily excretions, the sores on her skin, and the parasites that live on her flesh. In his portrayal, Matthew deliberately causes his readers to feel repulsion at the description of Beroe. As in Rustico’s sonnet, the intended reader-reaction to Matthew of Vendôme’s description encapsulates the moral purposes of the author: not only do we feel repulsion, but our repulsion should cause us to reject the sinfulness implicit to the woman. The commentator’s citation conforms to the morality of comic descriptions prescribed by Matthew of Vendôme, who viewed negative portrayals as a means to dissuade people from vice. The only way that the passage attributed to Augustine differs from Matthew’s literary treatise is that the saint specifies that men should only make such derisive statements of women. Otherwise, both Matthew and Augustine appear in agreement that derision constitutes a socially acceptable way to define and chastise inappropriate behaviors.

Rustico’s sonnet, therefore, is not unique in portraying a woman as hideous. Rather, such a presentation was a *topos* of misogynous writings during the Middle Ages. As Katharina

⁴⁰Alexander Joseph Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 19, 27.

Rogers states, “[i]n an effort to nullify [women’s] pernicious influence, [Church fathers] repeatedly insisted that the female body is not really an attractive object, but a vessel of filth.” Saint John Chrysostom, for instance, explained that women are full of uncleanness, and compared a comely woman to a rag covered in sputum.⁴¹

Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler describe another text of the misogynous tradition, Saint Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum*, as possibly “the most influential piece of antifeminist writings of the Middle Ages.”⁴² Jerome writes that there is nothing uglier than loving one’s wife adulterously.⁴³ Jerome then engages in a veritable litany of women’s faults. While it is possible that Jerome intended *Adversus Jovinianum* as satiric, it also appears that his text was interpreted literally by many readers of the Middle Ages.⁴⁴

In another misogynous text, John Bromyard draws the analogy between a woman and a painted tombstone, which is attractive on the outside but conceals a rotting corpse within itself.⁴⁵ Another medieval author, Walter Map, explains that even loving an optimal woman will result in the fear of bitterness, and frequent misfortunes.⁴⁶

⁴¹Katharina M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966), 18, 22.

⁴²Ralph Hanna III and Traugott and Lawler, *Jankyns’s Book of Wikked Wives: The Primary Texts*, v. 1 (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 17.

⁴³ Jerome writes: “*Nihil est fedius quam uxorem amare quasi adulteram.*” Hanna and Lawler, v. II, 349-50. Jerome, Theophrastis and Walter Map are cited from Hanna’s and Lawler’s edition.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, David S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as Satirist: A Study in Christian Latin Thought and Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1964). See also Hanna and Lawler, 17, 18.

⁴⁵Rogers, *Troublesome*, 70.

⁴⁶ Walter Map writes: “*Optima femina, que rarior est fenice, amari non potest sine amaritudine metus et sollicitudinis et frequentis infortunii.*” Hanna and Lawler, v. 5, 74.

Regarding the writings of the various religious thinkers, Katharina Rogers notes, “abhorrence of sex leads to abhorrence of the sex object”—that is, to the abhorrence of women.⁴⁷ Since it functions to dissuade men from both loving and marrying, the *topos* of the denigration of women in the Middle Ages forms an intrinsic component of misogynous literature. By the thirteenth century, a long tradition of misogynistic, or misogynous, texts existed, and a medieval reader of Rustico’s poem would have recognized the numerous echoes of that tradition in his sonnet. The poem’s intertextuality with such authoritative writings might have cued in the readers to its proper interpretation: this sonnet, too, participates in the misogynous tradition in some fashion.

Misogamous literature was not only a means to enforce celibacy of monastic brothers, however. The descriptions of women as offensive beings also appeared within the medieval discourses of love. As Millicent Marcus notes, antifeminism was an ideological stance that pervaded many of the discourses of the Middle Ages (26)⁴⁸. In book three of the treatise *De arte honeste amandi*, Andreas Capellanus repeats many of the traditional slanders of women in the attempt to dissuade his intended reader, Walter, from engaging in all the behaviors of love spelled out in the previous two books of the work. But Capellanus was not alone in utilizing misogyny to dissuade lovers. In the treatises on lovesickness, one of the prescribed cures was to situate the lover in the presence of an old woman who speaks ill of the beloved. For example, in his glosses on Constantine’s *Viaticum*, Gerard of Berry states openly: “In this, moreover, the counsel of old women is very

⁴⁷ Rogers, *Troublesome*, 8.

⁴⁸ Millicent Marcus, “Misogyny as Misreading: A Gloss on Decameron VIII, 7,” *Stanford Italian Review*, 4: 1 (1984), 26.

useful, who may relate many disparagements and the stinking dispositions of the desired thing.”⁴⁹

Other treatises on lovesickness stress that the mere presence of an old woman might cure the lover’s malady. The hope was that by viewing the elderly woman, the lover would cease contemplating on the beautiful, beloved lady.⁵⁰ In fact, one possible treatment of lovesickness was to imagine the woman’s eventual old age. For example, in *De nuptiis*, Hugh of Fouillooy rhetorically asks why a man should ever love a woman—either she will die young, causing him grief, or she will age and grow ugly.⁵¹ The portion of the *Roman de la Rose* dedicated to the discourse of the old woman (“*La Vieille*”), furthermore, can be interpreted in a similar manner of dissuading men from loving. By the end of the thirteenth century, therefore, the representation of women as hideous had already become a literary commonplace, with the implicit purpose of discouraging passion between the sexes.

When reading a sonnet written in thirteenth-century Italy, moreover, the topic of love should be foremost in the reader’s mind. According to Joan Levin, prior to Rustico’s generation, the sonnet was used exclusively for amorous subject matters; in fact, Rustico was responsible for expanding the acceptable topics for the sonnet form.⁵² In this sonnet, Filippi appropriates a poetic form formerly dedicated exclusively to amorous thematics as a vehicle to convey misogynous material. Thus, Rustico’s sonnet can be read as a compendium of women’s offensiveness written with the intention of causing men to fall out of love. It may be, in other

⁴⁹Cited from Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages, the Viaticum and its Commentaries*, v. II (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1990), 51-3, 203.

⁵⁰Wack, 107.

⁵¹Marie-Thérèse, d’Alverny, “Comment les théologiens et les philosophes voient la femme,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 20 (1977), 126.

⁵²Joan H. Levin, *Rustico di Filippo and the Florentine Lyric Tradition* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 57.

words, a type of *remedium amoris* or *dissuasio amoris*. In effect, to love a woman, to make a carnal and sensual being the ruler of one's soul, Rustico seems to say in this sonnet, is like being forced to eat filth. It is a reversal of the correct social and spiritual order of things. His readers should know that men ought to be chaste, and not subject to bodily desires for women nor subject to the those carnal entities, women themselves.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret Filippi's sonnet exclusively as a reaction against encomiastic love literature. Instead, the rejection of women was simply one part of a greater cultural inducement to reject the flesh entirely.⁵³ The social relationship between men and women was said to mirror that of the spirit to the flesh;⁵⁴ male was supposed to rule over female, just as the soul ruled over the body. Numerous theologians throughout the Middle Ages affiliated woman with the body, while man was considered analogous to spirit. In his writings, for instance, Saint Augustine explained that since Adam was created in the image of God (spirit), and since Eve was created in the image of Adam (flesh), Eve represented the body while Adam stood for the soul.⁵⁵

Rustico's sonnet seems to share in the ideological connection of woman to flesh. In his poem, the repulsive concoction is composed strictly of elements that originated inside of, or off the surface of, her flesh; she is trying to feed him the unclean by-products of a human body. In his sonnet, he reduces the woman to a purely physical entity, a body, and then describes that body as simply the producer of excrement and as sustenance

⁵³Bloch, 70.

⁵⁴Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 191; Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed., Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 163; Caroline W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 151.

⁵⁵d'Alverny, 120, 156.

for parasites. Since he portrays the woman in a repulsive manner and he equates her with the flesh, Rustico most probably intended his sonnet to be read in the light of the misogynous tradition in the broadest sense. That is, he hoped that the readers' disgust would induce them to turn away from sexual attraction towards women, and subsequently to reject all the pleasures of the flesh. The dynamics of gender in this sonnet conceal a deeper, and for most medieval thinkers, more important dynamic—that of the proper relationship of the spiritual to the physical.⁵⁶

The relationship between the male poet and female beloved correspond to the relationship between soul and flesh in the psyche of the unrepentant: for the soul to embrace the flesh and corporeal existence is to take into one's innermost being the uncleanness of the material world. In this respect, Filippi's sonnet apparently parallels a passage from the Gospel of Matthew, where Christ explains that eating with unwashed hands does not make someone impure. Impurity is not derived from that which enters the mouth because actual dirt simply ends up in the stomach; instead, the filth that comes out of someone's mouth—spiritual filth such as evil thoughts, adultery and sexual immorality—cause a person to be polluted (Matthew 15: 10-20). Through its sinful impulses the body, allegorized as the woman in the sonnet, serves up to the soul, personified by the male poet-subject, a plate of excrement and waste. Rustico tacitly poses the question to the readers: will you accept or reject such repast?

For decades, scholars have recognized misogyny, like that expressed by Filippi, as a *topos* of jocose poetry. Yet they have not explained its *raison d'être* beyond that of making recourse to literary history; the poets wrote about it, the critics seem to imply,

⁵⁶ Kate Greenspan, for instance, writes about the frustrated efforts of some modern-day feminist scholars to locate anti-patriarchal impulses in medieval women authors: "For women [of the Middle Ages], writing could be a means of celebrating a spiritual triumph much more important to them than any earthly triumph over a censorious patriarchy." See "The Autohagiographical Tradition in Medieval Women's Devotional Writing," *Auto/Biography Studies*, 6:2 (1991), 166.

because comic authors had always written about it.⁵⁷ Such a scholarly view, in short, locates the true literary meanings of such topoi at the origins of the literary tradition, and positions writers of later generations as unconsciously reiterating their forebears. Maurizio Vitale explores the question slightly more deeply, drawing a connection between misogynistic motifs and the religious preaching of the age.⁵⁸ None of the scholars, however, has raised the fundamental question of why jocose poets such as Rustico, would write verse denigrating to women, of why they would compose misogamous texts at all.

The question is particularly pertinent in the case of Filippi, for he was not only the initiator of Italian comic literature but also an adherent of love poetry. It should be stressed that misogynistic *topoi* were not coincidental to the Italian literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Dante capitalizes on the traditional motif of misogyny in portions of the *Divine Comedy* (e.g., *Purgatorio* XVI and XXIII), and he emphasizes the sexual sins of the female souls condemned to hell.⁵⁹ Comic poets in the fourteenth century, like Pietro de' Faitinelli, Pieraccio Tedaldi, Adriano de' Rossi, and in the fifteenth century, Giovan Matteo di Meglio and il Burchiello, to name only a few, all wrote poems describing women's horrible natures.⁶⁰ Indeed, one of the masters of Italian literature, Giovanni Boccaccio, composed a long prose work, *Il*

⁵⁷ Marti, *Poeti giocosi* 14; Vitale, *Rimatori comico-realistici*, 20; Levin, 92.

⁵⁸ Maurizio Vitale, *Lingua*, 60.

⁵⁹ Rachel Jacoff, "Transgression and Transcendence: Figures of Female Desire in Dante's *Commedia*," *Romanic Review* 79: 1 (1988), 130-5.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Cecco Angiolieri's sonnet "La stremità mi richer per figliolo," Pietro de' Faitinelli's "Uom può saper ben fisica e natura," Pieraccio Tedaldi's "El maladetto di, che io pensai," Adriano de' Rossi's "Cara compagna del compagno mio," Giovan Matteo di Meglio's "O calandrona, stregonizza errante," and Burchiello's "Ardati 'l fuoco, vecchia puzzolenta." For an in-depth study of fifteenth-century misogynistic sonnets in Italian literature, see Bruno Bentivogli's article "Sonetti misogini da codici quattrocenteschi" *Studi in onore die Raffaelli Spongano* (Bologna: Boni, 1980), 73-93.

Corbaccio, which similarly falls into the parameters of misogamy / misogyny.⁶¹

Nor were misogynistic subject matters limited to the literature of Italy; instead, it pervaded much of the literature of Europe during the Middle Ages. The point of this discussion, albeit a highly cursory overview, is that the denigration of women is not a motif outside the mainstream of medieval literature throughout Europe. Yet a striking characteristic of the literature of misogyny / misogamy is its lack of inventiveness. The authors repeat the same centuries-old slanders of women frequently with little or no innovation on the subject matter.⁶² Therefore, as the conclusion of my paper, I will examine Rustico's selection of misogynous *topoi*, and in the process address, admittedly in a perfunctory fashion, the general question about the existence and, more importantly, the persistence of antifeminist *topoi* in medieval literature. In my opinion, the two issues are linked because Rustico clearly shares similar authorial intentions of many of the comic poets of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁶¹Scholarship has always recognized the relationship between the *Corbaccio* and the misogynous tradition. However, critics have debated Boccaccio's rationale for appropriating misogynous language. In the early twentieth century, Henri Hauvette, "Une confession de Boccace: 'Il Corbaccio,'" *Bulletin italien*, 23: 1 (1901), 4, interpreted the *Corbaccio* autobiographically, claiming that Boccaccio had been rebuffed by a young woman and composed the work to vent his frustrations. Other scholars, such as Normand R. Cartier, *Boccaccio's Revenge: A literary Transposition of The Corbaccio (The Old Crow)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), viii, Mario Marti, "Per una metalettura: de. 'Corbaccio': ripudio di Fiammetta," *Giornale storico dell letteratura italiana*, 153 (1976), 70 and Giuseppe Italo Lopriore, "Osservazioni sul 'Corbaccio,'" *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 60: 3, 4 (1956), 483-484, seemingly accept Hauvette's reading of the work. In contrast, other scholars view the work as an ironic parody. Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Last Fiction 'Il Corbaccio'*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 2, proposes that the *Corbaccio* is a literary joke, while Gian Piero Barricelli, "Satire of Satire: Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*," *Italian Quarterly*, 18 (1975), 109, considers it a satire of medieval misogyny. Anthony K. Cassell, "Abandoned Canvas," xxv, describes it as a reaction against the predominant love literature of the age. Janet Levarie Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta; the Narrator as Lover* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 154, interprets it as chastising lust, and not love.

⁶²Bloch, 2, 3.

An answer to the question of the rationale for misogynous vernacular literature is suggested in the subtext to the commentary to Francesco da Barberino's poem *Documenti d'amore*. In the sentence immediately following the above citation of Augustine, the commentator performs a novel interpretation of the saint. He claims that when Augustine proscribed conversation between men and women, he was speaking only of those men who loved women carnally, but not those who loved spiritually.⁶³ By interpreting Augustine in such a manner, the commentator endeavors to employ the saint's authority to distinguish between love and lust. The commentator's statement is surprising given the fact many writings of the Church Fathers and some conservative members of the Catholic hierarchy did not recognize such a distinction. By trying to differentiate between love and lust in Augustine's writings, the commentator can then argue that love literature is not at odds with Christian Orthodoxy, but instead conforms to it. To wit, by claiming that amorous literature agrees with—rather than clashes with—predominant religious teachings, the commentator is attempting to establish the authoritative sanction for love literature. As the commentator's disquisition progresses, he proudly proclaims that he has reconciled the two cultural impulses, writing that Augustine would agree with his opinion that spiritual love is not identical to carnal lust.⁶⁴

In the passage under discussion, the commentator's effort to reconcile love literature and ecclesiastical authorities is quite remarkable because it belies a certain cultural anxiety regarding the proper relationship between love literature and Christianity. The rejection of love literature by many churchmen placed vernacular writers on the proverbial horns of a dilemma. Presumably, most such authors viewed themselves as good Christians; at the same time, however, they were adherents of a

⁶³ The commentator writes: "*Sed super lictera ista loquitur non de dominabus quas quidam amant carnaliter*" (v. 1, p. 90).

⁶⁴ The commentator writes: "*securius tamen credo consilium augustini*" (v. 1, p. 90).

general movement, vernacular literature, which developed as a means to disseminate love literature. As Dante explains in the *Vita Nuova*:

E lo primo che cominciò a dire sì come poeta volgare, si mosse però che volle fare intendere le sue parole a donna, a la quale era malagevole d'intendere li versi latini (XXV, 6).

The first poet to begin writing in the vernacular was moved to do so by a desire to make his words understandable to ladies who found Latin verses difficult to comprehend.⁶⁵

To be sure, Dante presents a simplified version of the multitude of historical factors that gave rise to vernacular literature. Nonetheless, his explanation underscores the belief at the time that vernacular literature developed in lay contexts alongside love poetry. Indeed, the *topoi* of love all but justified the writing of literature in the vernacular. While this is not the place to prove such a broad assertion, it is my belief that many writers who excelled at love literature faced, to borrow a term from contemporary psychology, an instance of cognitive dissonance, the anxiety provoked by adhering to two contradictory beliefs and the desire to bring those beliefs into agreement.

As seen above, numerous church authorities taught that interactions between the sexes were fraught with sin, while vernacular poets wrote almost exclusively of love. Thus, when Dante makes Beatrice into a symbol for the transcendent in the *Vita Nuova*, or when Petrarch speaks of Laura as a sinful distraction from God in the *Canzoniere*, to mention only two exalted cases, both can be viewed as the attempts by two great thinkers to reconcile two incompatible belief-systems—that of a particular type of orthodox Christianity on the one hand, and of vernacular love literature on the other. It should be recalled, furthermore, that the publisher of the *princeps* edition of Dante's

⁶⁵Dante's *Vita Nuova* is cited from Domenico de Robertis's edition, *La Vita Nuova* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1980). The translation is from Mark Musa, *Dante's Vita Nuova: a Translation and an Essay* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973).

Vita Nuova, Bartolomeo Sermartelli, during the height of the Catholic Counter Reformation, was required to bowdlerize the text by removing all the metaphors of the divinity of Beatrice.⁶⁶ While the culture of the Counter Reformation was overweeningly interested in the establishment and enforcement of orthodoxy than was the society of the Middle Ages, the editorial treatment of Dante's *libello* in the seventeenth century elucidates in part the discussion at hand. Madison A. Sowell claims that Dante based his poetics on the amalgamation of two disparate vocabularies, namely erotic and spiritual lexicons, thereby re-contextualizing amatory language to speak of the soul's yearning for the divine.⁶⁷ But even several centuries after his death, Dante's unique fusion of love literature and Christianity was still radical and treated as suspect.

In conclusion, I believe that the cultural division between those who embraced love literature and all that it implied, and strains of conservative Christianity with their traditional rejection of sexuality (and by extension, women), may explain Rustico's innovation of misogynous/misogynous writings in Italian vernacular literature. I assert that in medieval Italian literature, misogyny probably had very little to do with women *per se*, despite the apparently paradoxical nature of such a statement. I maintain that the *topos* of the denigration of women evolved in Italian poetry as a symptom of a larger cultural debate about the propriety and sanction of the writing of love literature.

This is not to say that such literature had no impact on the real-life experiences of women, but that the practical applications of such poetry were, at best, secondary intentions. The primarily purpose, I believe, was to debate the ever growing and increasingly popular literature in the vernacular. One text written outside the context of medieval Italy appears to validate my opinion. In the

⁶⁶For a description of Bartolomeo Sermartelli's princeps edition, see Michele Barbi, *La vita nuova* (Milan: Hoepli, 1907), LXXIX. Regarding the bowdlerization of the text, Barbi writes: "che si trovasse nella Vita Nuova cose che potessero offendere il sentimento religioso, sarà, credo, maraviglia per molti."

⁶⁷Madison U. Sowell, "Dante's Poetics of Sexuality," *Exemplaria*, 5:2 (1993), 469.

prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, Geoffrey Chaucer explains that he undertook to write of honorable women to counteract the misogyny inherent to *Troilus and Criseyde* and of the *Roman de la Rose*. Venus appears to the poet in a vision and charges him with enumerating the examples of upstanding women:

Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,
that is an heresy ayeins my lawe,
and makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;
and of Creseyde thou hast seyde as the lyste,
that maketh men to wommen lasse triste.⁶⁸

Chaucer's text implicitly confirms the contrast of, on the one hand, misogamy, and on the other, love literature as personified by Venus. The goddess of love requires that the poet now make amends for his previous misogynistic works; he must do so through literature of praise, such as that defended by the commentator to Francesco da Barberino. Misogynistic texts like the sonnet under examination only become comprehensible when counterpoised to the love lyrics predominant in the Middle Ages; their fundamental purpose was to offer a contradictory opinion on the *elogium* of women.

Due to the moral—and occasionally moralistic—nature of comedies,⁶⁹ comic poets such as Rustico wrote misogynistic texts to problematize the amorous tradition. Filippi wrote love poems, but he was also aware of the theological and moral difficulties of doing so; that, to a certain degree, explains his “two-headedness.” As an author, Filippi wrote in all the available styles, but he was also a learned individual and therefore he knew of the many ecclesiastical objections to his art. Scholars have recognized for decades that other poets of the Italian comic tradition, such as

⁶⁸Cited from *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), version F, verses 329-33.

⁶⁹For information on the moralizing of comic poets, see Alfie, “A Sonnet Ascribed to Saint Catherine of Siena: Attribution and intertextualities,” *Italian Quarterly*, 39 (2002), 5-18.

Cecco Angiolieri, positioned themselves against literary developments such as the *dolce stil nuovo*.⁷⁰

The works that insult and denigrate women should be read in a similar manner. Texts such as these constitute documents of a cultural debate about literature, and about love literature in particular. Rustico employs the sonnet, a poetic form that heretofore had been used strictly to treat amorous material, as a means to discuss the horrible nature of women. In so doing, he forces his readers to accept the authoritative nature of his description of the woman—following as he does the misogynistic language of authorities like Augustine and Jerome, among many others—which is now placed in the context of love poetry. Which, he tacitly asks, is the correct portrayal of the woman: the *encomium* of amorous verse, or the denigration of those monastic Church Fathers? And if one accepted the judgment of the Church Fathers, then how, such poetry implicitly ponders, could love literature be justified?

Nor should the codicological context of misogynous poetry be overlooked. All of Filippi's sonnets appear in larger manuscript compendia of vernacular love poetry. The misogynous verse stands out in harsh contrast to the more general attitude therein of the praise of women.⁷¹ Indeed, one possible interpretation of medieval misogynous literature is precisely as a corrective to the general tendency of vernacular manuscripts toward love lyrics. While I have discussed Filippi in particular in this paper, I hold that my findings can be applied to many of the vernacular poets who partake of misogynistic topoi. The long-standing persistence

⁷⁰Marti, *Cultura e stile*, 100-119.

⁷¹Pamela Benson, "Debate about Women in Trecento Florence," *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, eds. Thelma S. Foster and Clare A. Lees (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 165, asserts that during the Middle Ages, the case against women was allowed to stand alone, while pro-female writings were positioned against misogynistic texts. However, F. Regina Psaki, *The Traffic in Talk about Women* (work in progress) has noted that the pro- and anti-woman treatises were frequently juxtaposed to one another, causing the reader to decide which was the more appropriate attitude.

of this motif demonstrates that the question of the appropriateness of love literature was to remain unresolved into fifteenth-century Italian literature and beyond.⁷² I believe that Rustico's misogynist/misogamous literature is among the first attempts by Italian poets to highlight the conflict between the different teachings of conservative medieval Christianity and amorous writings. It comprises the posing of a difficult question, which, they hope, someone will adequately answer.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, doubtless for a myriad of reasons, have historically avoided the *topos* of misogyny. But the avoidance of this topic has performed a disservice for medieval literary criticism. The poetics of the Romantic Movement normalized the notion that poets would write of their intimate emotions. Post-Romantic readers, including the Victorian scholars who rediscovered many medieval texts and wrote the earliest studies on them, certainly accepted unquestioningly much of the Romantic literary ideology. Many such ideas are still prevalent to this day.

Few contemporary readers would find anything amiss in writers singing of their loves, exalting their beloved ladies, and of comparing passion to divine *caritas*.⁷³ Analysis of misogynistic poetics, however, casts medieval amorous literature in a sharply different light. Love poetry was anything but normal and accepted. Rather, it was shockingly new and not necessarily in conformity with the predominant ideologies of the Middle Ages. By writing of misogyny/misogamy, Rustico Filippi and his ilk, far from being radicals speaking from the fringes, co-opted the authoritative and socially sanctioned positions in questioning new cultural developments. Theirs were not the pathological voices of cranky curmudgeons; rather, they spoke alongside the voices of orthodoxy against the dubious innovation of love literature.

⁷²For a discussion of the *topos* of misogyny in sixteenth-century Italian literature, see Orvieto and Brestolinii, "Chi dice donna dice danno," chapter 13 of *La poesia comico-realistica*.

⁷³ For a reading of Dante's *Vita Nuova* as associating erotic love and divine caritas, see Mark Musa's translation.

***Fama and Fortuna:*
Giorgio Vasari's Michelangelo**

Peter Kanelos
University of San Diego

I

The life of Michelangelo is set indisputably as the capstone to Giorgio Vasari's monumental, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* (1568). Cathedral-like in its detail and expanse, Vasari's collection of biographies is itself a carefully designed and constructed work of art.¹ Its separate parts are crafted with concern for the whole; from its series of individual narratives, a single grand narrative emerges. Buonarroti's position in this is conspicuous, and purposefully so. In the first edition of the *Vite* (1550)—his biography, the only one granted a living

¹Not all critics have seen, or do see, the *Vite* in this way. For some, Vasari's account is literal, and in the strictest sense of the term, historical. An example of this is Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), which takes most of what Vasari claims at face value. The trend in recent scholarship, however, has applied to the *Vite* modes of analysis that take into account its literary character; see Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), and several works by Paul Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose: A Myth and its Maker* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990), *Why Mona Lisa Smiles and Other Tales by Vasari* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991), *Giotto's Father and the Family of Vasari's Lives* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992), and *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State UP, 1994). This essay builds upon Barolsky's contention that Michelangelo consciously crafted his persona as an artist; my intent is to show the degree to which Vasari absorbed the lessons of his "master," and how he was not only complicit in mythologizing Michelangelo, but used Buonarroti's *vita* to bolster his own project and achievement.

artist—concludes the work decisively. It is the final entry and the one in which all the separate virtues that had been scattered liberally among artists and across centuries have been collected in Michelangelo's "divine" person. In the 1568 edition, he is followed by Titian and other artists of his day, a shift that does not compromise his preeminence, but is made for reasons that only buttress his status, as will be discussed further on. Between the two editions, a separate off-print, entitled *La Vita del Gran Michelagnolo*, was issued by Vasari; the reason for this will also form part of my argument. In all cases, Michelangelo's superlative rank is beyond question—he represents the pinnacle of artistic, if not human, achievement.

In detailing the lives of artists, Vasari records a persistent and forward march, marked by invention and innovation. It is the nature of art, he argues, to develop, and in developing, to ascend.

Having carefully turned all this over in my mind, I have come to the conclusion that it is inherent in the very nature of these arts to progress step by step from modest beginnings, and finally to reach the summit of perfection (I: 85).

Art matures, he holds, in a linear and upward manner, towards a particular end. Its progress is finite. The *telos* towards which art evolves – the excellence designated in the title of the *Vite*—is embodied in its paragon, Michelangelo.

Vasari's book is an attempt to arrest artistic development at its peak, before it begins to ebb. He was well aware that over time and through the vicissitudes of fortune the achievements of artists have always been, sooner or later, forgotten. A trope that had from ancient times represented this abasement was that of a deluge, associated with Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Memory, in contrast, operated to check or channel this flood, so that its damage might be mitigated. The most effective instrument of remembrance was believed to be the written word, for reasons that will be discussed. In this essay, I will illustrate how Vasari claims for himself the privilege of preserving through his writing the fame of the artists of the Renaissance. Moreover, I will contend that he

expands for his own purposes the role of writing in the service of memory. It was Vasari's belief that writing, to fulfill this aspiration, needed to be more than a record of the past, that it needed to adopt for itself the principles of art. By examining carefully what he avers of remembrance, particularly in his *vita* of Michelangelo, I will demonstrate that, for Vasari, memory is only truthful when it surpasses the imitation of nature and passes into the realm of invention.

II

The spur for the advancement of art, claimed Vasari, has always been the passion for fame. Across the broad arc of the *Vite*, this is in fact what links one artist to the next, and what makes the upward mobility of art possible. It is present, in the first entry, when Cimabue, whose works, "had made him famous," is eclipsed by Giotto, who, "inspired by a worthy ambition," obscures the reputation of his master, "in the way that a great light dims the splendour of a lesser" (I: 55). It is also the sentiment, that opens the climactic selection on Michelangelo, three centuries later:

Enlightened by what had been achieved by the renowned Giotto and his school, all artists of energy and distinction were striving to give the world proof of the talents with which fortune and their own happy temperaments had endowed them (I: 325).

What is sought by the artist is not merely the esteem of one's peers, which Vasari represents as a diluted and often volatile sort of celebrity, but rather an honor that transcends time and place. One's work is the depository of one's fame; it is through his art that the artist hopes to be remembered.

In the *vita* that opens the history, we find Vasari quoting from Dante. Cimabue's epitaph, found in Santa Maria del Fiore, remarks upon the painter's apparent preeminence in his craft: "'Twas Cimabue's belief that he did hold the field in painting. / So in life he did; but now the stars of heaven are his."² During his

²"Credette Cimabue nella pittura / Tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido; / Sì che la fama di colui oscura" (I: 54).

lifetime, Cimabue felt that his reputation was secure. It is the poet's prerogative however to remind us of the mercurial nature of fame. Alluding to this epitaph in the eleventh Canto of the *Purgatorio*, Dante writes:

Once Cimabue was thought to hold the field
In painting; Giotto's all the rage today;
The other's fame lies in the dust concealed.³

One's reputation is never as stable as it might appear to be. This is far from the last time that Vasari will quote Dante; it is telling however that the first time the poet is called upon, this is the sentiment expressed. Moreover, Vasari appends to this quotation the interpretation of Dante's lines by a commentator writing in 1334:

Cimabue was a Florentine painter who lived at the time of the poet; he had outstanding ability, but he was so arrogant and disdainful that if anyone remarked any fault or defect in his work or if he noticed any himself...he immediately rejected it, no matter how precious it might be (I: 55).

Bearing out the claim that Dante made, the painter has been reduced, in one generation, to a footnote, the purgatory of the once-famous—a third of a century after his death, Cimabue has been nearly forgotten; this is partially attributed to vanity. In contrast, the poet, Dante, Cimabue's contemporary, is well remembered. When the reader encounters, over one hundred lives later, the claims for Michelangelo's preeminence, it is profitable to recall this observation made so early on.

It is certainly not by happenstance that Vasari, in the beginning of his work, foregrounds Florence's greatest poet, and establishes between himself and Dante the shared privilege of assessing, and securing, the reputation of artists; nor is this the last time that he raises the subject. In the life of Alberti, an artist like

³Dante, *Purgatorio*, trs. by Dorothy Sayers (New York: Penguin, 1955).

Vasari best known for his writings, the following observation is made:

...as far as fame and reputation are concerned the written word is more enduring and influential than anything else; for, provided they are honest and innocent of lies, books travel freely and are trusted wherever they go (I: 209).

Writers have a tactical advantage over other artists—their work travels with little constraint (under most circumstances) and their opinions are generally credited. As fame is a subset of opinion, this grants them tremendous influence. One need only glance at Vasari's model, Pliny, to see the truth of this statement. The vast majority of works that Pliny describes have been lost to the world; they persist only in the pages of his *Natural History*. The artists that he neglected, or those that did not know of, have dropped forever out of memory. As Vasari explains:

An artist lives and acquires fame through his works; but with the passing of time, which consumes everything, these works – the first, then the second, then the third—fade away. When there were no writers there was no way of leaving for posterity any record of works of art, and so the artists themselves also sank into obscurity (I: 31).⁴

Vasari's conception of history is one that takes into account the rise *and* fall of civilizations. He applies this pattern to the fate of the arts as well. In his Preface to the *Vite*, he makes it clear that the barbarian wave that leveled the classical world was only the latest in a recurring series of deluges. There have always been and will always be catastrophic events that overwhelm civilization – within memory was the sack of Rome in 1527, which had great

⁴Yet as works from antiquity were being excavated with ever greater frequency in Vasari's day, the complex relationship between artist and art historian—exemplified in the figure of Pliny and the discrepancies between his description of pieces such as the Laocoön and the hard evidence at hand—was increasingly manifest. For a particularly cogent account of this issue, see Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 105-117.

impact on the artists of the day. It is obvious to him that the fate of the plastic arts is precarious. The written word, however, is more resilient. Looking at the advancements of his contemporaries, it seems probable to Vasari that the arts have reached the point of perfection in the past as well, but that these achievements have been lost to the present. He suggests that men before the Flood, nearer to the moment of the Creation, produced works that were closest to the imitation of nature, from which the idols mentioned in the Old Testament descended. From these idols, no longer extant, he contends that the Egyptians learned, “to make statues of those whose fame they wanted to perpetuate” (I: 27). He offers the example of Ozimandias, whose sepulcher, also lost, is described in detail by Diodorus (and who became a symbol of the passing nature of fame for Shelley). The Greeks, according to Pliny, learned in turn of painting, sculpture and other arts from the Egyptians. Pointing to the famous description of Achilles’ shield by Homer, Vasari contends that they too must have brought the arts to the peak of perfection. Yet once again only a description, embedded in a work of writing, survives.

These ideas—of the periodic and catastrophic destruction of civilization, and of writing as the surest record of the past—are likely culled from Plato’s *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, Socrates relates the story of Solon, wisest of the Athenians, who traveling to the city of Sais in Egypt, was so over-awed with the grandeur of their antiquities that he wished to engage the Egyptians in a discussion about the most ancient things. He told them about the deepest past retained in Athenian memory, of Phoroneus, “the first man,” of Niobe, and of the Deluge and the survival of Deucalion and Pyrrha. This elicited from the Egyptians mild reproach:

O Solon, Solon, you Hellenes are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you ... in mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition, nor any science hoary with age.⁵

⁵*Timaeus*, in Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996 [first published, 1961]), 22b-c.

They informed him that there has not been a single deluge, but many, and that there have been countless other destructions of mankind, some arising from fire, others from water. Because they have been insulated from most of these by the Nile, the Egyptians have been able to preserve the art of writing, and, as a result, have knowledge of the most ancient traditions, including the founding, nine thousand years earlier, of Athens itself and of the city's greatest triumph in the conquest of Atlantis.

Whatever happened either in your country or in ours, or in any other region of which we are informed—if there were any actions noble or great or in any other way remarkable, they have all been written down by us of old and preserved in our temples. Whereas just when you and other nations are beginning to be provided with letters and the other requisites of civilized life, after the usual interval, the stream from heaven, like a pestilence, comes pouring down and leaves only those of you who are destitute of letters and education, and so you have to begin all over again like children, and know nothing of what happened in ancient times, either among us or among yourselves.⁶

Vasari himself, through the *Vite*, provides a narrative of art's recovery after a sustained submersion. The very first sentence of the first life he records carries forward the Timaeian image of the deluge:

The flood of misfortunes which continuously swept over and submerged the unhappy country of Italy not only destroyed everything worthy to be called a building, but also, and this was of far greater consequence, completely wiped out the artists who lived there (I: 49).

The *rinascita* is able to commence with the young Cimabue, only because, “fortune certainly looked kindly on this instinctive talent,” by providing for him an opportunity to paint in the company of the Greek artists visiting Florence, whose work

⁶*Timaeus*, 23a-b.

offered the contrast necessary for others to notice the youth's superior artistry. Had this moment of contingency been missed, no mentor would have arisen for Giotto, and the reemergence of Italian art would have been indefinitely delayed, if not forever frustrated.

Vasari is very sensitive to the uneven operations of fortune and misfortune. It is for this reason that he begins the *Vite* with Cimabue, and not Giotto, to call attention to the unsteady concatenation of circumstance that the Italian renaissance has built itself upon. Like Machiavelli, however, he wants to find a way to hedge in and direct chance. Machiavelli himself employs the image of a deluge—"one of those violent rivers which when they become enraged, flood the plains"—to describe the vicissitudes of fortune. He argues famously in Chapter XXV of *The Prince* that although fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, she leaves the rest in our own hands. A large measure of one's *virtù* resides in advanced preparation:

It is not as if men, when times are quiet, could not provide for them with dikes and dams so that when they rise later, either they go by canal or their impetus is neither so wanton nor so damaging.⁷

Looking attentively to the past, one can divine the means to secure the future.

Like the Egyptians of Sais, Vasari understands that, given the cycles of fortune, writing is the necessary instrument of memory. He is very direct about his role and purpose:

⁷Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trs. by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 98.

[I]f, which God forbid, because of indifference or evil circumstances or the ruling of Providence (which always seems to dislike the things of this world proceeding undisturbed) it ever happens at any time that the arts once again fall into the same disastrous decline, then I hope this work of mine, such as it is, if it proves worthy of a happier fate may, because of what I have already said and what I am going to write, keep the arts alive, or at least may inspire some of the more able among us to give them every possible encouragement (I: 47).

There will certainly be further calamities, collapsing the façade of civilization. Vasari hopes to blunt, however, the damage that this will inflict on the arts; he imagines that, amidst the rubble, future generations will discover his *Vite*, dust off the cover and, with it as a primer, re-institute the proper principles of artistry. The resuscitation of art will have been made possible only because Vasari, uniquely situated at the crest of the Italian renaissance, had the prudence to put aside his brush and take in hand a pen.

Vital to the argument made in the *Vite* is the assumption of a “Vasarian moment.” As a contemporary and friend of Michelangelo, Vasari is able to view from the highest summit the long scope of Italian art; this elevation provides for him the broadest possible vista. It is only because he is deeply acquainted with Buonarroti as both a man and an artist that he is able to consolidate the highest principles of art and apply these to all those who have come before.

He presents this too as a critical moment of contingency. Regarding those who have seen with their own eyes Michelangelo’s masterpiece, *The Last Judgment*, Vasari remarks: “How fortunate they are, and what happy memories they have stored up, who have seen this truly stupendous marvel of our times” (I: 383). Bearing in mind that acme is followed by nadir, as well as Vasari’s claim that the *rinascita* has crested with the passing of Michelangelo, there appears to be a brief moment of opportunity, provided by fortune, to preserve for the future evidence of art’s high-water mark. As not only a close associate of Michelangelo, but also as one who has with great care surveyed the

entire field of art, Vasari is especially qualified for the project. It is a sign of his *virtù* that he has the foresight to grasp its necessity. He understands that, as one who has stored up “happy memories,” he is under obligation to provide a surrogate memory for those who will follow. He will do so by fashioning indelible pictures branded into the mind.⁸ In the *Timaeus*, Hermocrates remarks that Solon, if he had finished his tale of Atlantis, would have been as famous as Homer or Hesiod; he had made poetry of history.⁹ This too is the approach taken by Vasari.

III

Like Dante guiding his audience through hell, purgatory and paradise in the *Divine Comedy*, Vasari leads his reader through the *Vite* as if a *cicerone*; he is present throughout his history as an escort and commentator. He visits the churches and villas that are his subjects, critiques with a discerning eye the paintings and sculptures set therein, and relates anecdotes of the artists and their work that have come to him first-hand. These are biographies in which the pronoun “I” makes frequent and emphatic appearances. Vasari’s presence is in fact the anchor that brings the *Vite* so vividly before the eye of the reader. Moreover, the author is entirely unapologetic that he resides in his own work. As in Dante, this blurs the division between the narrator and his subject, an effect that Vasari encourages.

This effect is complete in the biography of Michelangelo. As Buonarroti’s story intersects with Vasari’s own memory, there

⁸That Vasari chose to include in the 1568 edition of the *Vite* portraits to accompany each of the biographies indicates his sensitivity to the memorial interrelationship of the image and the word; as Lina Bolzoni writes, “the portraits that accompany Vasari’s *Lives* condense the narration and crystallize it in memory, thus making it possible both to see and to read the memories,” *The Gallery of Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 226. It may also suggest that Vasari, who was friends with practitioners of the “arts of memory,” such as Vincenzo Borghini, was aware of the conventions of artificial memory systems and gestured towards their devices (see Bolzoni, 246-47).

⁹*Timaeus*, 21b-d.

is a transformation in the narrative: the pronoun “I” is filtered out as the author begins to refer to himself in the third-person:

It was at that time, in 1525, that Giorgio Vasari was taken as a young boy to Florence by the cardinal of Cortona and placed with Michelangelo as an apprentice (I: 365).

Vasari is now too a subject of the *Vite*; he too is a figure with a role to play in the history of Italian art. We begin with an account of his entry into the craft, by now, a familiar pattern. Like both Cimabue and Michelangelo, Vasari is apprenticed to a master; like them as well, he will be given an opportunity to supersede his master’s artistry. Of course, it is predetermined that he cannot surpass Michelangelo in painting, sculpture or architecture. Yet Michelangelo concedes to Vasari superiority in another form, the art of memory.

The “Vasari” who interacts with Michelangelo within his biography has a definite role. He intercedes with the Pope on Michelangelo’s behalf, advises Buonarroti on public projects, and even, during a tour on horse of the seven churches of Rome, engages Julius and Michelangelo in a dialogue on the uses of art. He is seen repeatedly as an advocate for Michelangelo and as a custodian of the artist’s reputation. In fact, in an earlier biography, that of Salviati, Vasari, when only a boy, risked himself for Michelangelo’s sake. In one of the periodic uprisings against the Medici, a mob had damaged the statue of *David* standing outside the Signoria. An arm lay shattered in the plaza for days; no one would recover the pieces for fear of reprisal. The young Vasari and his companion, Salviati, “without thinking of the danger, amidst all the soldiers on guard...found the pieces and carried them off” (II: 276). They saw them returned to the Medici, who later restored the arm to its proper place with iron pins.

In this spirit of honorable preservation, the biographer later in life hands to Michelangelo a copy of the first edition of the *Vite*, a scene recorded in the 1568 edition:

Vasari had that year seen completed in Florence the printing of his biographies of the painter, sculptors, and architects. He had not written the biography of any living master (although there were several older artists who were still alive) with the exception of Michelangelo, who received it with great pleasure. In it, in fact, were details of many things that Vasari had heard from Michelangelo's own lips, he being the oldest and wisest of all the craftsmen (I: 393).

Then dramatic reversal occurs—just as the author of the *Vite*, Vasari, becomes a subject within his own work, so now does his subject, Michelangelo, become an author. Moreover, it is not only the details of his biography nor the ratification of his great pleasure that he contributes, but also his divine gift of poetic expression. In response to the *Vite*, an evidently grateful Michelangelo sends to Vasari a sonnet, “Se con lo stile e co’ colori avete,” in appreciation. Vasari includes in the 1568 edition this poem “in memory of [Michelangelo’s] loving kindness,” its subject, however, is the resuscitative power of Vasari’s own memory.

With pencil and with palette hitherto
 You made your art high Nature’s paragon;
 Nay more, from nature her own prize you won,
 Making what she made fair more fair to view.
 Now that you learned hand with labour new
 Of pen and ink a worthier work hath done,
 What erst you lacked, what still remained her own,
 The power of giving life, is gained for you.
 If men in any age with Nature vied
 In beauteous workmanship, they had to yield
 When to the fated end years brought their name.
 You, re-illuminating memories that died,
 In spite of Time and Nature have revealed
 For them and for yourself eternal fame.¹⁰

¹⁰This translation of the sonnet ‘Se con lo stile e co’ colori avete’ is by John Addington Symonds (Vasari, I, 394). For the original text of the sonnet, see Michelangiolo Buonarroti, *Rime*, ed. E. N. Girardi (Bari, 1960), 132.

The narrative here turns back on itself and produces a commentary on its own efficacy. As a vehicle of remembrance, it presents its own endorsement from the subject that is being remembered. It provides, in loving memory of Michelangelo, Michelangelo's praise of the *Vite* as a medium of memory. The inclusion of the poem by Vasari is strategic. It sharpens our focus on memory and establishes it as the central function of the *Vite*. From Michelangelo, one learns that that Vasari's brings to light "memories that died." Thus the very task that Vasari had already set for himself, that of perpetuating the fame of artists, has already, before the work itself is at an end, been declared successful.

Throughout the *Vite*, it has been the function of poetry to assess the reputation of the artists catalogued. In many of his biographies, Vasari includes verses by others in praise (sometimes in derision) of his subjects. What is commonly lauded is the artist's ability to imitate the life-giving aspect of nature. In the *vita* of Donatello one finds, for example, an epitaph that concludes, "To the marble he has given life, emotion, movement. What more can nature give, save speech" (I: 189)? Likewise, on the tomb of Fra Filippo Lippi is carved: "My touch gave life to lifeless paint, and long / Deceiv'd the mind to think the forms would speak" (I: 222). Vasari, through Michelangelo's sonnet, is also celebrated for his ability to give life. With a masterly stroke, Vasari has changed places with his subject so that he might receive from him his praise. Moreover, he is declared by the greatest of artists *to be an artist*. Vasari's art of memory is commended as superior; his pen and ink have produced a work worthier than the brush. This is merited because he has found a way to circumvent the normal cycle of fame (and fame for an artist is an extension of his life), dictated by fortune, by giving to his subjects what other artists have been unable to—the power of speech.

Not only does Michelangelo contribute a sonnet to his own biography in praise of the biographer, but Vasari includes as well numerous letters addressed to "My dear Giorgio." The subject of most of these missives is, alternately, Michelangelo's awareness of his impending death and Vasari's ability to preserve life. The

letter of 1 August 1550 is typical. It begins with Michelangelo's concern for the new foundations for the church of San Pietro; the details are of little importance to the narrative at this point. The letter is produced by Vasari for the sentiment on which it closes:

... seeing you [Vasari] are a man who brings the dead back to life, I am not at all astonished that you should prolong the life of the living, or rather that you should snatch from the hands of death and immortalize those who are scarcely alive. Such as I am, then, I am yours. Michelangelo Buonarroti. Rome (I: 395).

Michelangelo is given a voice in his own *vita*, granting an impression of vitality and participation, but it is a voice that is carefully moderated by the themes that Vasari wishes to advance; as he confesses, he is Vasari's.

While Michelangelo is portrayed as putting ever greater confidence in Vasari's ability to memorialize, his own memory, as he approaches death, is shown to be deteriorating. Vasari initially praises his subject's power of recollection:

Michelangelo enjoyed so profound and retentive a memory that he could accurately recall the works of other after he had seen them for his own purposes that scarcely anyone ever remarked it (I: 425).

It appears that one function of memory is to adapt it in the service of art for one's own purposes. But Michelangelo's ability is slipping; he himself comments on this, once again in his letters. Vasari, hoping to execute Michelangelo's design for a staircase in the library of Duke Cosimo, requests a description of the plan, to which the artist replies, "believe me if I could remember how I planned it I would not need to be asked" (I: 400). The project falls through; with a loss of memory there is a loss to the arts. The number of times that Vasari calls attention to Michelangelo's failing memory in the last third of his *vita* is striking. It emphasizes that, even in the most vigorous of minds, this faculty is

in and of itself insufficient. Without aid, remembrance is set adrift. In another letter, Buonarroti interjects,

I am wandering from subject to subject because I have lost my memory and my wits, as writing is not my profession I find it very irksome (I: 401).

Aware of the necessity of memory for art and of writing for memory, Michelangelo is willing to cede to those whose profession it is the task of recording those details of his life that are rapidly slipping from his grasp.

IV

If one were to read exclusively Vasari's 1568 account of the life of Michelangelo, one would sense only profound concord and shared purpose between these two men. This effect is precisely what Vasari aimed for. The poems, letters, and conversations included in the *vita* attest to their solid friendship; they indicate as well Michelangelo's recognition of his dependency on Vasari to secure his legacy and Vasari's willingness to take on the assignment. Yet this apparatus, through which Michelangelo endorses his own *vita*, is absent from the 1550 edition and is added in the later edition only after the artist's death in 1564.

Something occurred during the intervening years, something that would cause Vasari not only to revise the biography of Michelangelo, but to reaffirm the relationship they shared. Vasari admits in the later edition that he felt it necessary to defend himself against claims that he had exaggerated his connection to his principal subject and had presented a distorted portrait of the artist in his *Vite* of 1550. Thus in support of his work he presents what appears to be hard evidence. To prove, for example, that Lodovico, Michelangelo's father, had in fact apprenticed his son to Domenico Ghirlandaio, as Vasari claimed in the 1550 *vita*, he copies an entry from Lodovico's journal, as well as a receipt for his son's services. He then explains why he is compelled to include this data:

I have copied these entries straight from the book in order to show that everything I wrote earlier and am writing now is the truth; nor am I aware that anyone was more familiar with Michelangelo than I or can claim to have been a closer friend or more faithful servant, as can be proved to anyone's satisfaction. Moreover, I do not believe there is anyone who can produce more affectionate or a greater number of letters than those written by Michelangelo and addressed to me. I made this digression for the sake of truth, and it must suffice for the rest of the *Life* (I: 328).

The person to whom this aside is directed is, on the surface, Ascanio Condivi, who published in Rome in 1553 his own life of Michelangelo, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroto raccolta per Ascanio Condivi da la Ripa Transone*. In this work, Condivi directly challenges Vasari's veracity. On important details, such as Michelangelo's apprenticeship to Ghirlandaio, Vasari is contradicted. According to Condivi, the young Michelangelo was never a formal student of any artist, but rather stole away when studying letters in Florence to seek out the company of various painters. For good measure, he adds that Michelangelo learned to paint entirely of his own accord, through observation of the natural world. "Michelangelo," he explains,

... worked with such diligence that he would not apply color to any part without first consulting nature. Thus he would go off to the fish market, where he observed the shape and coloring of the fins of the fish, the color of the eyes and every other part.¹¹

His work was so admired that Ghirlandaio, the preeminent Florentine painter of the day, claimed in public that it had come from his own workshop. This lie, grounded in envy, had been propelled further by unscrupulous biographers:

¹¹Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, trs. by Alice Sedgwick Wohl, edited by Helmut Wohl (University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 2000), 10.

... there have been some who, writing about this rare man, though not having (as I believe) frequented him as I have, on the one hand have said many things about him which never were so, and on the other hand they have left out many things which are most noteworthy.¹²

As the only published account of Buonarroti's life then in circulation was that of Vasari, his target is ill-concealed.¹³

Vasari, as has been noted, felt this provocation to be a serious one. The *vita* of Michelangelo was the center of his work, the life to which all other *vite* were tethered. If someone were able to cast doubt on his association with Buonarroti, or on Buonarroti's confidence in his project, it would discredit the whole. Vasari's response was shrewd. Not only did he completely revise and expand his life of Michelangelo, incorporating as we have seen evidence of Michelangelo's sanction, but he published this new version as a separate off-print. In so doing, he was able to make accessible to the widest possible audience his own edition. A single, slim volume, like *Condivi*'s, could be purchased by almost anyone with an interest in Michelangelo; in mid-sixteenth century Italy, this was a wide audience indeed.¹⁴ Vasari, who had already gained considerable fame for his first edition of the *Vite*, was confident that interest in his *La Vita del gran Michelagnolo* would swamp over his competitor's work; given that *Condivi*'s *Vita*, soon out of print, was lost to the world for over two-hundred years, his confidence was not misplaced. Yet even though he was able to

¹²*Condivi*, 3.

¹³It appears, however, that Michelangelo was not above fabrication for his own ends, as Barolsky and others have argued. Hard evidence placing the artist as an apprentice in the workshop of Ghirlandaio is extant, including a note in Ghirlandaio's own hand indicating that on the 28th of June, 1487, a young Michelangelo di Lodovico collected a debt of three florins for his master. See Jean K. Cadogan, "Michelangelo in the Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio," *The Burlington Magazine*, 135, no. 1078 (Jan., 1993), 31.

¹⁴See Lisa Pon, "Michelangelo's Lives: sixteenth-century books by Vasari, *Condivi*, and others," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27 (1996), 1015-1018.

ensure that his work would become the standard, there was a deeper issue at hand for Vasari.

Condivi's claim that he collected his material directly, "from the living oracle of [Michelangelo's] speech," was firm, as scholars have demonstrated.¹⁵ In fact, Michelangelo was so displeased with his own portrayal in Vasari's original, 1550 *Vite*, that he himself engaged Condivi to write what we would today call an "authorized" biography. He felt that Vasari, whom he knew only slightly, had completely misrepresented him.¹⁶ Condivi therefore served as a conduit for Michelangelo's discontent.

This presented a rather thorny problem for Vasari. He had invested, as we have seen, so much in his representation of Michelangelo that it would be virtually impossible for him to acknowledge publicly any strain between himself and his most important subject. Fortunately for Vasari, and by an odd twist of fate, he and Michelangelo had become friends later in life, after the publication of the 1550 edition, and he preserved assiduously the letters and sonnets that the artist sent him. He was able thereby, as has been shown, to fold these documents into the later *vita*, giving an impression of seamless cooperation.¹⁷ Thus his presentation to Michelangelo of the first edition of the *Vite*, which in reality occasioned backlash and Condivi's response, is followed, according to Vasari, by Michelangelo's donation of a sonnet praising Vasari's skill as a writer and claiming that memory is a matter of artistry.

¹⁵Pon, 1017.

¹⁶See Johannes Wilde, "Michelangelo, Vasari, and Condivi", in *Michelangelo: Six Lectures*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

¹⁷Michael Hirst, rightly in my opinion, expresses a high degree of skepticism regarding the intimacy of these two artists. He points out that many of the episodes in the 1568 edition recounting their "friendship" are misdated, giving the impression that Michelangelo and Vasari became close to one another as early as 1542. See Hirst, "Michelangelo and his First Biographers," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 94 (1997), 63-67.

It is this conception of memory that gave Vasari the latitude to reconstitute the character of Michelangelo to suit the greater purpose of his work. Although his argument is subtle, it is clear: writing is the necessary instrument of memory, yet it is to be considered not simply as a matter of record, but fully as an application of art. The writer is not a “mere dyer,” but one who exercises the creative faculty of invention. The only direct reference to Condivi by Vasari in the *Vite* finds fault in him not as a competing biographer, but as a painter:

Ascanio spent years on a picture for which Michelangelo provided the cartoon, and all in all the high expectations he aroused have gone up in smoke. I remember that Michelangelo, taking pity on Ascanio for his lack of facility, used to help him personally, but it was of little use (I: 422).

Condivi hardly seems to be a figure in which Michelangelo would invest his reputation. In Vasari’s account, Michelangelo felt sorry for the hapless Condivi, whose deficiencies as an artist are severe and incontrovertible. These deficiencies—provocatively represented as an inability to finish what Michelangelo has given him to complete—also, by Vasari’s standards, disqualify Condivi as a serious competitor in the realm of biography.

Buonarroti declared in his sonnet to Vasari, it is the prerogative of the artist to make “what [Nature] made more fair to view.” If Vasari’s writing, as this same sonnet suggests, is practiced as an art, then his history is beholden not to mere representation, but to the same principles that he has demarcated for other artists. The role of memory then, at least in this literary manifestation, is not one of replication, but of invention. In Rubin’s phrase, the artist, for Vasari, was capable of “creating new forms” that “give life to inanimate matter.” The author of the *Vite* goes far, as we have seen, to show that Michelangelo believed, that he, Vasari, was also one capable of granting such life. He accomplishes this through a new form of writing, a hybrid of history and poetry, which he distinguishes as doing honor to “art by art” (I: 439).

This phrase is used to describe the memorial services orchestrated by the Florentine Academy after Michelangelo's death, the purpose of which was,

to display ingenious inventions and works full of vigor and charm created by the knowledge and dexterity of our craftsmen, and thus to honour art by art (I: 439).

These take up a considerable part of the final quarter of the *vita*. This is not surprising, as Vasari was deeply involved with the Academy. Yet his treatment of the parades, orations and monuments seems a bit heavy-handed—the detail nearly drives the narrative to a halt.

Vasari, however, is attempting to press home a point that, once again, validates his project as a whole. In order to clarify for his readers the purpose of this pageantry and splendor, he includes a number of letters from preeminent Florentines discussing between themselves the nature of this activity. As with the correspondence of Michelangelo, these letters are threaded together by a single sentiment: Borghini states that the Academy is resolved, “to do some honour to the memory of Michelangelo Buonarroti;” Duke Cosimo is enthusiastic about, “preparations to honour the memory of Michelangelo Buonarroti” (I: 433, 434). There is an overwhelming consensus that it is proper and necessary to remember the accomplishments of Michelangelo, and that this is best achieved through art that reflects upon art. That this is fitting is attested to by Vasari:

One can truthfully say that Michelangelo was most fortunate not to have died before our Academy was established, considering the magnificent pomp and ceremony with which it honoured his death (I: 440).¹⁸

¹⁸Of course, the pageantry put on at the funeral of Michelangelo was also used by the Academy to advance its own purposes and status. Both Vasari and the Florentine Academy advocated “license”—artistic freedom attending to, yet overriding, artistic precedent—as the necessary foundation for contemporary art. Pointing to the practice of Michelangelo for validation, both Vasari and the Academy were heavily invested in maintaining Buonarroti's reputation. See Alina A. Payne, “Architects and Academies:

Yet fortune, as we have seen, is fickle. Speeches and rituals are ephemeral; busts and murals, though tangible, are also transitory. If Michelangelo's fame is to be extended beyond this moment, it must rely on another vehicle. The *Vite*, in which the fleeting ceremony and fading oratory have already found reprieve, offers itself as such a conveyance.

The extent to which Vasari allowed the imaginative to displace the factual in pursuit of this goal is difficult to gauge. This is because he finds in memory a plasticity that allows it to be shaped not unlike a work of art. According to the principles that he himself had laid down in the theoretical portions of the *Vite*, the highest function of art is not imitative, but creative. This, however, does not imply absolute autonomy on the part of the artist. The artist must first master the representation of nature. Only after having proven this skill is he at liberty to impress upon his work his own style, his *maniera*. This is done not to add luster, neither to the artist, nor to his art, but to increase the emotional resonance of the work; in this way, the artist takes what nature has given and improves upon it. Vasari, who defined Mannerism, held this to be the highest application of art and considered Michelangelo to be its prime exemplar. He argues that all art had evolved towards this moment, when it would be able to surpass mere representation. This is what he defines as "giving" life, rather than copying it. It is clear that he felt compelled as well to apply to the art of memory his own *maniera*.

As has been noted above, when Vasari recalls his first encounter with Michelangelo, he slips into the third person: "Giorgio Vasari," he tells us, "was placed with Michelangelo as an apprentice" (I: 365). One assumes, of course, that this is being drawn from the author's own memory. Yet just as Michelangelo misrepresented his apprenticeship with Ghirlandaio, so too does

Architectural Theories of *Imitatio* and the Literary Debates on Language and Style," in *Architecture and Language: Constructing Identity in European Architecture, c. 1000—c. 1650*, eds. Georgia Clarke and Paul Crossley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 118-133.

Vasari alter his own history. The suggestion that he learned his craft as an apprentice under Michelangelo is patently false. The premise of the claim however is, for Vasari, perfectly true. The “Vasari” of the *Vite* is the product of an artistry learned from Michelangelo, a way of shaping one’s identity as if a work of art. What complicates this situation in the *Vite* is the dynamic relationship of author and subject. At times, it appears that Michelangelo is the one who dictates how we will perceive Vasari; on other occasions, Vasari commands our perception of Michelangelo. What is hidden is the hand of the author who plays these two critical characters off one another.

In the sonnet that we have already looked at, “Se con lo stile e co’ colori avete,” Michelangelo evidently praises Vasari and explains to the reader of the *Vite* the value of the work: it is a triumph of art over nature, of memory over time. Its success at bringing to life those who have passed is apparent in this very moment: the tender appreciation of Buonarroti, relayed in his own voice through this poem, creates a vivid image of the artist. The translation that we have referred to, that of John Addington Symonds, captures perfectly the celebratory tone of the poem:

You, re-illuminating memories that died,
In spite of Time and Nature have revealed
For them and for yourself eternal fame.

Michelangelo, in gratitude, wishes through his own poetry to honor Vasari’s art, impressing on the reader its worth. He, too, constructs an image for the audience, that of his biographer as associate and accomplice. The fate of their reputation—how they will be remembered by future generations—is one that is shared. Michelangelo appears to have an interest in promoting the efficacy of Vasari’s memory.

This, however, in spite of appearances, is the impression that *Vasari* would like to leave with his reader. His Michelangelo is often a simulacrum, animated to suit the needs of Vasari’s narrative. In this instance, Vasari has actually stripped from Michelangelo his voice and appropriated it for his own ends. “Se

con lo stile,” was written not in praise, but in derision of Vasari. It was, as claimed, penned in response to the *Vite* of 1550; but, as Hellmut Wohl indicates, it was intended rather to mock Vasari’s efforts.¹⁹ Michelangelo held a very low opinion of Vasari as a painter; therefore, as in the translation that Wohl offers, the emphasis must fall on the first word of the poem, the “if.”

If you had with your pen or with your color
Given nature an equal in your art,
And indeed cut her glory down in part,
Handing us back her beauty lovelier,

You now, however, with a worthier labor,
Have settled down with learned hand to write,
And steal her glory’s one remaining part
That you still lacked, by giving life to others.

Michelangelo does not commend Vasari’s ability to give life, he derides it. This is certainly evident in the action that he took soon after writing this sonnet, deputizing Condivi so that he might dictate to him his version of the story. Vasari, however, understood that interpretation is a matter of context, that it is the prerogative of the artist to guide his audience in its appreciation of his work. The most effective method, he believed, was to impose one’s *maniera* without making it felt as an imposition. By placing Michelangelo’s poem in proximity to letters that commend Vasari, the poem itself is read as laudatory. Thus a sonnet commemorating memory is reshaped through the artistry of its subject. Taking advantage of the fluid nature of interpretation, Vasari blends memory and *maniera*, the presentation of the past with the franchise of the present, adding meaning to each.

In one of the most personal moments of the *Vite*, Vasari, sent one evening by Julius II to retrieve a design from Michelangelo, is met by the artist at his door with a lamp in hand. Looking inside, Vasari notices the leg of a Christ that Michelangelo is working on; Buonarroti, not wishing for this piece

¹⁹Wohl’s Introduction to Condivi, xvii.

to be seen, drops the lamp, leaving the two in darkness. While a servant fetches another light, Michelangelo muses,

I am so old that death often tugs my cloak for me to go with him. One day my body will fall just like that lamp, and my light will be put out (I: 429).

The glimpse of the leg recalls the arm of the David that the youthful Vasari had risked himself to preserve. He is committed, as he has shown throughout the *vita*, to securing the glory of Michelangelo, even when it is Michelangelo himself who seems to be impeding his project. In spite of obfuscation and darkness, Vasari will find a way to perpetuate the light.

The perfection of Michelangelo, as represented by Vasari, is intended not to deter further accomplishment, but to induce it; the artist ought not to copy Buonarroti's work, but emulate him. Like the ideal Prince, his portrayal is intended to show that the way is open for those with *virtù* to follow; he addresses his fellow artists in the same spirit as Machiavelli, who wrote:

Here there is readiness, and where there is great readiness, there cannot be great difficulty, provided that your house keeps its aim on the orders of those I have put forth. Besides this, here may be seen extraordinary things without example, brought about by God; the sea has opened; a cloud has escorted you along the way; the stone has poured forth water; here manna has rained; and everything has concurred in your greatness. The remainder you must do yourself. God does not want to do everything, so as not to take free will from us and the part of the glory that falls to us.²⁰

The images of deluge, now that the way of containment has been revealed, are benign. Michelangelo, at least as Vasari would portray him, is the miracle sent by God,

²⁰Machiavelli, 103.

... so that everyone might admire and follow him as their perfect exemplar in life, work, and behaviour and in every endeavour, and he would be acclaimed divine (I: 325).

A number of artists, including Titian, have followed his lead; Vasari offers this path to others. Yet as Michelangelo himself wrote, “working in hard stone to make the face / of someone else, one images his own.”²¹ Vasari, in addressing others, exemplifies in the *Vite* how he would have them proceed, by building on art through art. He accomplishes this, following Dante, through his own art of memory—the portrayal of memorable images in a “visible speech”—“*visibile parlare*”—that his readers will hold in their minds.²²

The endpiece of the 1550 edition shows a winged Fame flying above three grounded women holding the instruments of the three arts discussed in the *Vite*. There is, both in this image and in the book itself a conspicuous absence. In his home in Arezzo, Vasari had, on the domed ceiling of one room, painted Fame, represented by a trumpeting angel, with four spandrels branching off, each containing a separate angel engaged in one of four pursuits: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Poetry. The trumpet call both announces their success and urges them onward. Equal to the three arts celebrated in the *Vite* is the excellence of a fourth, poetry. Vasari, whose pen records the memory of artists with lovely colors and creditable inventions, hopes through his writing to secure for them, and for himself, an unending glory.

²¹Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo*, trs. by John Frederick Nym (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 122.

²²*Purgatorio*, x: 95. This phrase is noted in Rubin, 285.

(Editor's choice)

Giorgio Vasari: Self-Portrait



From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia

**WEDDING VOWS AND COFFINS: CANTICLES'
RHETORIC, THE LITURGICAL FORM OF MATRIMONY
AND MIDDLETON'S A CHASTE MAID IN CHEAPSIDE
(1613)**

Lissa Beauchamp
St. Francis Xavier University

The concluding scene of Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* begins as a double funeral procession and turns into a wedding as the lovers rise from their coffins to be married; but what are coffins doing in a wedding scene? The coffins, as an onstage sign of the metamorphosis of funeral into wedding, are the emblematic focus for this paper. This investigation exposes the resonances of Canticles' erotic betrothal and Revelation's matrimonial fulfilment as a rhetoric common to both theatrical rituals and to ecclesiastical scriptures.¹ After briefly introducing what I call Canticles' rhetoric – Canticles itself, its exegesis, and its typological connections with Revelation—I will then examine how this rhetoric informs the wedding ritual in the *Book of Common Prayer*'s "Fourme of Solempnizacion of Matrimonye."²

¹ Canticles is also known as the Song of Songs, or the Song of Solomon. Though many critics often confuse the issue by referring to Canticles as the biblical epithalamion or wedding song, the verses do not include a wedding; the consummation is clearly that of betrothal, and the matrimonial imagery associated with Canticles is an exegetical rhetoric that actually draws on imagery of the wedding feast in the Book of Revelation. Further discussion elaborates below.

² *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1559* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), 122-128. The Prayer-Book remained substantially consistent with the 1559 edition throughout Elizabeth's and into James' reign, at least until 1623 when it was somewhat

The sense of apocalyptic resurrection and eroticized reunion that are present in the liturgy then go some way toward explaining Middleton's funeral/wedding scene as an appropriate way to conclude his city comedy: the coffins as stage properties represent a liturgically adopted scriptural allegory of betrothal and marriage. Specifically, the coffins evoke the apocalyptic echoes of marriage rather than simply sin and corruption, and the apocalypse in Middleton's city comedy is both ironically deferred and satisfyingly present.

Moreover, staging a wedding beside the coffins, from which two lovers have just risen, comments on the intimate relationships between the worldly matters of courtship and marriage, and the more mystical associations between the world and the redemption of the apocalypse. The latent performative possibilities of the liturgy provide a way to recognize these relationships between practice and exegesis. John R. Gillis notes that though "The church service, now at the altar rather than the porch, was the least important part of a ... [sixteenth-century] wedding", couples invested considerable significance in the private negotiations of engaging in matrimony:

Betrothal allowed them time to consider themselves as a pair; now the wedding rites would clarify their broader responsibilities as heads of family and household. It focused on and completed their [domestic] separation from family, from friends, and from the subordinate status of the unmarried ... Each marriage was a political event in the life of the community, for it redistributed power as well as status and economic resources.³

The wedding, therefore, is a public ritual of recognition that legitimizes the more important process of courtship and betrothal;

expanded. All references to the matrimonial ceremony refer to the 1559 edition by page number.

³ Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 62, 57.

more importantly, it is the nature of courtship that determines the nature of the marriage, and the wedding is a ritual that signals the couple's particular mutual promises for the community.

This attribution of greater value to the betrothal, rather than the wedding ritual itself, reflects a Reformation development of a late-medieval shift in terms of Canticles' exegetical trends. E. Ann Matter has established that, though historical allegories and apocalyptic readings were emphasized in the ecclesiologically-minded exegesis of the early church (4th to 11th c.), by the twelfth century the literal and tropological senses had become the focus:

[While] Song of Songs commentaries reflect changes in the perception of *Ecclesia* and 'her' major impediments in each period ... [t]here is a movement from a sense of 'inside/outside' [in the early and middle ages of the Church] to 'inside/*truly* inside,' in concert with the growing impact of the monastic ideal and related readings of the Apocalypse.... [By the twelfth century,] the Song of Songs was increasingly read as a dynamic guide to the quest of each human being for union with God[.] ... [furthermore, the] tropological or moral [sense] was not limited to the spiritually elite world of the cloister.⁴

Here we can see the roots of the Reformation principle of the personal encounter with scripture, and we can also see how the "quest of each human being for union with God" is related to the structure of *Ecclesia* as a guiding framework for each of her members. Canticles and Revelation, as representations of the betrothal and marriage of human and divine, are important examples of the Renaissance operation of tropology as a way of reading the present day: both historical allegories of spiritual legacy and the future of apocalyptic culmination are ways of recognizing the interpretive operation of the soul in the everyday conduct of domestic relationships.

In Middleton's play, furthermore, the social performances

⁴ E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990), 109-111, 123.

of courtship and marriage open and extend the boundaries of scripture and liturgy to the playfulness of irony, when characters act out their everyday adaptations of scripture, and the audience's latent reactions reflect this model of responsiveness to scriptural and liturgical motifs. The theatrical audience, like the congregation of the liturgy, also performs its response to the drama of liturgical response; indeed, as Ramie Targoff points out, "By the early seventeenth century, to pray in the English church was always to perform."⁵ The congregation, then, is potentially self-observing, and this suggests that audiences' and congregations' responses to the spectacle of ritual constitute a performance of interpretive self-recognition, mimicking the marginalia of exegesis as a textual annotation distinct, but inseparable from its "text."

Middleton's lively ironies throughout *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* juxtapose sacred and secular rituals in a way that reflects the rhetoric of Canticles and its extensive exegesis; in this way, the expected irony of marital infidelities in the play is qualified by a genuine affection between the married partners in the play, and the responsibility of acquiring community approval not only disrupts but also supports the intimate pleasures of Moll and Touchwood Jr.'s courtship. The corruption of the city of London is imbricated with apocalyptic resonance: though the threat of purging corruption echoes in the apocalyptic promise of the Lenten setting, there is also the implication that something present and valuable may be saved through the forms of the wedding itself.

Canticles' Rhetoric: Scriptural Motifs of Pleasure and Deferral

It is important to note, first, that the medieval traditions of Canticles exegesis are an adopted legacy of interpretation in the English Renaissance, both in terms of the liturgy as well as in

⁵ Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001), 9. Though she focuses on the *Book of Common Prayer* and the liturgy, Targoff's argument suggests a number of valuable insights into theatrical performance through the analogy of congregation and audience.

popular secular forms like the theatre. John Foxe, for instance, in the *Book of Martyrs*, claims that the English Church derives directly from the Greek patriarchs and that the contemporary Roman Church has corrupted the heritage of the “true” Church in institutional ways.⁶ Though monastic exegesis is not, strictly speaking, liturgical, monastic interpretations that have remained uncorrupted by Roman doctrines inform many of the liturgical forms of the English Church; and through the liturgy, exegesis also affects the visual and verbal practices of theatrical performances such as Middleton’s staging of Moll and Touchwood Jr.’s wedding as well as the dynamic of their courtship throughout the play. Indeed, the forms of interaction between scripture and marginal exegesis tend to mimic not only the vocal forms of liturgical worship, but the physically responsive forms in *Canticles* itself.

Canticles is an intensely erotic sequence of speeches that alternates between a male and a female who desire each other, though it is read as a spiritual allegory too, especially in terms of its typological connection with the wedding of the Bride and the Lamb in Revelation. Typology is a dialectical device of exegesis that links Old Testament promise to New Testament fulfilment; but when the fulfilment is itself an unfulfilled prophecy, as in Revelation’s wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb, the narrative device of typology displaces the resolution of New Testament fulfilment to the perpetually deferred apocalypse. In this way, the Reformation emphasis of concluding exegetical readings with the tropological or moral sense renders the present day as the heart of both scriptural history and apocalyptic promise in the lyrical presence of reading scripture as an example of everyday conduct in the present. Exegetical reading is situated *in*

⁶ John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. Rev. George Townsend, Vol. 1 (New York: AMS Press, 1965). After the prefaces in the Table of Contents, one of the first sections is entitled: “Acts and Monuments of Christian Martyrs, and Matters Ecclesiastical in the Church of Christ, from the primitive beginning, to these our days, as well in other countries, as, namely, in this realm of England, and also of Scotland, discoursed at large: and first, the Difference between the Church of Rome that Now Is, and the Ancient church of Rome that Then Was.”

medias res, and conflates the sense of “now” with the “not yet” that permeates scripture. This temporal conflation of past and future in the present moment is known as *parousia*, the guiding principle of Canticles’ rhetoric, in which multiple layers of interpretation are simultaneously and lyrically held together.⁷ Tropological readings of Canticles that call upon the more immediate and immanent presence of Christ tend to invoke the eroticized negotiation of betrothal with the wedding of imminent divine presence in the apocalypse of Revelation, while yet insisting on the primary significance of the betrothal.

Usually, the “betrothed ones” of Canticles—Sponsus and Sponsa—are read as allegorical figures for Christ and the Church, though the Sponsa is also read as the Virgin Mary in mariological readings, and, increasingly from the twelfth-century onward, as the individual reading soul of the exegete. The Sponsa, the female lover of Canticles, figures the self-observing and self-interpreting human soul; she is desiring and desired, speaker and listener, both enclosed garden and opened body. The most commonly acknowledged allusion to feminine imagery from Canticles is the male lover’s description of his beloved object as a *hortus conclusus*: “A garden inclosed is my sister my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (Song 4:12).⁸ In addition to this pastoral feminine image, Canticles also includes the Sponsa’s own description of herself as a radically opened subject: “Let my

⁷ *Parousia* (Gk.) means, literally, “presence.” In a Christian context, it is usually meant to refer to the presence of Christ, both in eschatological terms and in terms of the apocalypse.

⁸ All biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version of 1611. Spenser’s *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, and Marvell’s “The Garden” are conventional examples for the use of Canticles’ sensual garden (or *hortus conclusus*) imagery in the period, though as I have mentioned already, her own self-ascribed openness is often neglected as part of the imagery. See Theresa Krier’s “Generations of Blazons: Psychoanalysis and the Song of Songs in the *Amoretti*,” *Texas Studies of Literature and Language* 40.3 (Fall 1998), 293-327; Stanley Stewart’s *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Madison WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1966); and Israel Baroway’s “The Imagery of Spenser and the Song of Songs,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 33 (1934), 23-45.

beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song 4:16), and “I opened to my beloved” (Song 5:6). Ultimately, the female body of the Sponsa figures the paradoxical state of human existence as both enclosed object (body) and opened subject (soul). The importance of Canticles’ rhetoric is that it turns erotic and marital motifs toward the present moment of “reading rhetoric,” or the performative rhetoric of response, through the Reformation emphasis on tropology. The reading subject as the Sponsa is an enclosed body opened to discrete examination not only literally (as in anatomical studies, *i. e.* the scientific method of Bacon’s *Novum Organum*, or Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*) but figuratively, in terms of the psyche’s or soul’s openness to the divine.

Since the rhetoric of apocalyptic marriage, like marriage practices of the period, emphasizes the eroticized betrothal allegory of Canticles rather than the marital eschatology of Revelation, I will refer to this conjunction of motifs as Canticles’ rhetoric. Yet the distinctively conflated relationship between the two books of scripture is an important one in terms of how betrothals and weddings are considered in this period, as in my example of Middleton’s use of coffins and wedding vows. The distinctions between Canticles as betrothal and Revelation as wedding are often elided in critical discussions of scriptural wedding tropes, leading to the common ascription of wedding imagery to Canticles itself—a conflation that obviates the attribution of greater value placed on betrothal sequences rather than the marital situations that follow courtship and betrothal, as well as ignoring the apocalyptic resonances of the wedding.

In fact, Canticles is a predominantly pastoral lyric sequence of betrothal that is concluded only in the wedding of the Bride and the Lamb in Revelation, which is set in the apocalyptic city of the New Jerusalem. Recognizing the distinction between the two biblical sources, and how the distinction is traditionally elided, affords us the opportunity to see precisely how the coffins belong in a wedding scene: the setting of urban London develops the rural motif of betrothal while also prefiguring the apocalypse, situating London *in medias res*. The coffins embody the exegetical legacy

of *parousia* that links promised presence to deferred fulfillment, and this principle is incorporated in the abbreviated “Fourme of Solempnizacion of Matrimonye” that Middleton stages. As well, the coffins provide a compelling visual reminder of the importance of what distinguishes the wedding from the betrothal: the public recognition of the wedding form renders death as rebirth, renewing the desirable reward of eternal life through the individual connection with the larger Church community. But it is the human betrothal that makes this spiritual marriage possible: without the promise of mutually responsive and pleasurable interaction, neither wedding nor death fulfills anything.

Wedding Vows: liturgy and the spectacle of response

The form of solemnizing marriage, as a liturgical spectacle, is a ritualized repetition: the wife and husband articulate their vows aloud in front of a congregation of witnesses, repeating them as instructed by the parson who then goes on to outline the roles that husband and wife undertake through this ritual performance. The roles of husband and wife described in the form of solemnization are part of “an excellent misterie” drawn from the erotic betrothal and promise of Canticles and its associated wedding trope in the Book of Revelation:

O God which haste co[n]secrated the state of matrimonie to suche an excellent misterie, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual mariage and vnitie betwixte Christe and his Church.⁹

The unity between Christ and Church as betrothed ones is rendered as a body, with Sponsus as head and Sponsa as the rest of the body. Despite current readings of gendered dominance and subordination in this body metaphor for marriage, however, it is an extension of the integrity of Christ and Church. This integrity is based on the model of the Sponsa as human female, opening through chosen

⁹ *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1559*, 126; see also *The Booke of Common Prayer: 1623* (Facsim. ed., Columbus OH: Lazarus Ministry Press, 1998), C4v.

consummation *after* mortal death (just as Moll and Touchwood Jr. are married *after* their faked deaths). The issue of gender as a performative representation is one that I shall return to, but first it is expedient to consider the matter of performative representation itself.¹⁰

Canticles' rhetoric offers a way to perceive the body and its mortality as a legible site of pleasure, both in the theatre and in the Church; corruption is the neglect of the soul's or head's contribution to the body's pleasure, a lack of proper correspondence between "interpretation" and "text." Reading pleasure as either virtuous or corrupted is the operation of the soul, and involves the administration of discretion – or, in sexual terms, chastity. This rhetoric of the body as a potentially self-reading text is supported by the analogy of the Book of Nature, which renders all human activity as "textual", i.e., to be read; theatrical performances and Church rites and rituals are therefore open to the same sort of rhetorical interpretations as scripture and literature are, since they depend on bodies to perform them.¹¹

Theatre and liturgy, too, may "read" each other in the same way that exegesis reads scripture: the practice of interpreting the verbal exchanges of lovers in Canticles participates in that exchange by generating further textual commentary. Marginal annotation, rather than an entirely separate text, constitutes the exegete's awareness of her interpretive contribution and of her own rhetorical position in the scriptural text. In a similar way, the

¹⁰ It is perhaps expedient to clarify that while I am arguing against readings of dominance and subordination in the head/body metaphor, such readings are not themselves invalid – they are simply not required readings. The ideal reading I propose here is also not an obligatory reading, nor is it necessarily more common in the period; but it offers the corrective that neither is an hierarchical reading necessary nor more common in an historical context.

¹¹ Ernst Robert Curtius writes of the "two books" of the medieval and early modern periods, "the *codex scriptus* of the Bible and the *codex vivus* of Nature," which provided a wealth of metaphorical tropes. For instance, the epigrammatist John Owen (1563?-1622) inverts the "book of the world" topos by calling his book a world (Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask [New York: Harper and Row, 1963], 322).

liturgical form is a reading of exegesis, just as Middleton's "reading" of the matrimonial form constitutes an awareness of his own response as itself a kind of spectacle. The forms of ritual and theatre, though both are spectacles, differ in terms of the script. In the liturgy, for instance, spouses repeat the same form that is used relatively invariably; they adopt archetypal roles that, as far as the verbal form goes, do not admit much in the way of character or dramatic development. Yet these ritually repetitious responses qualify as representations of conversation in that they concentrate attention and maintain an "encounter of a special kind" that includes non-verbal moves, as Erving Goffman maintains:

Words are the great device for fetching speaker and hearer into the same focus of attention and into the same interpretation schema that applies to what is thus attended. But that words are the best means to this end does not mean that words are the only one or that the resulting social organization is intrinsically verbal in character. Indeed, it is when a set of individuals have joined together to maintain a state of talk that nonlinguistic events can most easily function as moves in a conversation. ... [C]onversation constitutes an encounter of a special kind.¹²

The "special kind" of encounter that characterizes conversation ("talk") is what also characterizes the ritual responses of spouses as more than verbal replies to instruction: because they are inherently dramatic in nature rather than purely verbal, the ritual responses of couples represent an integral involvement in the liturgy at the altar. Furthermore, as Goffman points out, non-verbal moves signal the difficulty of designating the term "response" as opposed to "statement":

¹² Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1981), 70-71.

Standard sequences ... are not [always] sequences of statement and reply but rather sequences at a higher level, ones regarding choice with respect to reach and to the construing of what is reached for. ... In this way we could recognize that talk is full of twists and turns and yet go on to examine routinized sequences of these shiftings.¹³

In the wedding ritual, the “twists and turns” of conversational spectacle incorporate physical gestures, such as the taking of hands, the exchange of rings, and kisses, as significant conversational “moves.” At the altar of the Church, the couple’s interaction in the liturgy becomes a latent dramatic device for physical expression, expressing joy and delight as a kiss that signifies the couple’s new sovereign status.¹⁴

This point might seem obvious, if it were not for the critical construction of a necessary relation between the formal erasure of voice and agency that is a requirement of ritual and the social/political status of women and men. Predominant critical trends interpret the wife’s obedience and submission as enforced silence and subordination to the husband, but this is by no means a necessary interpretation, since the role of the wife is described in terms of an effective and eloquent ability to speak as a present and literal embodiment of *Ecclesia* as *Sponsa* to Christ. Though elided in the form of ritual (just like the husband’s), her symbolic agency and speech is what characterizes the virtue of obedience, and her submission to her husband, like the submission of a paper for publication, describes a discrete application of attention rather than subordination to unilateral control. Indeed, the “excellent

¹³ Goffman, 73.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that Canticles opens with the phrase “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine” (KJV, Song, 1:2). The “kisses of his mouth” have been interpreted in a variety of ways, not least of which is the “kiss of contemplation” which transmits divinely inspired eloquence. See excerpts from William of St. Thierry’s *Brevis Commentatio* or Alan of Lille’s *Elucidatio* in Denys Turner’s *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995). Further discussion of kisses, and the theatrical effectiveness of the silence associated with them, continues in the next section.

misterie” of Canticles’ rhetoric is that it invokes the form of a lyric dialogue as a dwelling place or occupation: the discourse of courtship, both verbal and non-verbal, is an enclosed garden of sensual delights in which the lovers are open to each other.¹⁵

In the sense that Canticles itself is a lyric series of speeches, including a chorus of community witnesses, the vows of husband and wife symbolically imitate the conversational speech and agency of the Canticles lovers with regard to each other and in the social context of supportive witnesses. This articulated desire is an important feature of Canticles’ rhetoric because Canticles itself is a representation of speech: the lovers speak to and about each other, expressing their own desires through erotically evocative imagery. Indeed, the form of Canticles’ dialogue is reflected in its exegesis, in commentaries that speak to and of each other as well as articulating eroticized interpretations of scripture.¹⁶ This representation of textual conversation symbolically is embedded in the matrimonial ceremony: the “conversation” of wives in the *Book of Common Prayer*’s matrimonial form identifies the domestic space of the new household as one that is analogous to the Church and which is characterized by conversation.

The ritual repetition of conversational speech in the

¹⁵ The sexual connotations of the word “conversation” are supported by the derivation from the Latin *conversari*, to keep company or to frequent, and the Old French *converser*, to have (verbal) intercourse with. Webster’s Dictionary gives Francis Bacon as an example of the Renaissance use of the word: “experience in business and conversation in books” also connotes that conversation is an occupation or association esp. with an object of study or subject, a close acquaintance or intimacy. “Conversation” also implies frequent abode in a place, a manner of life, or dwelling in a place, as in KJV Phil. 3:20: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” – or Song 8:13: “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.” In this sense, the verbal and non-verbal conversation of marriage is what characterizes the domestic dwelling and the community that surrounds it.

¹⁶ For examples of eroticized and self-reflexive exegesis of Canticles, see Denys Turner’s *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995).

wedding ritual is therefore a particular kind of performance that represents a paradigm for domestic and social conversations. The lyric dialogue of Canticles and the rhetoric of textual commentary provide a model for the exchange of vows in the liturgy, which then establishes a dwelling place of and for speech in the domestic household. This conversation/place is therefore made safe and comfortable through the sustenance of conversation, including non-verbal moves that the liturgy performs.

Insofar as conversations may demonstrate the eroticized pleasures of exchange, rather than the politics of power (dominance and subordination), ritualized gestures and responses may also represent the verbal responsiveness that the Canticles lovers demonstrate and that is also the ideal of liturgical worship. Canticles' rhetoric of the pleasurable body is thus an important example of a "silent" rhetoric in which forms of speech need not disclose delight when the body itself may respond; this kind of silent pleasure, moreover, may be embodied in the liturgy not only through the exchange of rings and kisses but also through the individual variables of performance—tone of voice, manner of speech, facial expression, and spontaneous gestures.

A re-examination of the concept of "obedience" as a virtue of this kind of silent rhetoric of the body discloses a Renaissance notion of betrothal and marriage that is more consistent with the abundance of strong female characters on the stage. "Obey" derives from the Latin *oboedire*, from *ob-* to, towards and *audire*, to hear, and has the sense not only of compliance or ready attention, but also that of behaving or acting in accordance with one's own feelings, whims, etc. Obedience is a particular kind of responsiveness, an expression of openness submitted to another's attention, and as such the wife's vow to obey is at least potentially or ideally exchangeable with the husband's vow to comfort. Obedience in the liturgy of matrimony need not signal the oppression of female autonomy and may acknowledge a particularly "feminine" operation of social responsiveness that is desirable for men as well, insofar as men are also members of the Church/body with regard to Christ. In the vows themselves, the

wife symbolically responds to the husband's vow; he must first plight his troth before she will give him hers:

[Priest, to the husband] Wilt thou haue thys woman to thy wedded wyfe, to lyue together after Goddes ordynaunce in the holye estate of Matrimony? Wylt thou loue her, comforte her, honour, and kepe her, in sickenes, and in healthe? And forsakyng al other, kepe the onely to her, so long as you both shall liue? *The man shall aunswere*, I will. *Then shall the Priest say to the woman*, Wilt thou haue this man to thy wedded housband, to lyue together after Goddes ordynaunce in the holy estate of matrimony? wilt thou obey hym and serue him, loue, honour, and kepe him, in sycknes and in health? And forsakyng al other, kepe the onely to him so long as ye bothe shal liue[?] *The woman shall aunswere*, I will. ...

And the Minster receiuyng the wouma[n] at her father or frendes handes, shall cause the man to take the woman by the right hand, and so either to geue their trouth to other, the man first saying.

I. N. take the. N. to my wedded wife, to haue and to hold from thys day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for porer, in sickenes, and in healthe, to loue and to cheryshe, tyll death vs departe; according to Gods holy ordinaunce, and therto I plight the my trouth.

Then shall they louse their handes, and the woman taking againe the man by the right hande, shall saie.

I. N. take the. N. to my wedded husbande, to haue and to holde, from this day for ward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickenes a[n]d in health, to loue, cherish, and to obey, till death vs departe, accordyng to godes holy ordinaunce: and therto I geue the my trouth.¹⁷

The spoken acquiescence of husband and wife is largely identical in the solemnization: both simply respond "I will" and repeat their troths. But there are two subtle variations: the wife's vow substitutes "obey" for the husband's "comforte" in the otherwise identical pledge of duties, and where the husband "plights" his troth, the wife "gives" hers. To plight one's troth is

¹⁷ *Prayer-Book 1559*, 123-124.

to pledge honour, security, and material protection; it is a security given for the performance of some action, and (unlike pledging or giving) never applied to property or goods—that is, the husband plights his soul to his wife.¹⁸ Plighting is thus a specific act of spiritual engagement and betrothal that earns the wife’s obedience and her “giving” of her troth *in return*.

The exchange of vows also involves the taking of hands and the exchange of rings that confirms the verbal exchange in dramatic terms. The espoused couple remains silent thereafter as the priest elaborates the significance of the spoken and silent vows:

Ye housbandes loue your wiues, euen as Christ loued the Churche, and hath geuen hymselfe for it, to sanctifie it, purgyng it in the fountaine of water, throughe the worde, that he might make it vnto hym selfe a glorious congregacion, not hauyng spot or wrinkle, or any suche thyng, but that it shoulde be holy and blameles. So men are bounde to loue their owne wyues, as their owne bodies. He that loueth his owne wife loueth hym selfe. For neuer did any man hate his owne fleshe, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, euen as the Lorde doeth the congregacion, for we are membres of his body: of his flesh and of hys bones. ... This mistery is great, but I speake of Christe and of the congregacion. ... Ye housbandes, ... Geuyng honour vnto the wyfe ... as heires together of the grace of lyfe, so that your praiers be not hyndred. ...¹⁹

Though the husband’s role is described as analogous to Christ’s love of the Church, it is significant too that the figure of the Church here includes the husband as one of her members: as Christ loves the husband in the Church, so the husband should love his wife “of his flesh and of hys bones.” The wife is like the husband’s own body, “for neuer did any man hate his owne fleshe.” The flesh of the body – whether the wife’s or the husband’s – is neither corrupted nor corrupting but a virtuous and pleasurable site worth nourishing and cherishing, as well as

¹⁸ See Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary.

¹⁹ *Prayer-Book 1559*, 127.

deserving of the husband's sacrifice in *imitatio Christi*. Rather than placing the husband in a dominant position over the wife who must subordinate herself to him, the analogy here seems to suggest that the husband should be ready to subordinate his own desires for her comfort as Christ died for love of the Church, and as his vows indicate: he vows to comfort her in exchange for her vow to obey him. Thus, as the head, his role invokes a particular kind of ready attention or obedience to his wife as he would to his own body.

The wife's vow to obey her husband is therefore elaborated as a response to the degree of her husband's willingness to make sacrifices for her comfort, and her role reflects this active responsiveness to sacrifice his own desires in terms of responsible social interaction:

Ye women, submit youre selves vnto youre owne housbandes as vnto the Lorde: for the housbande is the wyues headde, euen as Christe is the headde of the Churche. And he [Christ] is also the sauioure of the whole bodye. Therefore as the Churche or congregacion, is subiecte vnto Christe. ... Let wyues be subiecte to their owne housbandes, so that if anye obey not the woorde, they may be wonne withoute the woorde by the conuersacion of the wyues ... so that the spirite be milde and quiete.²⁰

The application of wives to their husbands is a conditional promise, dependant on his performance of his duty to her and her assessment of its value. The comfort or pleasure of the flesh that the husband cherishes in the wife is not subject to him but rather an object example for the congregation at large: "so that if *any*e [including husbands] obey not the word, they may be wonne withoute the woorde by the conversation of the wyues" (*italics mine*). Correspondingly, too a wife's conversation indicates the degree of comfort afforded to her, and the obedience of the Church to Christ is an ideal model for both spouses. "Conversation" here draws an implicit comparison between ecclesiastical and domestic

²⁰ *Prayer-Book 1559*, 127-128. See also 1623 ed., p. C4v and C5.

“dwelling places”: both may convert or transform disobedience into respectful social behaviour—both are identified with the generative body of the wife (rather than the sacrificial body of Christ).

The integral body of Christ and Church is the macrocosmic paradigm for both husbands and wives, as individuals who each have heads and bodies of their own and as a figure for the communal body to which they both belong: “*we* are membres of his body.” The metaphor of head and body is a connected metaphor here: Canticles’ Sponsus expresses desire for his beloved, not for his subordinate, and the evocation of Christ as Sponsus and thus as exemplary husband in the form of matrimony signals that Christ’s divine superiority over humanity is not a necessary issue here (though it may be elsewhere, such as in the general confession). Similarly, the Sponsa expresses desire for her lover, not as “lord and master” but as Queen to King, both of royal blood: “the King hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine” (Song 1:4). The head is part of the body, and though at the top of it in a physical sense, the integrity of the whole body obviates the sense of dominance for which some feminist critics argue. If the head exerts dominance through the faculty of reason, then the whole organism of the body is compromised – just as an over-reliance on physical pleasures or suffering destabilizes the proper operation of reason.

While I am not arguing that the principle of “mutual affection” in marriage is uncomplicated by Renaissance practices, the obedience of the wife, like chastity and silence, corresponds to the self-sacrificing responsibilities of husbands. Feminist critics like Coppélia Kahn and Linda T. Fitz do not address the rhetoric of Canticles and the presence of Christ and Church in the vows; nor do they address how this principle is manifested in the husband’s and wife’s mutual duties to each other, instead focussing on a presumed equation between heads and hierarchical dominance.²¹

²¹ For instance, Coppélia Kahn, in her discussion of the Renaissance institution of marriage and the theatrical portrayal of women, admits that “under pressure

The bodily analogy for spouses is the basis for the erotic allegory of Christ as head and the Church as his desirable and desiring body, a body that experiences pleasure in concert with its head. In marriage, husband and wife enact this eroticized rhetoric in worldly terms, cherishing each other as sacred in imitation of Christ's love for the Church. The eroticized appeal for the divine is firmly based in the human body, including the head and the ability to reason, in a betrothal model for the relationship of marriage where genders represent complementary virtues: male and female are made one, as indivisible as the heart and head of each male or female individually.

The insistence that "Marriage is an immovable obstacle to any improvement in the theoretical or real status of women in law, in theology, in moral and political philosophy"²² perpetuates the constructed paradigm of political power by dismissing the rhetoric of the "excellent misterie." In the Form, however, both spouses acknowledge obedience as the responsibility of establishing a space of mutual comfort for themselves within the supportive context of the community. Middleton's lovers, though apparently

of a new Protestant ideology of marriage," biblical interpretive models were changing; yet she still maintains that "Both woman and marriage are enfolded within the idea that man dominates woman." See also Linda T. Fitz, "'What Says the Married Woman?': Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance" (*Mosaic* 13 [1980]: 1-22).

²² Kahn, 247, qtg Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medieval Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 66, 85. Incidentally, in citing Maclean, Kahn distorts his argument. After stating that "In all practical philosophy, the female sex is considered in the context of the paradigm of marriage", Maclean goes on to argue that "dislocations of a fundamental nature ... do occur" as a result of "the activities of queens, queen regents and court ladies, and the emergence of a class of women possessing leisure and the aspiration to fill it profitably. Claims that women have equal virtue and mental powers and an equal right to education become more strident throughout Europe after the middle of the sixteenth century" (Maclean, 66). Furthermore, in "theology, medicine and law" Maclean identifies satire that "is directed against an object other than women: socinianism, prejudice, academic ponderousness. In each case, the effect of the joke is to reinforce the contrary proposition: woman is a human being." Her status as a figure for satire is appropriate because "it will be evident to those to whom the satire is addressed that there is a discrepancy between what she is and what she is said to be according to traditional authorities" (Maclean 85-86).

disobedient to their superiors in their preference for each other, dramatize this sense of mutual responsiveness in their plot to convert the community to support their union. Though Touchwood Sr. says that “delight will silence any woman,” he also indicates that Moll will “find her tongue again” now that she may “keep house” – a house in which her husband, too, may “utter all at night” because it is supported by familial and social forms as well as discrete and private pleasure (5.4.52-54).²³

Coffins: theatre and the spectacle of response

Middleton’s literalized performance of scriptural tropes amplifies the play’s parody of the institution of earthly marriage: by including coffins on the stage during the wedding of Moll and Touchwood Jr. in the final scene, Middleton recognizes, re-appropriates, and emblemizes the reformed Church’s already re-appropriated tradition of linking Canticles and Revelation in the context of the human rite of matrimony.²⁴ Yet Middleton’s use of liturgical settings, however ironic, suggests his awareness of the common heritage of Church and theatre in that both may borrow performance strategies from each other perhaps more often than we acknowledge. Alizon Brunning, for instance, points out that “native English comedy ... has its roots in the medieval Church” and asserts that “*A Chaste Maid* incorporates all [the] major

²³ Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, 2nd edition, ed. by Alan Brissenden (London: New Mermaids, 2002). Subsequent references to the play will cite Act, Scene, and line numbers parenthetically as they appear in this edition.

²⁴ Peter Daly writes of “Emblematic stage properties as elements in the dramatic action,” when stage properties such as the coffins here can operate both as scenic elements alluding to a host of traditional correspondences as well as “play[ing] a significant role in the dramatic action” (Peter Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, 2nd ed [Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998], 175). Coffins are often used in emblem books to indicate that the mortality of the body prefigures the immortality of the soul as the “betrothed one” or Sponsa of Christ. See, for instance, George Wither’s *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), emblem 1.21, which pictures a coffin in a funeral procession and allegorizes the cyclical harvest of wheat as the regeneration of the human soul beyond death (*The English Emblem Book Project*, Penn State University Libraries Electronic Text Center, <http://emblem.libraries.psu.edu/home.htm>).

elements of sacramental drama The plot moves from *tristia* to *gaudium*, a transformation from sorrow to joy” in the final scene.²⁵

Brunning’s approach identifies what she calls “Protestant poetics” that criticize both Roman and Puritan sacramental notions equally in *Chaste Maid*; but this approach is limited by her notion of “Protestant poetics” and her imputation of this poetic to Middleton and the English Church, which had much in common with both Roman and Puritan camps.²⁶ Moreover, the boundaries of performative space are somewhat distinctive in Church and theatre, and forms of rhetoric and response are ambiguous in different ways. Theatrical performances involve the physical body as a variable means of articulation much more so than liturgical performances do, and though physical expression is often “silent” or unscripted, the staged incorporation of scriptural tropes in *Chaste Maid* depends on the analogy of Church and theatre as sites of spectacle. Where speech and gesture alike must be read by the congregation or audience, there is yet a greater flexibility to incorporate irony alongside redemption in the theatre. The theatrical spectacle conflates practices of morality and pleasure much more vividly and immediately than the liturgy does, and therefore Middleton’s staging of the apocalyptic wedding juxtaposes a wider spectrum of behaviours.²⁷

²⁵ Brunning, “‘O, how my offences wrestle with my repentance!’: The Protestant Poetics of Redemption in Thomas Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 8.3 (January 2003), 2, 13.

²⁶ See also R. V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan* (Cambridge UK: D. S. Brewer, 2000); Young argues that “religious poetry in seventeenth-century England was not rigidly or exclusively Protestant in its doctrinal and liturgical orientation” (Young, i).

²⁷ While various critics have noted the influence of liturgical and sacramental rituals in *A Chaste Maid*, to my knowledge no one has chosen to emphasize the use of betrothal and the matrimonial ritual beyond describing the hypocrisies of the already established marriages in the play. For a consideration of the “sacrament” of confession, see Alison Brunning’s “‘O, how my offences wrestle with my repentance!’: The Protestant Poetics of Redemption in Thomas Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 8.3 (January 2003); for an interesting and suggestive reading of the christening scene and the Lenten/Carnival setting, see Rick Bowers’

First performed in 1613, *A Chaste Maid* initially seems full of hypocritical variations on marital situations: Allwit panders his wife to Sir Walter Whorehound, the Kixes are childless until Sir Kix unknowingly panders his wife to Touchwood Sr. The Touchwoods themselves have too many children—some of them illegitimate—and so accept Sir Kix’ generosity to support themselves, and the Yellowhammers are interested only in improving their material and social status by marrying off their children to morally corrupt shams. Moll Yellowhammer and Touchwood Jr., however, are “in love” despite parental opposition. Their presence together onstage is often silent, suggesting that their interaction is in a different mode than the apparently hypocritical examples elsewhere in the play. The lines they do speak imply they are contriving to be together behind their parents’ backs—possibly fondling each other as well as passing notes—and that they are scheming far more than we can ascertain until the end.

Middleton’s abbreviated wedding in 5.4 invokes the otherwise implicit apocalyptic context of human/divine relationship in the vows with the use of coffins as properties of the stage, and with a plot line that involves Moll and Touchwood Jr. faking their own deaths to get married with communal support. The couple demonstrates their mutual complicity in the betrothal intent of the wedding vows, an intent that is concealed by their lines (and the absence of lines) as well as revealed by their actions throughout the play. When the two lovers rise from their coffins to be wedded beside them, amidst the chorus of supporting witnesses, they visually summon the rhetoric of the betrothal promise in Canticles and its fulfilment in the wedding of Revelation. Act 5, scene 4 opens with the stage directions:

“Comedy, Carnival, and Class: *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* (January 2003).

Recorders dolefully playing. Enter at one door the coffin of the gentleman, solemnly decked, his sword upon it, attended by many in black, his brother being the chief mourner. At the other door, the coffin of the virgin, with a garland of flowers, with epitaphs pinned on it, attended by maids and women. Then set them down one right over against the other, while all the company seem to weep and mourn; there is a sad song in the music room.
(5.4, p.101)

The flower-bedecked coffin of the virgin and her entourage of “maids and women” here offer a parodic contrast to the “daughters of Jerusalem” who attend the Sponsa in Canticles; similarly, the sword on Touchwood Jr.’s coffin echoes the martial metaphors of the Sponsus.²⁸ As well, the “chief mourner” is Touchwood Senior, who we learn shortly has been “in” on the lovers’ plot all along: he has helped the lovers in their failed attempt to elope in 4.2 and conveys the letter to Moll from the “dead” Touchwood Jr. in 5.2, after which she faints in order to set up her own “death.” After the ceremonial entrance onto the stage in 5.4, Touchwood Sr. delivers a eulogy, and asks the deliberately leading question:

Touchwood Senior. I cannot think, there’s any one amongst you,
In this full fair assembly, maid, man, or wife,
Whose heart would not have sprung with joy and gladness
To have seen their wedding day?
(5.4.23-26)

All respond that “It would have made a thousand joyful hearts” (5.4.27), whereupon Touchwood Sr. directs the couple to rise from their coffins: “Up then apace, and take your fortunes,/ Make these joyful hearts, here’s none but friends” (5.4.28-29). The lovers then “*rise from their coffins*” (editorial, but clearly implied, stage direction) to be married:

²⁸ See Song 1:5, 3:5, 4:4, 5:16, 6:4, 8:4.

Parson. Hands join now, but hearts forever,
Which no parent's mood shall sever.
[To Touchwood Jr.] You shall forsake all widows, wives, and
maids;
[To Moll] You, lords, knights, gentlemen, and men of trades;
And if, in haste, any article misses
Go interline it with a brace of kisses.
Touchwood Senior. Here's a thing trolled nimbly. Give you
joy brother,
Were't not better thou should'st have her,
Than the maid should die?
Mistress Allwit. To you sweet mistress bride.
All. Joy, joy to you both.
Touchwood Sr. Here be your wedding sheets you brought
along with you;
you may both go to bed when you please to.
Touchwood Jr. My joy wants utterance.
Touchwood Sr. Utter all at night then, brother.
Moll. I am silent with delight.
Touchwood Senior. Sister, delight will silence any woman,
But you'll find your tongue again, among maidservants,
Now you keep house, sister.
(5.4.36-54)

Moll and Touchwood Jr. are in fact silent thereafter. Again, the staging implication is that they take their winding/wedding sheets and "go to bed", though they need not leap into the coffins while onstage to underline the suggestion that they will do so at the soonest private opportunity: the parson's direction to make up for the hasty wedding with "kisses," and the couple's silence after line 52, imply that they do at least kiss.²⁹

Despite the clear gesture toward scriptural traditions of the apocalyptic wedding in the presence of coffins onstage during a wedding, Middletonian critics prefer to underline his

²⁹ Christina Luckyj notes that in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, a kiss is mentioned as a way of silencing a character or characters (Luckyj, 'A moving Rhetoricke': Gender and silence in early modern England [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002], 91).

detached and cynical wit as the anarchic power that defies containment by law and tradition, [emphasizing that] sexuality in city comedy is equated primarily with social disjunction and with sin.³⁰

Stephen Wigler, for example, the only critic to my knowledge who seems to have granted more than passing reference to 5.4, demonstrates how many critics have dismissed the potential for a restorative rather than a purely satiric response to the scene as well as the play.

Wigler's premise is that "provocative stimulation increases tension and is only pleasurable insofar as it promises fulfillment, [therefore] our sexual tension is neither disguised nor subdued, and our self-awareness as an audience of voyeurs, experiencing the pleasures of others by observation and identification, becomes more acute"; he concludes that "Rather than celebrating rebirth and renewal, and thus evoking joy in its auditors, the finale of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* evokes the soiled delight and discomfort characteristic of the play from the beginning."³¹ Wigler privileges the notion of a monolithic discourse in which the "satisfaction" must be as literal as the stimulation. In this approach, the satire of "soiled delight and discomfort" cannot co-exist alongside genuine satisfaction and the comedic resolution of the wedding: the sacred rite and the profanity of pleasure must be antagonistic or at least mutually exclusive—yet Middleton does not exclude joy, delight, nor pleasure from this play.

Canticles' rhetoric, however, inscribes marital motifs and social virtues with erotic pleasure rather than limiting marriage, and the body, to the suffering of anxiety: apocalypse here does not necessarily mean fire and brimstone but also signals the redemption of humanity in the New Jerusalem, the Eden achieved

³⁰ Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), 50.

³¹ Stephen Wigler, "Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*: The Delicious and the Disgusting," *American Imago* 33.2 (Summer 1976), 210, 213.

through knowledge and the operation of virtue and virtuous choices. The inclusion of coffins on the stage at the end of *Chaste Maid* is therefore not only satirical, alluding to the punishment of the sinful. It is also reverential, invoking the marital motif of the apocalypse, when the souls of humanity are wed to the divine Sponsus, Christ, and are resurrected through that wedding as a newly integrated body where human and divine are no longer distinct. The present form of soul and body combined, and the union of male and female in the domestic relationship of marriage, are then prefigured promises of this apocalyptic union.

Middleton's comedy of too-literal representation of the immanent apocalypse in the young couple's coffins does not necessarily censure the spiritual ideal that is parodied. Instead, Middleton's drama of marriages that are yet socially functional, despite infidelity, censures the standards of conventional absolutes that are hypocritically discordant with practices. Moll's and Touchwood Jr.'s wedding within the community and with its approval seems to signal social renewal in the post-coffin scene, rather than merely "social disjunction and sin": if they can remain uncorrupted, they may be able to win their disobedient community "without the woordes by the conuersacion of the [Church] ... so that the spirite be milde and quiete." The spirit of mutual affection and due benevolence in marriage advocated by the Church is practicable too: the unexpected irony of extra-marital sex in this play is that it does not ultimately compromise any of the marital alliances, at least not for the couples themselves. Their corrupted marriages appropriately reflect their corrupted selves, which ironically validates the self-reflective operation of marriage.

Middleton's playful literalizing of this opened rhetoric—opening the coffins to wed the couple, for instance, as well as opening liturgical motifs to corrupt practices – is what makes his comic resolution so funny, and so interestingly resonant of scripture. As William Slights argued, the "incarnational comedy" of Middleton's plays uses "intentional incongruity, inversions, and fantastic or violent images, often created by the juxtaposition of

incompatible levels of metaphoric and literal language.”³² Such incongruities then reveal “the potential for human triumph in the inseparability of body and soul, flesh and spirit.”³³ Middleton’s method or rhetoric juxtaposes sacred ritual alongside profane carnality, and then demonstrates that these juxtapositions are triumphantly inseparable, just as their vehicles, body and soul, are inseparable in this life. This rhetoric of conflating corruption and ritual informs much of *Chaste Maid*, which takes place during Lent and culminates in a Church, with a christening at the centre of the play (3.2); but it is also characteristic of exegetical strategies, both Judaic and Christian, with regard to the sensual expression and mystical allegories of Canticles.³⁴

The emphasis on joyful silence here, after a dramatically silent courtship, raises important questions about the activity of virtue. As Christina Luckyj has recently argued, silence onstage can be a powerful signifier of “plenitude,” indicating that a character need not speak in order to express herself, or that she may choose not to speak without the necessary implication of erasure: silence itself offers significant rhetorical potential for both women and men, especially on the Renaissance stage. She re-examines the notion of silence to “reveal the ... slippage away from strict denotation into connotation (to not speaking *as a sign* of calm and patience)” and she asks the interesting question: “if discourse is a site of the most insidious, internalised social controls, might silence offer a rival, less highly regulated space?”³⁵ Luckyj cites Philip McGuire’s term “open silence” to describe non-verbal responses on the stage as “textually indeterminate”—

³² William Slights, “The Incarnations of Comedy,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 51.1 (Fall 1981), 23.

³³ Slights, 24.

³⁴ For a brief history and discussion of the connections between rabbinic and early Christian exegesis, see Noam Flinker’s *The Song of Songs in the English Renaissance: Kisses of their Mouths* (Rochester NY: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

³⁵ Luckyj, ‘*A moving Rhetoricke*’, 3, 5.

“when, in other words, the text itself offers no guidance as to how the silence should be interpreted on the stage.”³⁶

Such “open silence” may indeed open interpretive potential for 5.4 of *Chaste Maid*, when Moll and Touchwood Jr. are silent after their vows and are told to go to bed. Luckyj’s questions regarding the problems of assuming the “chaste, silent, and obedient” model of misogynistic rhetoric point out how current criticism privileges the subjectivity of discourse at the expense of “silent” stage presences, which may be “both self-contained, closed, secret *and* open, multiple, uncontrollable, unfathomable.”³⁷ Like the figure of the Sponsa, who is both enclosed garden as desirable object and opened body as desiring subject, the nominally female rhetoric of silence, chastity, and obedience deliberately elides the conventional boundaries of speech, discourse, and desire. For instance, the Sponsa is *enclosed*, not closed off; the connotation suggests that she is not empty but rather full. Such an enclosed “feminine” self also indicates an important (if only because so often overlooked) agency: the Sponsa, like Moll, may choose to be silent because her physical state is itself expressive; she need not express herself verbally because she is already a signifier of discretion or chastity.³⁸

Throughout the entire concluding scene, Moll has one line—“I am silent with delight”—and Touchwood Jr. has two lines—he spurs the Parson to perform the wedding with “Good sir,

³⁶ Luckyj. 117, note 14; qtg McGuire, *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare’s Open Silences* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Luckyj’s application of “open silence” focuses on Shakespearean tragedy almost exclusively, but the principle is valid for comedy as well.

³⁷ Luckyj 89; she names Suzanne W. Hull’s *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982) as being largely responsible for establishing the cliché.

³⁸ Again, see Luckyj. 2-4 on silence as plenitude; also, see Luce Irigaray, “The Sex Which is Not One” in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. R. Warhol and D. Herndl (rpt. “Ce Sexe qui n’en est pas un,” in *Cahier du Grif*, no. 5; English translation by Claudia Reeder, in *New French Feminisms*, New York: 1981; Rutgers UP, 1991), 350-356.

apace” and follows the wedding, like Moll, with “My joy wants utterance.” The wedding vows of 5.4 reflect the literal and figurative openness of “incarnational comedy” in the “silent” responses of Touchwood Jr. and Moll: neither is compelled to be silent, and both merely articulate satisfaction in delighted joy. The ensuing silence of the theatrical kiss then encloses them in this non-verbal interaction: joy and delight characterize a chosen silence, preferred by both new spouses. The joyful silence of both Touchwood Jr. and Moll after their abbreviated vows perpetuates the sense of their agency and the successful achievement of their own goals; they are, after all, the authors of their own “deaths,” which then enable them to “resurrect” in their wedding with the support of the community.

Moll and Touchwood Jr., having engineered such communal support through their necessarily deceptive plot, may now be open with each other as well as with the community. Their silent but significant presence onstage throughout the remainder of the scene directs the alternative and comedic mode of virtuous and pleasurable renewal amidst hypocrisy and corruption. Whether or not they remain faithful, at this concluding moment of the play they offer the emblematic promise of something valuable and worth saving. The “moving rhetoric” of silence on stage suggests that, like obedience in the liturgical form, chastity may have a similarly alternative mode of expression that signals plenitude rather than erasure. In this sense, chastity can be understood as the faithful containment of the individual or of a relationship as a kind of enclosed garden. The figure of the Sponsa incarnates this alternative rhetoric of the body, a “silent” rhetoric that signals virtue as sensually pleasurable: the Sponsa articulates desire through her preferential response to her chosen lover, and the spiritual allegory associated with the Sponsa as a figure of human response to the divine is a powerful rhetoric of emergent virtue.

This is not to deny that the satiric conflation of death and sexual consummation at the end of Middleton’s play comments on the hypocrisy of the marriages in this play, as various critics have

noted in passing references to this scene.³⁹ Yet the spoken lines that deliberately obscure action from other characters in the play indicate to the audience that something else is also going on alongside the ironic parodies. Despite the abbreviated elaboration of the couple's mutual duties from Middleton's Parson, when he tells them to interline missing articles with kisses, and from Touchwood Sr., who directs the couple to take their winding sheets for wedding sheets, Moll and Touchwood Jr. need not consummate their vows in their coffins onstage any more than bastard children need to be conceived onstage: the presence of coffins is enough to imply that the sexual act is associated with the grave and thus potentially with corruption, sin, fire, and brimstone. But the suggestions from the Parson and Touchwood Sr. also indicate a degree of light-hearted ambiguity that makes the equation of sex with sin too easy, especially since they *rise* from their coffins to be married. The apocalyptic wedding trope is just as present here, offering the possibility of releasing corruption and anxiety through sexual and social concord in marriage.

The urge to identify Middleton's comedic world of marriage as "unpleasant" and governed by "irony" seems to be the effect of focussing on the hypocrisies of the Allwits, Yellowhammers, Kixes, or Sir Walter, rather than on the chaste maid, Moll, who unironically supplies the title for the play. For instance, as Kahn points out, the title, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, "forms an oxymoron which link[s] entities normally opposed"; Moll's name is "a nickname both for [the Virgin] Mary and for women of the underworld, evoking in a word both virginal and whorish representations of women."⁴⁰ After identifying

³⁹ Dorothy M. Farr, *Thomas Middleton and the Drama of Realism: A Study of Some Representative Plays*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973), 1, 22. For further analyses of marital hypocrisy as Middleton's theme, see Joanne Altieri's "Against Moralizing Jacobean Comedy: Middleton's *Chaste Maid*," *Criticism* 30.2 (Spring 1988), 171-187; Anthony Covatta's *Thomas Middleton's City Comedies* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1973).

⁴⁰ Kahn 253; see also 249. Kahn essentially argues that "the theater wantonly, deliberately confuses categories held elsewhere [in conduct books and sermons] to be clear and firm" after asserting that "The object of this contest [of gender

Moll's potential duality, Kahn interprets both parts in exclusively negative terms, but we cannot forget that Moll is also, as far as we know, a chaste maid who lives in Cheapside. By arguing that desire is a problem that is lodged in women and controlled by marriage, Kahn elides the pleasures of desire that are lodged in the figure of the Virgin/Mother Mary as one of the allegorical identifications of the Sponsa of Christ and that are released by marriage. Thus Moll's "virginal" status in a setting of corruption may also signify a highly versatile idea of womanhood: though initially characterized by her mother as "a dull maid ... drowsy-browed, dull-eyed, drossy-spirited" (1.1.4, 13-14), by the end of the play she is also "silent with delight" (5.4.52) and quick to join her new husband in the sheets (however metaphorically). Moll's chastity need not be a literal virginity for it to be virtuous, any more than her desire needs to be asserted verbally to be clear evidence of her agency: her behaviour clearly demonstrates discretion in her preference for Touchwood Jr. and not for the indiscrete Whorehound.

In her onstage interactions with Touchwood Jr., Moll receives notes and conveys clever responses to indicate that the two are deliberately concealing their plans from others, including, though to a lesser degree perhaps, the audience. Upon Touchwood Jr.'s entrance, for example, he declares (presumably to the audience) his desire for Moll, and then speaks to Moll before addressing her father, who plainly does not hear the exchange:

dominance] is 'the production of a normative 'Woman' within the discursive practices of the ruling elite,' a woman signified by 'the enclosed body, the closed mouth, and the locked house'" (Kahn 249, qtg Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers [eds.] [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986], 127). Far from being "clear and firm," such representation offers – by Kahn's own estimation – unresolved issues of domestic "responsibility" and "subordination." As I've already established, the "enclosed body" is only half of the Sponsa figure's characterization, and the "closed mouth" that characterizes desire in physical and responsive terms can offer much more than the "obsessively binary conceptualization of sexual categories" that Kahn assumes is characteristic of "theology" (Kahn, 251).

Moll. Sir?

Touchwood Jr. Turn not to me 'till thou may'st lawfully, it but whets my stomach, which is too sharp set already. [*Gives her a letter*] Read that note carefully, keep me from suspicion still, nor know my zeal but in thy heart; read and send but thy liking in three words, I'll be at hand to take it.
(1.1.145-150)

A little later in the same scene, after Moll has apparently had time to read the letter surreptitiously, and while Touchwood Jr. has been commissioning a ring from her unwitting goldsmith father in distinctly bawdy terms that annotate the letter's contents for the audience, the young suitor says to Moll: "Shall I make bold with your finger, gentlewoman?" in order to size it for his otherwise anonymous beloved. She responds, in three words, "Your pleasure, sir" (1.1.194-195).⁴¹ Touchwood Jr. then asks Yellowhammer to engrave the ring with the posy "*Love that's wise, blinds parents' eyes*" (1.1.199); Yellowhammer responds by approving the sentiment: "I wonder things can be so warily carried./ And parents blinded so; but they're served right/ That have two eyes, and wear so dull a sight" (1.1.209-211). Touchwood Jr.'s posy indicates from the beginning of the play that his love is "wise" – that he recognizes the importance of "blinding" or concealing his and Moll's betrothal arrangements while he does not have support from her family. Though we never learn the details of the letter he passes to Moll, her answer – "Your pleasure, sir" – is clearly agreeable, even to the number of words Touchwood Jr. has requested.

That they conduct a relatively silent intrigue through the rest of the play is equally clear when we see them passing notes to each other later, and the evident results of the note-passing in 3.1 when we see the couple about to be married, only to be interrupted by Yellowhammer and Sir Walter. Again, in 4.3, Moll attempts to

⁴¹ The exchange of rings and the holding of hands is also a gestural echo of verbal responses in the wedding form. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ring had an emblematic significance: "Even in the absence of a priest's blessing (as in betrothal), the ring was sufficient to confer permanence on a relationship" (Gillis, 62).

elope and is caught and beaten by her mother, Maudline.⁴² The scene ends with Sir Walter and Touchwood Jr. duelling and wounding each other. Finally, in 5.2, Moll reads another note that seems to inform her of her beloved's death, and faints (to fake her own death). The third, and this time successful, attempt to get married here signifies the couple's determination to fulfil their "pleasure," though we've neither seen nor heard them plotting beyond the implications of the incidents just cited.

It is possible that there have been looks and gestures that have passed between them, but this is not spoken aloud—spoken dialogue indicates only obfuscation or "blinding" of parental opposition.⁴³ The deliberately ambiguous manner of the lovers' courtship, moreover, literalizes the ideals of marital roles: Touchwood Jr. actually receives a wound, sacrificing his bodily comfort for his marriage; and Moll literally submits herself to silent compliance, being dull or fainting away rather than arguing with her parents' objections, or complaining about them openly to her sympathetic servant Susan.⁴⁴ Onstage, silence is another mode of speech, or a "moving rhetoric" indeed; chastity is a mode of discretion, indicating the significance of Moll's preference for Touchwood Jr. instead of Sir Walter Whorehound. Obedience is a

⁴² This episode echoes the "dark night of the soul" sequence of *Canticles*, in which the *Sponsa* seeks her beloved in the streets and is beaten by the night watchmen (see *Song* 5:6-8).

⁴³ Indeed, the audience needn't know that their deaths are faked until they rise from their coffins to be married: winks and nods to the audience aside, it would be more theatrically interesting to imagine that the faked deaths are well faked, and that the audience is not "in" on the details of the lovers' third plot until it is revealed to the rest of the characters. Thus the theatrical audience and the social congregation in the play are potentially conflated, both duped into sympathy and pleasant surprise (and not, as Wigler argues, simply made uncomfortable by voyeuristic self-recognition).

⁴⁴ Brunning also notes that Touchwood Jr. "receives a fatal wound from Sir Walter which leads to his 'death' and rebirth" just as "Moll herself undergoes a form of re-baptism in her 'drowning' in the Thames, her subsequent death and final resurrection at the altar" (Brunning 42). However, she does not develop this remark to indicate how the lovers' rebirth is connected to their wedding, instead focussing on Sir Walter as a "Protestant poetic" alternative to Roman and Puritan sacramental rituals of redemption.

way of exerting the authority of social responsibility when both lovers scheme to acquire approbation for their marriage rather than eloping (like the tragic Pyramus and Thisbe, or Romeo and Juliet).

All this while, too, the young couple's lusty determination is contextualized by marital hypocrisy that yet manages to decry itself as hypocrisy, as well as to demonstrate the spirit of due benevolence, mutual affection, and the comedic ideal of support through and beyond adversity. Sir Oliver Kix, for instance, shares a genuine if quarrelsome affection with his wife; the Yellowhammers are united by their morally corrupt materialism; and Touchwood Sr., for all his infidelities, is as genuinely sorry to have to leave his wife for pecuniary reasons, as she is to see him go. Their enforced separation is cast as mutually undesirable:

Wife. I shall not want your sight?
Touchwood Sr. I'll see thee often,
 Talk in mirth, and play at kisses with thee.
 Anything, wench, but what may beget beggars;
 There I give o'er the set, throw down the cards,
 And dare not take them up.
Wife. Your will be mine, sir.

Exit.

Touchwood Sr. This does not only make her honesty perfect,
 But her discretion, and approves her judgement.
 Had her desires been wanton, they'd been blameless
 In being lawful ever, but of all creatures
 I hold that wife a most unmatched treasure
 That can unto her fortunes fix her pleasure
 And not unto her blood; this is like wedlock;
 The feast of marriage is not lust but love,
 And care of the estate.
 (2.1.38-51)

The lawfulness of the Touchwoods' desire, like Touchwood Jr.'s injunction to Moll to "Turn not to me 'till thou mayst lawfully," shows discrete consideration for a socially directed and supported kind of pleasure. Rather than complaining of punishment for self-indulgence, Touchwood Sr. paraphrases the "due benevolence" rule from 1 Corinthians 7:3-5:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.
The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.
Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.
(KJV, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

Though the Touchwoods, of course, do not confine themselves to “fasting and praying.” Touchwood Sr.’s impregnation of Lady Kix does allow him to reunite with his wife; and they do separate “with consent ... and come together again.” Such mutual “due benevolence” can, as Heather Dubrow suggests, threaten those “readers accustomed to patriarchal authority”:

[T]he rhetoric of the Pauline passages in question and the commentaries on them in the marriage manuals circumscribe and control the very passion ostensibly being unleashed. The language of debt and obligation makes sexuality seem less an anarchic and uncontrollable force and more a mercantile commodity subject to measurement and control ... sexuality is constructed not as a self-indulgent, uncontrollable pleasure but rather as a socially sanctioned and even mandated responsibility.⁴⁵

The responsibility and duty of marriage is both potentially threatening and socially useful, both for men and for women; a socially circumscribed, Lenten-like duty co-exists alongside the carnivalesque sexuality that the Touchwood brothers enjoy with their women.⁴⁶ But the pleasures and responsibilities of marriage

⁴⁵ Dubrow, *A Happier Eden: The Politics of Marriage in the Stuart Epithalamium*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), 25.

⁴⁶ For a refreshing discussion of the Lenten context and the carnivalesque in this play, see Pier Paolo Frassinelli’s “Realism, Desire and Reification: Thomas

also support flexible and various approaches to it; indeed, as Dubrow advocates, “variety and change are among the most salient characteristics of both Tudor and Stuart thinking on marriage; we need to talk in terms of Protestant discourses of marriage, not the Protestant discourse, of Puritan arts of love rather than a unified and monolithic art.”⁴⁷ Such a variety of discourses will involve, as in Middleton’s play, both threatening and celebratory notions, both Lenten duty and Carnival liberty, because “marriages are emotionally charged occasions ... [that] represent a threshold between two different states, two different stages in life, and thresholds are perilous” and exciting.⁴⁸ The liminal peril that is so joyfully celebrated in the final scene of *A Chaste Maid* emblematically renders the difficulty the lovers have had – their two interrupted attempts to marry – as well as their pleasure in finally marrying because they’ve overcome trouble and hypocrisy to do so, just as the Touchwoods engage in hypocrisy to overcome their problems and re-unite.

Concluding Remarks

The Renaissance theatre and the English Reformation liturgy both offer their audiences a liminal stage, not only for the exercise of pleasure but also for the social constitution of the whole body. Middleton invites such ecclesiastical and theatrical analogies in his comedy of marriage, itself a liminal stage between innocence and corruption, by alluding to the wedding forms themselves, liturgical customs such as due benevolence and the lawful pleasures of consummation, and the carnivalesque practices of corruption, infidelity, and other pleasurable temptations. That several acts of consummation occur beyond the sanctity of marriage on the edges of this play heightens the irony of the

Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 8.3 (January 2003).

⁴⁷ Dubrow, *Happier Eden*, 1990, 13.

⁴⁸ Dubrow, *Happier Eden*, 1990, 5.

parson's emphasis on fidelity and exclusive "kisses" in the final scene; but the various hypocrisies do not undermine "the mutual societie, helpe, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversitie" shared by these unfaithful but happily married couples (*BCP 1559*, 122).

Neither does the context of universal infidelity compromise the possibility that Moll and Touchwood Jr. may be happy together, as Tim and his Welsh "gentlewoman" may also be happy at the conclusion of the final scene:

Welsh Gentlewoman. Sir, if your logic cannot prove me honest,
 There's a thing called marriage, and that makes me honest.
Maudline. Oh, there's a trick beyond your logic, Tim.
Tim. I perceive then a woman may be honest according to the English print, when she is a whore in Latin. So much for marriage and logic! I'll love her for her wit; I'll pick out my runts there; and for my mountains, I'll mount upon
 (5.4.116-122)

That Tim can choose to love his wife for her wit is the basis for her honesty in "English print." The rhetoric of a wife's "silent" pleasure—her conversation, her obedient responsiveness, and the discretion of chastity—is the basis for her converting or transformative social role in the English Church. That is, her physical virginity is secondary to her willingness to play her role in the community as a domestic and virtuous sovereign. Tim's Welsh Gentlewoman is honest because she has chosen to be his wife, though she has been a whore: marriage is a translation that does not erase its original "text" but builds upon it just as mortal death translates the Christian soul into eternal life without losing the integrity of subjectivity that makes desire possible in the first place.

At the same time, Moll's and her husband's silence mirror the "submission" of everyone that is described in the vow of obedience: obedience requires the observation of duties that Moll and Touchwood Jr. see to with due benevolence indeed, and without much apparent trepidation. The model of speech and

response in the liturgy is a figure for the wife's domestic and social conversation. The husband's infamous role as her "head" is therefore qualified by the head's dependence on the "body" as the site of social interaction; his vow to willingly sacrifice his body and physical comfort for her sake can be read as an acknowledgment of his responsibility to sustain her attentive obedience. The obedience clause, furthermore, applies as well to "we [who] are membres of his body"—to the congregation who witnesses the ceremonial drama before them, "silently" listening and ready, as Touchwood Sr. recommends to his brother, to "utter all at night" or to remain "silent with delight" as Moll expresses herself to be. Moll's and Touchwood Jr.'s silences in the play disclose that such deferral is charged with pleasure rather than compelled by anxiety; Touchwood Jr.'s anticipated utterances are contingent on Moll's continued delight, as signalled by her silence.

Finally, the coffins onstage during the wedding identify the emblematic promise of this wedding with the joyful end of days; though presently imperfect, and with a distinct tendency toward corruption, the promise of worldly marriage prefigures the divine/human wedding. The alternative of Canticles' eroticized rhetoric of the body as a *hortus conclusus* offers a way to see how both the ironized anticipation of carnal allusions, hypocrisies, and infidelities, and the genuine pleasure of ritual satisfaction, interact and co-operate in Middleton's play.

The strange conjunction of coffins and wedding vows is an emblematic echo of liturgical parodies elsewhere in the play, such as the Lenten setting with the corrupt Promoters (2.2) and the christening scene with the drunken and bepossed gossips (3.2). The interpretive traditions of the apocalyptic wedding are embedded in the ceremony of matrimony that is dramatized in Middleton's funeral-cum-wedding scene. *A Chaste Maid's* 5.4 thus offers an emblem of the paradox of corrupted carnality and the recovery of social institutions in the play: the use of coffins as stage properties offers, in Daly's terms, a "concrete visualization of a spiritual and moral experience" as well as a further comment on the dramatic action of the wedding scene and of marriage generally in the rest of

the play. In literalizing the apocalyptic associations of marriage as coffins, Middleton offers a visual and tangible satisfaction for the liturgical/scriptural motifs that he has introduced as corrupted but which may be renewed by this pair of lovers. The stage then offers us the reflected object of ourselves not as absolute or allegorical vices or virtues but rather as agents of vices and virtues. Middleton's comedy explores the petty vices of marriage within the festive rhetoric of scripture, liturgy, and theatrical performance, fully exploiting the ambiguities of such frameworks by staging corruption and perpetual renewal side by side.

DELNO C. WEST AWARD WINNER (2003)

James K. Otté

The Delno C. West Award is in honor of Professor Delno C. West, one of the founding members of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. Professor West was Professor of History at Northern Arizona University where he served for a time as Chair of the History Department and Director of the Honors Program. Professor West was a president of the Association and the general coordinator of three annual meetings that were held in Flagstaff and at the Grand Canyon. His teaching centered on medieval Europe, and he published widely on the history of Christianity. His numerous books and articles include *The Libro de las Profecias* of Christopher Columbus (1991).

The West Award recognizes the most distinguished paper given by a senior scholar at the annual conference.

**BETWIXT WAR AND PEACE: THE DUAL FUNCTION
AND SUBSTANCE OF THE BELL**

James K. Otté
University of San Diego

This paper owes its inspiration to Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* and to its protagonist, Henry Fleming, who

One night, as he lay in bed, the winds had carried to him the clanging of the church bell as some enthusiast jerked the rope frantically to tell the twisted news of a great battle. This voice of the people rejoicing in the night had made him shiver in a prolonged ecstasy of excitement. Later, he had gone down to his mother's room and had spoken thus: 'Ma, I'm going to enlist.' 'Henry, don't you be a fool,' his mother had replied. She had then covered her face with the quilt.¹

When Henry returned from town the next morning, he informed her, "'Ma, I've enlisted.' There was a short silence. 'The Lord's will be done, Henry,' she had finally replied, and had then continued to milk the brindle cow."²

From John Huizinga we know of the many functions of the bell in medieval and Renaissance society.³ Yet, I was unprepared

¹Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, www.cs.cmu.edu/~rgs/badge-table.html, ch. 1.

²Crane, *Ibid.*

³John Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1924), pp. 2-3.

to accept the tolling of a bell—one of the preeminent symbols of peace—as Henry Fleming’s inspiration to go to war. So, I decided to investigate whatever bellicose function the bell had served in the past. If, indeed, there was such a history, it would be insignificant, so I thought, and my paper would be very short. There was a surprise. I soon discovered that since at least the 8th century B.C. bells had played a prominent role in war, and my research soon revealed the proverbial tip, in this case, of a mound of bronze, which our ancestors molded into shields, swords, spears—and bells. My paper then will chronicle the various military applications of the bell, many of which had long been established, before the Greeks and Romans employed the bell in their military operations. Following a short introduction of the symbols of war and peace, of bronze, bells, and weapons, I will explore the following topics:

1. The bells’ apotropaic or shamanistic quality.
2. How bells were intended to confuse and intimidate an opponent.
3. The use of bells as a military signal.
4. The application of bells to avoid a surprise attack and instead reveal an entrapped enemy.
5. Why the bell’s very substance, bronze, remained an invaluable material long after iron and steel dominated the battlefield. Indeed, remolded bronze could appear in many guises!

SYMBOLS, BRONZE, BELLS, AND WEAPONS: THE BACKGROUND:

The dove, the olive branch and the bell are the celebrated symbols of peace in Western Civilization. But war quickly transforms those symbols. The screaming eagle replaces the dove; the olive branch is transfigured into a sword or spear. Only the bell retains its function. But its tolling is seriously compromised, even perverted, when Mars, the God of War, claims the bell’s voice and Pax, the Goddess of Peace, must surrender it. In

extreme cases the God of war has also laid claim to the bell's substance, when his followers melted down bells to forge their very matter into armor and weapons. It was an easy transformation; bronze is an alloy of 78% copper and 22% tin. The ancient warrior's shield, sword and spear were forged from the same substance as the bell.

The Trojan War, lasting some ten years, was fought in the Late Bronze Age around 1250 B.C.⁴ We can be sure, therefore, that the Trojan warriors, as well as the invading Greeks, fought with weapons of bronze. Moreover, Homer refers to the bronze weapons, but he does not mention the use of bells. The days of bronze weapons, however, were numbered.

The Dorian warriors who conquered Greece ca. 1100 B.C. carried weapons made of iron, a reality that did not elude the Greek poet Hesiod (c. 700 B.C.) who lamented,

I wish I were not counted among the fifth race of men,
but rather had died before, or been born after it.
This is the race of iron.⁵

The prophet Isaiah (c. 740 B.C.), a generation earlier, had been more optimistic. He envisioned the coming of a more peaceful age, prophesying: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." Isaiah 2: 4. So far, Isaiah's prophecy has been a fleeting illusion. More than two-and-one-half millennia have passed and we are still living in Hesiod's age of iron, made even more precarious since the atom was added to man's arsenal of destruction.

Some two-and-one-half centuries after the Trojan War, around 1000 B.C., and at the other extreme of the Asian continent, the first bell was cast in China. Its substance, too, was bronze. It

⁴Modern scholarship has moved the traditional dates of the Trojan War: 1194-84 B.C. to ca. 1250 B.C.

⁵Hesiod, *Works and Days* 174-76

was a large bell. Its diameter established the measure for length, its cavity defined volume, and its tone served as a tuning standard for the empire.⁶ Too large to move, Chinese bells resided in temples where they served the gods and astounded visitors

The casting of small bronze bells, in contrast to the large Chinese bells, appears to have originated in the highlands of Armenia in the 8th century B.C. Much smaller and suitable for attachment to man or beast, these little bells quickly spread into Mesopotamia, where they soon adorned the necks of horses and suspended from elephants and camels, they announced the approach of commanders and kings.⁷ For centuries, these smaller bells were enlisted in a variety of martial applications. Bells were, indeed, veterans of centuries of combat. The following are examples of their functions and applications.

1. APOTROPAIA:

Iranian horsemen of the borderlands adjacent to Armenia appear to have originated the practice of embellishing their horses with bells for shamanistic or apotropaic reasons.⁸ Bells were imbued with apotropaic powers, making their bearer immune from physical and demonic harm.⁹ “In classical Antiquity people believed that ore could break any spell. Its sound was held to be the voice of the gods.”¹⁰ The sound of bells, so it was believed,

⁶Kurt Kramer, *Glocken in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, (Karlsruhe: Badenia Verlag, 1986), p. 2.

⁷?Kramer?

⁸Schatkin or Triumph

⁹Schatkin or Triumph

¹⁰ S. Seligmann, *Die magischen Heil- und Schutzmittel* (1927) p.169, “Im klassischen Altertum brach Erz jeden Zauber. Sein Klang galt als Goetterstimme.” cited in (Maria Trumpf- Lyrizaki, Art.”Glocke,” in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Bd. 11, Stuttgart, 1981, Trumpf-Lyrizaki, clmn. 172)

appeased the gods and banished daemons. In addition, bells attached to the spears of warriors and hunters were meant to confuse both enemy and prey. Other horseman carried that tradition into various other regions. Wearing of bells was also common among the Scythian horsemen who repeatedly invaded Europe and who in later centuries served as Roman auxiliaries.¹¹

Bells reached Egypt during the 23rd Dynasty (817-730 B.C.).¹² By 700 B.C. bells had also reached the island of Samos and Etruria.¹³ The smaller bells were also present in India and China before 478 B.C., where they are mentioned by Confucius, who died in that year.¹⁴ Everywhere, so it appears, horsemen insured their safety and that of their horses with bells. With their migration from Asia Minor the Etruscans may have brought bells to Italy, where they seem to have lost their apotropaic value.¹⁵ The curious account that the cackling of geese alerted the guards when Rome was invaded by the Gauls in 387 B.C. may well be a myth, but the absence of bells on the Capitoline Hill appears even more peculiar.

In Asia Minor animals commonly wear bells. The translation of Alexander the Great's body from Babylon to Egypt in B.C. 323 provides another example of the bells' function: service in the cult of the dead. His hearse was pulled by sixty-four mules, each wearing two golden bells on its cheeks.¹⁶

¹¹Maria Trumpf-Lyritzaki, "Glocke," in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Bd. 11, Stuttgart, 1981, Sp. ?

¹²Trumpf-Lyritzaki, Sp. 164.

¹³ Trumpf-Lyritzaki, Sp.164.

¹⁴Schatkin,148.

¹⁵Schatkin, p. 148.

¹⁶Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 18, 27, 5. English Translation by Russel M. Geer, *Diodorus of Sicily*, Loeb Classical Library and Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), Vol. IX, p. 93. "...[T] here were sixty-four mules, selected

There are no literary references to the use of bells in Egypt, but from monuments it appears that bells were hung around the necks of horses, oxen, sheep and camels.¹⁷ “As elsewhere, the Egyptians valued the sound of bronze for its apotropaic power.”¹⁸ In Egypt also, bells are frequently found in the tombs of children whom they had protected as amulets in this life and whom they would presumably continue to defend in the next. Early Christians continued that tradition, as we know from the testimony of John Chrysostomos, who condemned this practice in the 4th century.¹⁹

2. BELLS ATTACHED TO SPEAR AND ARMOR WERE INTENDED TO CONFUSE AND INTIMIDATE AN OPPONENT:

Bells were employed by Greek playwrights in both tragedies and comedies, especially in matters of security and in war. In *Seven Against Thebes*, Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), the earliest of Athens’ great tragedians, enhances the fierceness of warrior Tydeus with the bellicose ringing of bells:

With shouts like these he tosses three tall shadowing plumes,
His helmet’s mane, while from the inside of his shield
Bells wrought in bronze send forth a terrifying clang.²⁰

four their strength and size. Each of them was crowned with a gilded crown, each had a golden bell hanging by either cheek, and about their necks were collars set with precious stones.”

¹⁷ Margaret Schatkin, “Ideophones of the Ancient World,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), p. 150).

¹⁸Schatkin, p. 150.

¹⁹Trumpf-Lyritzaki, Sp. 180

²⁰Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, ed. Philip Vellacott (New York: Penguin, 1987) line 380.

Not impressed by Tydeus' martial appearance and sounds of fury,
Eteocles, his Theban opponent, retorts,

What a man wears about him will not frighten me;
Pictures can deal no wounds, his crests and bells won't bite
Without his spear.²¹

The first Greek writer to mention bells within the context of the Trojan War was Euripides (485-06 B.C.), who around 450 B.C. composed his tragedy *Rhesus*. The following passage is interesting for its detailed description of the bells, but even more so for the fear the ringing of the bells induced in a messenger. Unlike Eteocles, who had mocked his opponent's bells, the Trojan messenger who had observed Rhesus, the Thracian warrior, is scared to death. Returning from a spying mission, the messenger informs Hector, the Trojan hero:

I see Rhesus mounted like a god upon his Thracian chariot.
Of gold was the yoke that linked the necks of his steeds whiter
than the snow; and on his shoulders flashed his targe with
figures welded in gold; while a gorgon of bronze like that
which gleams from the aegis of the goddess was bound upon
the frontlet of his horses, ringing out its note of fear with many
a bell. The number of his host thou couldst not reckon to a
sum exact.²²

But bells were not limited to his horses. Upon the entry of Rhesus,
the Chorus proclaims,

Hail, all hail O mighty prince! Fair the scion thou hast bred, O
Thrace, a ruler in his every look.
Mark his stalwart frame cased in golden corslet! Hark to the
ringing bells that peal so proudly from his targehandle hung.
A god, O Troy, a god, a very Ares, a scion of Strymon's

²¹*Ibid.* line 398

²²E. P. Coleridge, ed., Euripides, *Rhesus*, line 300.

stream and of the tuneful Muse, breathes courage into thee.²³

The apotropaic qualities of bells survived the conversion of the ancient world to Christianity, as the following event will show. When the Burgundian city of Sens was besieged by Clothair the king of the Franks in 615, Lupus, its saintly Bishop, ordered the ringing of the church bells. Unfamiliar with the sound, the invaders fled the scene.²⁴ Contemporary interpretations, which have not survived, were probably less rational and attributed the flight of the enemy to the miraculous power of the bells.

3, THE USE OF BELLS AS A MILITARY SIGNAL:

Elsewhere I have discussed the role of bells in the early Christian Church.²⁵ In Jerome's translation of the *Rule* of Saint Pachomius c. 292-346), bells are twice mentioned as a means of signaling. Tradition holds that Pachomius had been a soldier in the Byzantine army, where daily activities were governed by the ringing of bells. So, the founder of cenobitic or communal monasticism probably concluded that a group of men, whether soldiers or monks, required organization and discipline. He provided for both of them in his *REGULA*. Apparently Pachomius also continued some traditions of Roman army organization and discipline at Tabenna, his monastic community in Egypt.²⁶ A bell also was prominent in the life of Saint Benedict, the founder of western monasticism.

After Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547), the future founder of Monte Cassino, had abandoned society and sought refuge in a

²³*Ibid.*, line 379

²⁴*Vita Lupi Senon*, 20 [Acta Sanctae Sedis, Sept. 1, 262].

²⁵J. Otté, "The Reception and Justification of Bells in the in the Early Church," Conference of the Saint Anselm Society, Budapest, June 2002.

²⁶Trumph-Lyritzaki, 179.

remote and inaccessible cave, a monk named Romanus provided him a daily ration of bread. Moreover, Romanus attached a little bell to the basket holding the loaf of bread, thus alerting Benedict of its arrival. Pope Gregory I (590-604) who tells this story also mentions that the devil one day smashed the bell with a stone.²⁷ Told by one of only two popes called "the Great," indeed by one of the Latin Doctors, Gregory's account reached a wide audience. The fact that the devil found it necessary to smash the bell could not but increase its status and elevate its dignity.

Not so dignified was the ringing of a bell more than a millennium later. On the eve of St. Bartholomew's Day, 22 August 1589, the massacre of the French Protestants, the Huguenots, was to ensue in Paris, if not in all of France. The statesman and historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), witnessed the Massacre and described the event:

The signal to commence the slaughter should be given by the bell of the palace... and the marks by which they should recognize each other in the darkness were a bit of white linen tied around the left arm and a white cross on the hat.²⁸

Only Henri of Navarre was to be spared. By now both an ex-Protestant as well as an ex-Catholic, Henry had once again become a Protestant. But ever the *politique*, on 25 July 1593, Henri of Navarre, once again converted to the Catholic faith, which led to his official coronation as Henri IV of France at Chartres, on 27 February 1594. Only seven days earlier, Henri is reputed to

²⁷The Dialogues of Saint Gregory, *The Second Book of the Dialogues*, containing the *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict of Nursia*, Translated into English by "P. W." and printed at Paris in 1608. Re-edited by Edmund G. Gardner in 1911, and again by the Saint Pachomius Library in 1995. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/g1-benedict1.html> < 22 March, 2002>

²⁸J.H. Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History*, 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2:179-183.

have made his famous remark, "Paris is worth a Mass."²⁹

4. BELLS AS A WARNING SYSTEM TO AVOID A SURPRISE ATTACK AND AS SIGNAL THAT AN ENEMY HAD BEEN SNARED:

Relating an event late in the life of Marcus Brutus (B.C. 42), Plutarch describes how this fellow assassin of Julius Caesar demanded money and men from the Lycians in Asia Minor. Forcing his most obstinate opponents into the ancient city of Xanthus by the river of the same name, Brutus then besieged the city. The Lycians' attempt to escape failed. As Plutarch tells us, the Romans had anticipated their attempted breakout:

The [Lycians] endeavored to make their escape by swimming and diving through the river that flows by the town, but were taken by nets let down for that purpose in the channel, which had little bells at the top, which gave present notice of any that were taken in them.³⁰

Bells also functioned as military signals in fortified places as well as in field camps. In his description of the marauding desert tribes that plagued the inhabitants of Cyrene in Libya, Synesios ©. 370-414 A.D.), the bishop and Platonist, complained that the watch or guard bell frequently had robbed him of his sleep.³¹ Also, the *Mandaic Hymns*, composed ca., A.D. 400

²⁹J.H. Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History*, 2 vols. 2:179-183.

³⁰Arthur Hugh Clough, ed., *Plutarch's Lives*, the Dryden Translation, Vol. 3, "Marcus Brutus," p. 394 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1957).

³¹Trumph-Lyritzaki, Sp.181, Synesios, in his homily, "Catastasis," 2, 303 [2, 292, ed. Terzaghi]). Also, <http://home.t-online.de/home/Stefan.Cramme/andrvers.html>, 19 March 2003: "Prisca, die Witwe des Synesios, zieht nach dessen Tod nach Alexandria zu ihrem Schwager, dem Präfekten. Hier muß sie erleben, wie ein christlicher Mob die Philosophin Hypatia, die Lehrerin des Synesios, ermordet. Sie erzählt Synesios' Leben seit der Zeit, als sie ihn in Alexandria kennenlernte."

repeatedly portray the guardsmen with their bells as the protectors of the world, and always in connection with the sentinels of the watchtowers.³² Several Byzantine handbooks dealing with military science devote a portion of their description to the security of field camps. The *Sylloge tacticorum* requires that field camps be secured at night by foot traps, and poles, and by a line strung along the perimeter of the camp from which bells are suspended.³³ The *Liber de re militari* demands a trench around the entire camp in addition to the bells and adds that the night patrols making their reports must be careful while approaching the camp and avoid the ringing of the bells.³⁴ In their siege of Damietta in 1219, the crusaders employed the same tactic. Stringing lines with bells across the Nile, the crusaders prevented supplies from reaching the city at night.³⁵

5. DEATH AND “RESURRECTION” OF THE BELLS:

We have seen how the devil smashed the bell attached to Saint Benedict’s breadbasket. With the advent of cannon in the 14th century, bells faced yet another adversary, that very cannon. Indeed, the bell and the cannon share a common substance: bronze. An alloy of 78% copper and 12% tin, every bell was potentially a cannon. This helps explain the tradition—sometimes called the

³²Trumph-Lyritzaki, Sp. 181.

³³A. Dain, ed., *Sylloge tacticorum quae olim ‘inedita Leonis tactica’ dicebatur*. (Paris 1938), p. 43.

³⁴R. Vari, *Incerti scriptoris Byzantini saeculi X liber de re militari* [1901] 10, 4.(ebd. 12, 15/23). “Der *Liber de re militari* schreibt vor (‘dass vor dem das Feldlager umringenden Graben Stoecke aufgepflanzt u. dazwischen Schnüre mit Glocken gespannt werden sollen. Die Nachtwachen sollen vorsichtig, ohne die Glocken zu erschüttern, ins Lager kommen und ihre Meldungen erstatten.’”

³⁵*L'estoire de Eracles empereur* 32, 13 *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux* 2 (Paris 1859) 347; Cf. Morillot, *Bulletin d'Histoire et de Archeologie*, p. 247).

“*droit sur les cloches*”—which granted the artillery commander of a conquering army the right to confiscate a fallen city’s bells, or be compensated with the equivalent of their value.³⁶ Napoleon Bonaparte, who bragged that he had entered upon the stage of history, “with a whiff of grapeshot,” demanded that right when he conquered the city of Danzig in 1807.³⁷ Not surprisingly, the area of the church steeple that housed the bells was sometimes called the “chamber of the cannons,” and the bells themselves were sometimes called “the artillery of the clergy.”³⁸ The following anecdote corroborates the apparent affinity of bell and cannon.

The Cardinal and Archbishop of Vienna, Count of Migazzi, asked the Emperor Josef II of Austria if he wanted to receive Pope Pius VI in his upcoming visit to Vienna with the ringing of the bells. ‘I am surprised you asked,’ the emperor responded, “the bells are your artillery.”³⁹

There is biting sarcasm in this exchange. As we saw above, church bells were part of the booty or spoils of a conquering commander. The reply from a conqueror would have been different, for he considered a bell a potential cannon. But the poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860) drew a sharp distinction between the sound of bells and that of cannon. The Romanticist described the thunder emanating from the barrel of the a cannon as “the tolling of death.”⁴⁰ Yet, in a desperate situation even a religious ruler might sacrifice his own church bells. As a country’s sons spilled their blood on the fields of battle, so too the bells

³⁶Karl Walter, *Glockenkunde*, (New York: Pasted, 1913) p. 8.

³⁷Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 8

³⁸Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 8.

³⁹Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 8.

⁴⁰Moritz Arndt, “Das Geleute des Todes aus Kanonen.”

sacrificed their substance for war. And like the soldiers, so too the bells gave their lives for their countries.

The first documented and dubious distinction of the systematic destruction of his own church bells goes to the Kurfürst or Elector Frederick I of Brandenburg (1415-40). Bankrupt, and surrounded by enemies, namely his own nobility, the Quitzovs, Frederick ordered the melting down of the bells of the Marienkirche (Mary's Church) in Berlin, in order to recast them into cannons. But in his last will and testament the remorseful Frederick ordered his sons to make restitution for his deed.⁴¹ Yet, not Frederick's remorse, but his act of turning church bells into cannon had many imitators.

Charles the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy (1467-77), found himself in a similar situation. After losing his artillery in the battle of Granson in 1475, he decided to cast new cannons by melting down church bells and kitchen utensils.⁴² Peter the Great (1689-1725), the Tsar of Russia, also held a dubious, if temporary, record. He melted down enough bells in his empire to cast some 500 cannon.⁴³ That, however, was a pittance compared to the 44,000 bells confiscated in Germany during WW II. Of these, fewer than ten percent ever returned to once again praise God, and His saints, or to beckon a congregation of the faithful. During the French Revolution bells were melted down for bronze, which was then recast into cannons. But the secularism of the revolution and its contempt for religion did so also out of principle.

There are too many examples in which bells became cannons, or in the symbolism of Isaiah, in which plow shares were turned into swords. Ironically, the same master who had cast the bells was usually also the one who cast the cannons. Moreover,

⁴¹Karl Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 9.

⁴²Karl Walter, *Glockenkunde*, pp. 9-10.

⁴³Karl Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 10.

sharing the same substance, created by the same hand, and thus sharing a common father, bell and cannon were quasi brother and sister. So much for the optimism of the biblical prophet. Welcome to the Temple of Doom and Schizophrenia!

But I refuse to end this paper on such a negative note. Fortunately, the process could also be reversed. If a bell's substance could be recast into a cannon, why not "slaughter" cannons and recast them into bells!? After the Battle of Sedan (1871), which ended the Franco-Prussian War, William I of Prussia and Bismarck, his "Iron Chancellor," demanded the surrender of the French cannons. Melted down, their substance furnished the matter for Germany's largest bell. Named "*Die Deutsche Glocke*," it found a worthy home at the magnificent Cathedral of Köln or Cologne.⁴⁴

In Cologne, whose citizens are not noted for readily conforming to decrees from "above," "*Die Deutsche Glocke*," soon acquired another name. The four generations of Cologne's citizens who have heard its message of peace have affectionately renamed the bell "*De decke Pitter*," akin to our "Fat, or Big Pete" which, stripped of Cologne's dialect emerges as "big Peter." Indeed, "*De decke Pitter*" serves as an example in which a sword was turned into a beautiful voice, a symbol that neither Hitler nor Göring risked turning back into a sword. Isaiah, please forgive my pessimism. Indeed, "*De decke Pitter*" is a marvelous testimonial to your prophecy!

⁴⁴Karl Walter, *Glockenkunde*, p. 8, fn. 4.