

Quidditas

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



*The Adams Shakespearean Theatre at the Utah Shakespearean Festival in Cedar City, Utah
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Call for Papers, 2010

Rocky Mountain Medieval & Renaissance Association

"Politics and Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance"

&

The Wooden O Symposium

The 2010 **RMMRA Conference** will be held in conjunction with the **Wooden O Symposium** at Southern Utah University in Cedar City, Utah, from August 9-11. The Wooden O Symposium, sponsored by the Utah Shakespearean Festival and Southern Utah University's College of Visual and Performing Arts, the Gerald Sherratt Library, and the Department of English, is a cross-disciplinary conference focusing on the text and performance of Shakespeare's plays. Please note that in support of SUU's mission to promote undergraduate research, the Wooden O Symposium regularly includes at least one undergraduate panel as part of their program.

RMMRA and the Wooden O Symposium invite panel and paper proposals on the conference's special topic, "Politics and Performance in the Middle Ages and Renaissance." The Wooden O Symposium invites papers on any topic related to Shakespeare and early modern drama, but gives priority to those relating to the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2010 summer season: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Macbeth*.

Conference co-chairs are Jessica Tvordi, Department of English, Southern Utah University and Michael Don Bahr, Education Director, Utah Shakespearean Festival.

Deadline for proposals is April 1, 2010. Session chairs and individual presenters will be informed of acceptance no later than May 15. 250-word abstracts or session proposals (including individual abstracts) should include the following:

- ☐ name of presenter(s)
- ☐ participant category (faculty, graduate student, undergraduate, or independent scholar)
- ☐ college/university affiliation
- ☐ mailing address
- ☐ email address
- ☐ audio/visual requirements and any other special requests.

Abstracts for sessions and individual presentations should be sent to

Jessica Tvordi via e-mail: tvordi@suu.edu

For additional information about travel to, and accommodations in, Cedar City, contact

Miranda Giles, Wooden O Coordinator (Giles@bard.org)

from the Editor

This volume of *Quidditas* (v. 30, 2009) continues to reflect the eclectic nature of the journal. Our articles cover a variety of topics and time periods: an exploration of the quest for, and meanings of, Cathay, the location and significance of Charlemagne's sepulcher in Aachen, an analysis of Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, a comparison of on-stage baptism in the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* and Massinger's *The Renegado*, an essay describing the Italian, Spanish and English fencing styles in Shakespeare's England, and a discussion concerning migrating Irish women in Spanish convents of the sixteenth century. Our Notes analyze questions of the seclusion of quattrocento Italian women and the influence of Milton's *Of Education* on his later *Paradise Lost*. This year's review article describes and compares Shakespeare biographies from the seventeenth century to the present. Our two reviews in "Texts and Teaching" discuss the usefulness of a long neglected book on Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy, and strategies and books useful in teaching about the Black Death.

Quidditas is a Latin legal term that originally meant "the essential nature of a thing." In fourteenth-century French the word became "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.

Editor: James H. Forse, *Bowling Green State University*

Reviews Editor: Jennifer McNabb, *Western Illinois University*

Articles appearing in *Quidditas* are abstracted and indexed in *MLA*, *Historical Abstracts*, *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index*, and *America: History and Life*.

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 the 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 12 pages) pertaining to factual, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other issues pertaining to the research and teaching of Medieval and Renaissance disciplines. Our “Reviews” section features a “Review Essay” and a “Texts & Teaching” focus: short (3 to 7 pages) reviews 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 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. Authors of accepted works will supply a copy of the manuscript compatible with Microsoft Word on a CD.

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

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Annual Conference 2010

The 2010 conference of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association will be held 9, 10, 11 August, at Southern Utah University, Cedar City UT. The conference will be held in conjunction with the Wooden O Symposium and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. For more information contact:

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ALLEN D. BRECK AWARD WINNER (2009)

Adele Lee

The Allen D. Breck Award is given in honor of Professor Allen D. Breck (1914-2000), a founder of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. As Professor of History at the University of Denver, he also served for 20 years as department chair. As Professor Emeritus he became the historian of the University of Denver, writing *From the Rockies to the World—The History of the University of Denver*. His specialties included medieval and church history, particularly John Wyclif. 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.

**“The Whole is an Idle Dream:”
The Early Modern and Post-modern Quest for Cathay**

Adele Lee

Queen's University, Belfast

This article examines how the Renaissance English understood and responded to the land of Cathay. It argues that although Cathay is technically just another name for China it represented a separate conceptual realm in this period. In other words, Cathay must be considered as being, in many ways, a distinct discursive construct. Viewed as the ‘glittering prize’ of the East India Company, Cathay, which fuelled countless (doomed) attempts at discovery, possessed characteristics both Chinese and Tartar. Descriptions of it converged and diverged simultaneously with descriptions of China and Tartary. As well as being a culturally liminal entity, Cathay was also a temporally liminal construct as accounts of it often placed it in the past and the present, that is, as both continuing under the rule of Kublai Khan, its thirteenth-century Mongol ruler, and as self-governing.

Cathay's cultural, spatial, and temporal liminality means that it constitutes, in effect, an ‘unreal(istic)’ space in the early modern imagination; it transcends the established limits of the actual, material world. As such, ‘Cathay’ evades representational containment, which explains why contemporary critics have been frustrated in their attempts at explaining Shakespeare's incongruent uses of the term. This paper, however, fully acknowledges from the outset the impossibility of establishing a single definition of ‘Cathayans’ and proffers instead an interpretation of the term that allows for its elusiveness. Indeed, its elusiveness and almost nonsensicalness are its distinguishing features, features uniting Shakespeare's seemingly disparate uses with deployments in the plays of William Davenant and Thomas Dekker.

English Renaissance merchants, travellers and scholars were mesmerised by the land and whereabouts of Cathay (the outdated, Mongolian name for China) and arguably longed to establish trade

therewith more than any other country in the world. As expressed by the governors of the Company of English Merchants in 1580, “[Cathay] is the Countrey that we chiefly desire to discover.”¹ This sentiment was not particular to the English, as Arthur Tilley explains: “throughout [this period] the aim of every maritime explorer, whether from Bristol, or Dieppe, or Lisbon, or Seville, was to find a way to Cathay.”² The reason for this was, first and foremost, financial. As Pietro d’Angheira wrote, “there coulde not any nauigation bee imagined so commodious and profitable to all Christendoome.”³ Idealising it as an almost utopian kingdom of abundance, civility, craftsmanship and stunning opulence, Cathay was commonly accounted, “wonderfull rich in golde and silke, abounding in grain, wine, and [all] things necessarie for mans sustenance;” in short, “the moost noble and rich realm of the worlde.”⁴

Given such descriptions of Cathay, it is not surprising that innumerable voyages for the discovery of a passage thereto were funded and commissioned throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These included the famed voyages undertaken by Sebastian Cabot, Sir Hugh Willoughby, Anthony Jenkinson and Martin Frobisher, among others.⁵

1 “Commission giuen by Sir Rowland Heyward, George Barne, Aldermen and gouernours of the company of English Merchants, for discovery of new trades, vnto Arthur Pet, Charles Iackman, for a voyage by them to be made, for discouery of Cathay, 1580,” in Richard Hakluyt, *The principal nauigations*, 12 vols. (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1903-1905), v3, 256.

2 Arthur Tilley, “Rabelais and Geographical Discovery III: the short way to Cathay,” *The Modern Language Review*, 5.1 (1910), 68.

3 Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, *The decades of the newe worlde*, tr. Richard Eden (London, 1555; S.T.C. 647), fo. 253^r.

4 Anglicus Bartolomaeus, *Batman vppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended* (London, 1582; S.T.C. 1538), fo. 233^v; Frère Hayton, *Here begynneth a lytell cronycle translated [and] imprinted at the cost [and] charges of Rycharde Pynson* (London, 1520; S.T.C. 13256), sig. A3^r.

5 For more details on the early modern attempt to discover a North-West passage to Cathay, see George Best, *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher in Search of a Passage to Cathaia and India by the North-West*, ed. Richard Collinson (London: Hakluyt Society, 1867); J. R. Hale, “Cathay: The Persistent Vision” in his *Age of Exploration* (New York: Time, Inc., 1996), 95-104; Henry Morley, Richard Hakluyt and Humphrey Gilbert, *Voyages in Search of the North-West Passage from the Collection of Richard Hakluyt* (London and Melbourne: Cassell, 1886); Thomas Rundall, ed., *Narratives of Voyages towards the North-West, in Search of a Passage to Cathay and India, 1496 to 1631* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1846); Ann Savours, *The Search for the North West Passage* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999); and George Malcolm Thomson, *The Search for the North-West Passage* (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

Such expeditions entailed huge financial risk and would lead to the bankruptcy of many, including Company of Cathay governor, Michael Lok. Queen Elizabeth I, the Countess of Pembroke, Lady Anne Talbot, the Countess of Warwick and the Countess of Sussex are among those who, as shareholders and members of the Cathay Company, also lost huge sums in the pursuit of Cathay. But finding a passage to Cathay was considered worth the risk to wallet, reputation, and life. The reason for this was that many felt the discovery would result in an alliance between “Christian princes of Europe and the great emperoure of Cathay,” so that “there can nothyng be imagined more effectually for the confusion of the Turke.”⁶ Richard Eden’s hope that a union with Cathay would lead to the destruction of Renaissance Europe’s most dreaded foreign foe was fuelled by reports that there existed Christian tribes among the Cathayans. Cathay, therefore, represented not just a plentiful storehouse of exotic goods, but the solution to Europe’s struggle with the Islamic Middle East.

However, all such hopes were thwarted, as attempts to find a passage to Cathay proved “all in vaine.”⁷ As a result, Cathay became the cause of unrivalled frustration:

I know nothing which hath exercised the witts and industrie
of the Navigators of our age, more then the finding out of a
passage to Cathay”

wrote geographer Nathanael Carpenter.⁸ Such was the extent of frustration felt that Thomas Heyrick, in a poem about a mythical book (a kind of Pandora’s Box) that would solve the world’s greatest mysteries, claimed that only in this book:

6 Richard Eden, “The preface to the reader,” in d’Anghiera, *The decades of the newe worlde*, n. p.

7 Robert Hues, “To the Reader,” *A learned treatise of globes* (London, 1659; Wing H3298), n. p.

8 Nathanael Carpenter, *Geographie delineated forth in two booke*s (London, 1635; S.T.C. 4677), chapter 7, 117.

What hath puzzled Curious Brains
But ner Rewarded the Cost or Pains
Are maps, that do display
The Northern passage to Cathay.⁹

Here Heyrick highlights the “cost” and “pains the search for Cathay entailed, but he also suggests that the English will never achieve their goal since it is only through a mythical, and therefore non-existent book, that maps revealing the way to Cathay can be found.

This defeatist belief is echoed by Richard Willes who wrote in *The history of trauayle* (1577):

the route to Cathay . . . consist[s] rather in the imagination of
Geographers then allowable either in reason or approved by
experience.”¹⁰

What Willes is saying, essentially, is that Cathay can only be found through the imagination; it cannot physically be reached. This is either because no sea-route exists, or, more interestingly, because Cathay itself does not exist in the material world. That for the early modern English Cathay is not a “real” but fantasy place, somewhere one can only *imagine* travelling to, is supported by the fact that it *is* only through books that the Renaissance English *ever* encounter Cathay. Even when the English did finally set foot in China, the search for Cathay continued due to the mistaken belief that they were two separate countries. It could, therefore, be argued that Cathay was but the “stuff of dreams.” The fantastical qualities and characteristics with which it was endowed, underlines this hypothesis.

All this will be discussed in detail later; for my purposes now, however, the mere proliferation of material about Cathay in this period deserves comment, for current scholarship fails to reflect the significance of Cathay to the Renaissance context. It is only

9 Thomas Heyrick, *Miscellany poems* (London, 1691; Wing H1753), 31.

10 Richard Willes, “For M. Captayne Furbishers passage by the Northwest,” in Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, *The history of trauayle in the Vvest and East Indies* (London, 1577; S.T.C. 649), fo. 231^r.

due to Shakespeare's use of the term in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* that a few critics—namely, Y. Z. Chang, Gustav Ungerer and Timothy Billings—have been prompted to explore exactly who and what were the “Cathayans.”¹¹ This demonstrates the continued privileging of canonical texts at the expense of the non-canonical. And although this article will also discuss Shakespeare's incongruent uses of the term “Cathayans” (a “puzzle” that has taxed the “curious brains” of *this* age), equal attention will be paid to other references to Cathay. Marco Polo's *Travels* (1579), Peter Heylyn's *Cosmographie* (1625), Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore* (1605), and William Davenant's *Love and Honour* (1634), are a few of the texts I will examine.

The main thrust of my argument is that Cathay in this period cannot be understood as simply another name for China; instead, Cathay must be considered as a distinct discursive construction. And while Cathay can be identified with China to an extent, for descriptions of the two countries do frequently overlap, Cathay was also often confused with Tartary. For that reason, it is a geographically and culturally hybrid entity. As well as this, Cathay is also *temporally* liminal since medieval descriptions of it conflicted and coincided with early modern accounts. Thus, it existed simultaneously in the here and there, the now and the then. A brief look at Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) will serve to illustrate, at this stage, what I mean by temporal and cultural liminality. In book eleven of the poem, Michael leads Adam to the highest point in Paradise where, we are told:

His Eye might there command wherever stood
City of old or modern Fame, the Seat
Of mightiest Empire, from the destin'd Walls
Of *Cambalu*, seat of *Cathaian Can* –
To Paquin of Sinaean Kings¹²

11 Y. Z. Chang, “Who and What were the Cathayans?,” *Studies in Philology*, 33 (1936), 203-221; Gustav Ungerer, “My Lady's a Cathayan, we are Politicians, Maluolios a Peg-a-Ramsie,” *Shakespeare Survey*, 32 (1979), 85-104; and Timothy Billings, “Caterwauling Cataians: The Genealogy of a Gloss,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54.1 (2003), 1-28.

12 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1998), book 11, lines 385-92.

Milton clearly makes the mistake of regarding Cambalu and Paquin (both Peking) as two different capitals of two different countries. What this extract also illustrates is how, even as late as 1667, it is assumed that Cambalu is still the seat of the “Can.” Such a belief is anachronistic since the Khan (that is, Mongol ruler) had not presided over Cathay since 1368. But, Milton’s oversight is even more complicated than it would initially appear, for the “Can” that he imagines as ruling Cathay is described as “Cathaian.” Therefore, Cathay is conceived of as simultaneously self-governing (present) *and* as under the hold of a foreign “Can” (past). In other words, it is imagined as being in an intermediate state, phase, or condition.

Cathay’s cultural, spatial and temporal liminality means that it constitutes, in effect, an ‘unreal(istic)’ space in the early modern imagination; it transcends the established limits of the actual, material world. After all, to Milton the walls of Cambalu are “destin’d,” which means not just that they are sought after but *also* that they have yet to be built and therefore do not actually *exist*.¹³ In arguing that Cathay is an intangible entity, this article differs from previous attempts at discovering what Cathay meant to the early modern English. These attempts had as their goal the establishing of an interpretation that suits both the context of *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; by contrast, I argue that such an endeavor is futile because given the continually shifting and fluid nature of Cathay, Cathayans evade representational closure of any kind.

I

Most Renaissance geographers did not realize that Cathay was the Mongolian name for [North] China.¹⁴ Cathay and China are not only listed and discussed separately in cosmographies, encyclopedias

13 This interpretation of “destin’d” is suggested by Alastair Fowler in his edition of *Paradise Lost*, p. 618, footnote to lines 387-8.

14 China was divided into Cathay (North) and Mangi (South) by the Tartars in the thirteenth century. It was from the Tartars that Marco Polo inherited his descriptions of China, which he then passed onto medieval Europe.

and travel accounts such as Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus linguae Romanae* (1578), Giovanni Botero's *The Travellers Breviator* (1601), and Laurence Echard's *A Most Compleat Compendium of Geography* (1691), but in all the major maps of the period—Gerard Mercator's, Abraham Ortelius', Jondicus Hondius', and Johannes Bleau's. In them, Cathay is typically identified as a "kingdome" that is "bounded on the East with the Ocean, Westward with Tartary, Northward with the Scythian Sea, and on the South with China."¹⁵ In other words, Cathay is imagined as geographically and culturally autonomous. However, the most widely held view of Cathay in this era is of a country set inland and to the Northwest of China (often separated from it by the Great Wall) that was conquered by, and forms part of, "Tartary." Richard Blome, Laurence Echard, and Sir Thomas Elyot all held this perception of Cathay, and wrote the following description of it:

Cathay: A great region in the easte part of the worlde, extending to the east ocean sea on the south to the ouer India; and is also called Sinarum regio . . . [A]ll be under the Great Cham.¹⁶

The "Great Cham" here refers to Kublai Khan, who conquered China in 1264 and resided in Cambula until his death in 1294. After this, China fell under the rule of a series of Mongol leaders until 1368, when the Chinese ousted them from power. This period of Chinese history is known as the Yuan dynasty, and it is to this epoch that "Cathay" was anchored throughout the Renaissance.¹⁷ The early

15 Patrick Hume, *Annotations on Milton's 'Paradise Lost'* (London, 1695; Wing H3663), 115.

16 Richard Blome, *The gentlemans recreation in two parts* (London, 1686; Wing B3213); Laurence Echard, *A most compleat compendium of geography* (London, 1691; Wing E148); and Sir Thomas Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae Eliotis librarie* (London, 1542; S.T.C. 7659.5). The exact same description is also given of Cathay in Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus linguae Romanae* (London, 1578; S.T.C. 5688). None of these encyclopaedias are paginated. The descriptions of Cathay are found under each entry for "Cathay."

17 For more on this particular epoch, and on the Mongol empire as a whole, see Stephen G. Haw, *The Mongol Unification of China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Hok-lam Chan, *China and the Mongols: History and Legend Under the Yuan and Ming* (Aldershot and Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1999); Peter Brent, *The Mongol Empire: Genghis Khan: His Triumph and his Legacy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); and David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

modern concept of Cathay was, therefore, often a highly static one, failing to evolve through time. Indeed, “Cathay” continues to be used to evoke a sense of an old and unchanging China to this day.

The conceptualisation of Cathay as being eternally under the control of a thirteenth-century empire demonstrates the extent to which Renaissance England relied on Marco Polo’s *Travels*.¹⁸ Yet, surprisingly little is actually written about Cathayans in Polo’s account.¹⁹ For most of the book, he merely tantalises his reader with the promise of a description that is never fully delivered. When moving on from his brief chapter on Cathay, he assures the readers that, “[they] must not suppose that we have dealt . . . with the whole province of Cathay, or indeed the twentieth part of it,” but never returns to the subject (Polo, 169). Thus, the reader is not only kept in suspense for the rest of the book, but left disappointed and unsatisfied by the end of it. Just like the “literal” Cathay, the figurative Cathay proves always out of reach.

Of course, this constant deferral of fulfilment is the main reason

Cathay was considered desirable in the first place. As Jacques Lacan has pointed out, desire is constituted through lack: “desire and lack do not precede or succeed each other; instead, desire . . . is a lack engendered from the previous time that serves to reply to the lack raised by the following time.”²⁰ In line with this theory,

18 The edition I will be citing from here is Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, tr. Ronald Latham (London: Folio Society, 1958).

19 This is indicative of the general “thinness” of Polo’s work—only brief, basic and bland descriptions are ever given about anywhere. These descriptions are often highly formulaic, and limited to status (noble, very noble, great, very large), religion (idolators, Saracens), economic activity, and, if appropriate, any buildings or bridges. As Peter Jackson observes, “of several Chinese cities we learn little more than that the people are idolators, subject to the Great Khan, use paper money and live by trade and industry” (Peter Jackson, ‘Marco Polo and His *Travels*’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 61.1 [1998], 86). Polo’s formulaic and minimalistic statements about the places he visits suggests that he never actually went there himself but based his descriptions on documents used by the Mongol administration (see John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001], 89

20 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, tr. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 215.

the more elusive of Cathay were, and the more it thwarted attempts to reach it, the more Renaissance English desire was inflamed.

It is not so much ironic, then, as *fitting* that Polo's *Travels*, the principal source regarding Cathay, should contain only scant and vague descriptions of it. The only information the reader can garner about Cathayans is that they are a people who "surpass other nations in the excellence of their manners and their knowledge," they "speak in an agreeable manner, greet one another courteously," and they hate the government of the Khan (Polo, 134 and 110). This view of the Cathayans as a refined and sophisticated race overlaps with the prevalent opinion of the Chinese in this period. Polo consolidates the Cathayans' identification with the Chinese even more by contrasting the former with the Tartars, who, he writes, "do not trouble about such refinements" (Polo, 166).

The Tartars were commonly regarded in the Renaissance as an "uncivil" and "brutish" race that "lyue[d] in maner lyke wylde beastes."²¹ As a nomadic people, they were deemed "a barbarous nation" made up of "swartish men of square stature, broad face, hollow eies, thin beards, and ugly countenances."²² The Tartars, as well as being a warlike race, were also, according to the early modern English, "prone to lecherye" (Anglerius 1577, fo. 312^v).

In stark contrast to this, the Cathayans were often depicted as "extremely civil [and] of a white and fair complexion," "curteous and reasonable," and, above all, as a people who "know not what war meant."²³ Again, the Cathayans are characterised in

21 Henry Lane, "A letter of M. Henri Lane to the worshipfull M. William Sanderson," in Hakluyt, *The principal nauigations*, v. 3, 335; d'Anghiera, *The history of traualle*, fos. 270^v-270^r.

22 Carpenter, *Geographie delineated forth*, chapter VII, p. 121; Giovanni Botero, *Relations of the most famous kingdoms and common-wealths thorowout the world* (London, 1630; S.T.C 3404), 494.

23 Philippe Anvil, *Travels into divers parts of Europe and Asia* (London, 1693; Wing A4275), p. 158; Bartolomaeus, *Batman vpon Bartholome*, fo. 233^v; Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae Eliotis librarie*, n. p.; Cooper *Thesaurus linguae Romanae and Britannicae*, n. p.; Samuel Clarke, *The life of Tamerlane the Great* (London, 1653; Wing C4535), 9; Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus*, v. 11, 414.

like manner to how the Chinese were portrayed. The belief that the Cathayans “profess the Christian Religion” further reinforces this sense of a shared ethnic identity with the Chinese, who were frequently regarded as Nestorian Christians (Anvil, 158).²⁴ It is not surprising, then, that the Cathayans and the Chinese, both of whom “speak a peculiar language, quite different from that of the Tartars,” were frequently discussed in this period collectively (Anvil, 158). Edward Brown and Francis Bacon both describe Cathay and China jointly, for instance.²⁵ As does Louis Leroy, who wrote in *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things* (1594) that:

[astrology and magic is] much used in China and Cathay which are countries inhabited by most ingenious and industrious people; where they are not permitted to come to offices ... in the Common wealth without being learned.²⁶

Although Leroy imagines China and Cathay as two “countries” (plural), he describes them as a “people” (singular) with shared characteristics. Cathay both is and is not China. Interestingly, Leroy also locates Cathay in the present, since it is not viewed here as subject to Mongol rule, but as in a position to appoint its own leaders. Yet again we see how, from the perspective of the Renaissance English, Cathay existed, simultaneously, in the past (under Tartar rule) and in the present (self-governing).

Judging from these accounts, it is obvious that Cathayans were often considered as being in “custome [a]like” to the “Chinois.”²⁷ Nevertheless, Cathayans were not always carefully differentiated from their Mongol rulers. In many other relations of them, the native Cathayans are mistook for the Tartars resident *in* Cathay. Their perceived similarity in terms of physical appearance

24 Johannes de Plano Carpini likewise wrote that the Cathayans have “the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament” and “love Christians” (Taken from the 1598-1600 edition of Hakluyt’s *The principal Navigations*).

25 Edward Brown, *A briefe account of some travels* (London, 1685; Wing B5111), 97; Bacon, *The history of the reigns of Henry the Seventh* (London, 1679; Wing B300), 151.

26 Louis Leroy, *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world* (London, 1594; STC 15488), fo. 50^v.

27 Peter Heylyn, *Cosmographie in four bookes* (London, 1652; Wing H1689), book 3, 211.

did not help the matter. This blurring of distinctions is evident in Anthony the Armenian's description of the Cathayans.²⁸ In it, they are condemned for showing no "fear or reverence of [God], or do[ing] any good works"—a view of them that contradicts accounts praising them for "bestow[ing] much alms."²⁹ Anthony the Armenian further criticizes the Cathayans because, "the killing of men . . . [and] fornication and lechery is held by them no sin."³⁰ Here, the Cathayans are evidently branded with Tartar-like faults.

In Peter Heylyn's *Cosmographie* (1652), the Cathayans are likewise endowed with distinctively Tartar characteristics:

The people [Cathayans] are generally very war like, strong of body, quick of action, fearless of the greatest dangers: of mean stature, little eyes, sharp-sight, and thin bearded . . . [and] more honourable than the rest of the Tartars' (Heylyn, book. 3, p. 199).

Heylyn's portrayal of the Cathayans as "warlike" is at odds with representations of them as cowardly.³¹ However, Heylyn is keen to stress that the Cathayans retain some difference from "the rest of the Tartars." This distinction becomes apparent as he continues his ultimately contradictory description. Going on to say that the Cathayans are "industrious" and "of a good wit for dispatch of business," Heylyn adds that the Cathayans are, in fact, "lovers of quiet—[and] without use of arms" (Heylyn, book 3, p. 199). Thus Heylyn, who evidently pieced together this account from various and conflicting sources, ends his narrative, having first described the Cathayans as "warlike," with a shock turnaround. In sum, then

28 Anthony the Armenian, "Of the Kingdome of Cathay," in Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus*, vol. 11, 309-364.

29 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 361. Carpini, "The voyage of John de Plano Carpini," in Beazley, ed., *The Texts and Versions of John de Plano Carpini*, 116.

30 Anthony the Armenian, "Of the Kingdome of Cathay," in Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus*, v. 11, 361.

31 Anthony the Armenian, for instance, wrote that "the men of that country are not bold, or courageous, but . . . fearfull of death." See "Of the kingdome of Cathay," in Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus*, v11, 310.

the Cathayans' national identity is conceived of, both in this account and in the others discussed in this article, as hybrid: simultaneously Tartar and Chinese, wild and peaceful, civilised and barbarous, masculine and feminine.

II

Until now I have been arguing that 'Cathayans' should be read as a constantly shifting referent, whereas the characteristics of the Chinese and Tartars are fixed and stable in the early modern imagination. It has been only for the sake of simplicity that I have been categorising the Chinese and Tartars in this way. In actuality, accounts of the Chinese and Tartars were also often conflicting and contradictory. With regard to the Tartars in particular, there was no single, overarching opinion. Since they had absorbed the diverse customs and manners of their conquered subjects throughout Asia, the Tartars represented an incredibly fractured body of people. Indeed, four culturally, politically, and religiously distinct Mongol Khanates dominated huge swaths of Asia (Larner, 27). As Peter Jackson puts it, "the Khan of Tartar could apply either to the qaghan, to the Il-khan or to the Khan of the Golden Horde" (Jackson, 86). In other words, the Khan, like Renaissance England's most famous stage Tartar, Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, could be Islamic or Christian.³²

What is more, the term Tartar does not just mean the peoples of Mongolia, it could, in fact, also refer to the people of "Turkic" Siberia.³³ In several notable descriptions of the Tartars they seem to represent a Turkish, and hence Muslim, race to the early modern

32 Jonathan Burton offers a discussion of Tamburlaine's "shifting and ambiguous religious identity" in "Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30.1 (2000), 126.

33 See M. A. Czaplicka, *The Turks of Central Asia in History and at the Present Day* (London: Curzon Press, 1973), 57. See also Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World*, 16.

English.³⁴ By extension, Cathayans, being confused for the almost-equally indistinct “Tartars,” are also frequently considered as, in Randle Holme’s words, “hav[ing] the Mahometan religion countenanced amongst them” (Holme, 212). Peter Heylyn likewise wrote that the religion of the Cathayans “publically allowed and countenanced, is that of Mahomet” (Heylyn, book 3, p. 199). Both of these statements highlight the way in which the Cathayans, through their connection with the Tartars, were associated with Islam. But neither Holmes nor Heylyn explicitly states that the Cathayans are a Muslim race—only that they allow the religion to be practised amongst them. Hence, one is left uncertain as to which faith exactly the Cathayans adhere. Again, written accounts of them would appear to raise more questions than they resolve.

The purpose of this seeming digression is to (re)emphasise the way in which the term “Cathayan” is lost in a constant system of *différence*. It is continuously related to referents that likewise lack stability. As such, it could be read as a signifier without an object. We are already familiar with the idea that *all* signs are vulnerable to multiple and contradictory interpretation, but most signifiers, in “realistic” narratives at least, are to an extent secured by the weight of the signified. It is only, according to Rosemary Jackson, in “fantastic” literature that a sign is completely hollowed out.³⁵ If the lack of meaningful signification is the major defining feature of the fantastic, then Cathay can reasonably be read in this vein. Cathay’s refusal to observe unities of time, space and character also equate the place and concept with the fantastic. In Mikhail Bakhtin terms, fantasy is

hostile to static, discrete units . . . it juxtaposes incompatible elements and resists fixity. Spatial, temporal, and philosophical ordering systems all dissolve.³⁶

34 For instance, d’Anghiera wrote that the Tartars “are Macometistes,” meaning Muslim (*The history of traauayle*, fo. 274^v).

35 Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 40.

36 Cited in Jackson, *Fantasy*, 15. Paul Ricoeur is also useful here: he defines myth as “a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to the possible worlds which transcend the established limits of our actual world” (Ricoeur, ‘Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds’, in Richard Kearney, ed., *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984], 45).

If Cathay is a signifier without an object, a word representing nothing, it is, ultimately, a non-sense term like Poe's "Tekeli-li" and Dostoevsky's "bobok." The way in which the term is articulated by Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (1601), Vasco in William Davenant's *Love and Honour* (1634) and Matheo in Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore* (1605), supports this interpretation. In all three instances, the word Cathayan is used by these disreputable figures when they are discovered in drunken and/or angry states. For example, Sir Toby is intoxicated and "in admirable fooling" (II.iii.72) when he exclaims to Maria, who has just threatened to turn him out of doors, that "My Lady's (Olivia) a Cathayan, we are politicians, Malvolio's a Peg-o'-Ramsey, and 'Three merry men be we.'" ³⁷ According to Horace Howard Furness, Sir Toby "was in that stage of drunkenness when mere sounds connect words having no relationship to each other; he had heard Maria accuse them of 'caterwauling', and straightaway the sequence was clear to him that if he was a 'caterwauler', his niece was a *cataian*."³⁸ In other words, Sir Toby is simply talking gibberish. While Furness' hypothesis has come under attack by critics, I believe that it is acceptable to consider Cathay as a nonsense word; as deployed here, the term is purposefully being utilised in an illogical manner.

In Davenant's *Love and Honour*, the disreputable Vasco is likewise irate when he brands the Prince of Parma a "bold Cataian."³⁹ Having made a profitable living from female prisoners of war, Vasco is angered by the Prince's new law that "all prisoners/After a yeare should have free libertie" (II. i. 6). He vents this rage by crying:

37 William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in Stephen Greenblatt et. al., eds, *The Norton Shakespeare* (London and New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), II. iii. 68-71.

38 William Shakespeare, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: 'Twelfth Night, or What You Will'*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1901), 119.

39 William Davenant, *Love and Honour*, in James W. Tupper, ed., *'Love and Honour' and 'The Siege of Rhodes' by Sir William Davenant* (Boston and London: D. C. Heath & Co., 1909), II. i. 24.

“Hang him, bold Cataian, hee indites finely” (II. i. 24). Once more, a character deploys the word Cathayan when in a fury. Similarly, it is only when the gambling alcoholic Matheo is enraged by the knight Lodovico Sforza for giving him a “suite of satin” that he uses the word “Cataian:”

[P]lox on him – we whose Pericranions are the very Limbecks and Stillitories of good wit, and flie hie, must driue liquor out of stale gaping Oysters. Shallow Knight, poore Squire Tinacheo: Ile make a wild Cataine of forty such: hang him, he’s an Asse, he’s always sober.⁴⁰

Matheo is clearly not “sober” himself when he speaks these nonsense words: “Pericranions,” “Limbecks,” “stillitories” and, of course, “Cataine.” Also of note here is the way in which a Cathayan is regarded as the opposite to one who is sober and therefore civilized. Cathayan in this instance, then, is more Tartar than Chinese.

The use of the term “Cathayan” by those not in their right state of mind is significant for another reason. According to psychoanalysts, latent fantasies are often revealed via abnormal psychic states such as when drunk or in a rage. Fantasies are also often expressed in a seemingly incoherent manner, as Linda Ruth Williams states: “the patient does not offer up to the analysand an open text thick with overt significance, but rather a linguistic and symbolic puzzle or jumble.”⁴¹ Thus, given that finding a route to Cathay was arguably Renaissance England’s greatest national fantasy, it is fitting that “Cathayans” are referred to in this context (when angry and/or drunk) and manner (unintelligibly).

Perhaps reinforcing this point is the fact that Samuel Taylor Coleridge apparently wrote his poem about Cathay, *Kubla Khan*

40 Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore*, in R. H. Shepherd, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols. (London: J. Pearson, 1873), v. 2, 143.

41 Linda Ruth Williams, *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject* (New York and London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 7.

(1798), upon waking from a drug-induced sleep. The vision of Cathay, in other words, only came to him when he was hallucinating.⁴² Even in the late eighteenth century Cathay, it would seem, occupies a place solely in the imagination; it is somewhere visited only in dreams. Strictly speaking, then, Cathay belongs to, and certainly has become more at home in, the realm of literature and fiction.

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42 Douglas Hedley, "Coleridge's Intellectual Intuition, the Vision of God, and the Walled Garden of 'Kubla Khan,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59.1 (1998), 115. Note also the typical Jungian view of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" as "fantastic" and "incredible," which again reinforces my reading of Cathay as a fantastic space. See S. K. Heninger, Jr., "A Jungian Reading of 'Kubla Khan,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 18 (1960), 358-67.

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Illustration from *Marco Polo's Travels*
(c. 1300)

**Karlsgrab: The Site and Significance
of Charlemagne's Sepulcher in Aachen**

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The intention of what follows is to clear up one of the mysteries still surrounding the Charles the Great, now most commonly known by his later appellation "Charlemagne."¹ Born in 742, the son of King Pepin the Short (ca. 714-768), Charlemagne ruled as king of the Franks after 768; he additionally ruled as Emperor of the West, from 800 until his death in 814. Sources in his time presented him as an emulator and successor of Constantine the Great, and successive Western Emperors presented their own personae as successors of Charlemagne. In 1165, 350 years after Charlemagne's death, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa induced his anti-Pope, Paschal III, to canonize Charlemagne as a saint, just as the Eastern Church canonized Constantine. The actual context of Charlemagne's canonization was, however, rather more political than spiritual.²

Posthumously Charlemagne's life and deeds sometimes became the stuff of heroic legend.³ One of those traditional legends now raises the question of exactly where he was buried. As to the general (versus particular) location of his sepulcher, "Karlsgrab," the early chronicles leave little doubt: the place of imperial interment was somewhere within the grounds of the royal complex at Aachen, then called Aquae grani (Fig. a). But where? As these early chronicles suggest, the place of imperial interment was most likely situated somewhere in the vicinity of the Palatine Chapel (Fig. a-2). Once that essentially topographical question of the original site of Charlemagne's sepulcher has been answered, then one may proceed to clarify equally the historical sources for, and the contextual significance of that particular manner of burial, and particularly one does

1 For standard biographies in English, see R. Winston, *Charlemagne: From the Hammer to the Cross* (New York: Vintage, 1954); A. Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); M. Becher, *Charlemagne* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005); for another perspective, see W. Braunsfels, *Karl der Große* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1991).

2 For the political machinations behind this event, see Robert Folz, "La chancellerie de Frédéric Ier et la canonisation de Charlemagne," *Le Moyen Âge*, 70 (1964), 13-32.

3 For various aspects of the posthumous legend, see Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiévale* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950).

so by identifying the iconographic sources for the particular architectural formal of the sepulcher.

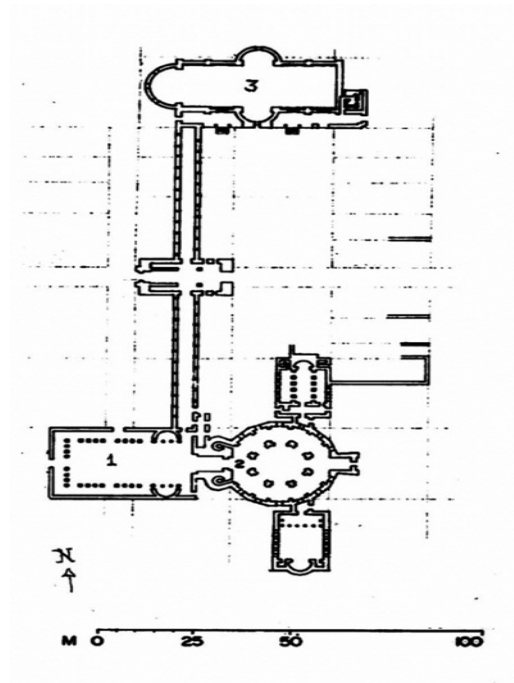


Figure a: Ground plan of the royal complex at Aachen around 814 (dotted lines show the governing grid-plan based on a module with multiples of one Carolingian foot = 33 cm). Major components: (1) the Atrium (site of the Karlsgrab); (2) Royal Chapel (Pfalzkapelle); (3) Royal Audience Hall (Sala Regia); demolished, now the site of Aachen's City Hall (Rathaus).

The earliest record of the Emperor's burial is the spare account recorded by the Emperor's contemporary and biographer, Einhard. As this author simply informs us (in his *Vita Karoli*, written between 829 and 836), Charlemagne's corpse had been "washed and ritually prepared for burial in the usual way"—*corpus more sollemni lotum et curatum*. Einhard continues, "amidst the great lamentations of the entire population," the corpse was then

brought to one side of the church [the Palatine Chapel, or *Pfalzkapelle*] and was interred there [ecclesiae in latum et humatum est]. At first, there had been some doubt as to where he should

be buried, for he had given no directions about this during his lifetime. In the end, it was agreed by all that no more suitable place could be found for his interment than the basilica that he had built himself at his own expense in that town [Aachen], for the love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honor of His holy and ever-virgin Mother. He was buried there on the day of his death, and then a gilded arch [*arcus . . . deauratus*] with his portrait-statue [*imagine*] and an inscription was erected above the tomb [*tumulus*]. The inscription ran as follows: "Beneath this funerary marker [*conditorium*] lies the body of Charles the Great, the Christian Emperor, who greatly expanded the kingdom of the Franks and reigned successfully for forty-seven years. He died when more than seventy years old in the 814th year of our Lord, in the seventh tax-year, on 28 January."⁴

After this brief statement we hear no more about the entombed Emperor Charles the Great for many years, that is, until after the liminal year of 1000. According to a trio of subsequent accounts, it was precisely on the feast of Pentecost in the year 1000 in the former imperial capital at Aachen that the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III (996-1002) then miraculously discovered (or "invented," *invenit*) the tomb with the enthroned corpse of his illustrious predecessor, the Emperor Charlemagne. Broadly viewed, the three surviving accounts of the "invention" of Charlemagne's tomb by the third Otto, his self-designated successor, belong themselves to an earlier literary convention. In one context, "invention," the narratives most closely parallel the oft-told account of the momentous finding of the tomb of Christ. In this case, here we have a concrete link to the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, whom Charlemagne had taken as his own imperial role model. Acting upon the instructions of his mother, Saint Helena, to whom the whereabouts of the sainted site had come in a dream, Constantine then opportunely discovered (*invenit*) the actual tomb in Jerusalem; subsequently, he ordered to be built over it the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Fig. b).⁵

4 Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer: Two Lives of Charlemagne*, tr. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 84.

5 For some idea of the later cultural and artistic importance of the Holy Sepulcher, reputedly "found" by St. Helena, see J. F. Moffitt, "Anastasis-Templum: 'Subject or Non-Subject' in an Architectural Representation by Jacopo Bellini?" *Paragone*, XXXIII, no. 391 (1982), 3-24 (with ample bibliography).

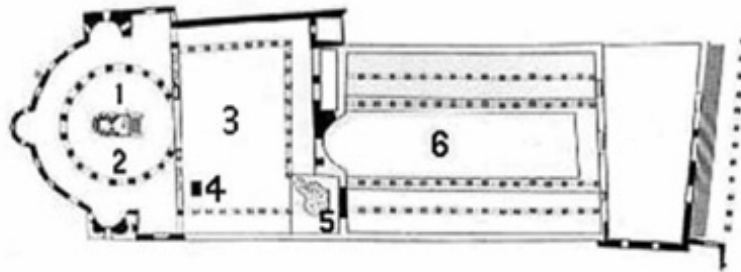


Figure b: Ground plan of the architectural complex built by Constantine at Golgotha-Calvary from 326 to 335; left is (1) the Edicule, later covered by (2) the columned Rotunda of the Anastasis; directly east is (3) the great atrium, or “Court before the Cross”; this contains (4) the repository of the True Cross, and (5) the small chapel sheltering the Rock of Calvary (Golgotha); and east of that (6) the immense Martyrion Basilica (north at top of the plan).

As is well known, in art as well as in governance, the pattern of renovatio pursued by Charlemagne was deliberately modeled upon that cultural “renewal” first initiated by Constantine the Great, the first specifically “Christian Emperor.” Constantine (ruled 306-337) was, and for all the obvious reasons, treated both as a “saint” and as the basic model for all subsequent Christian rulers by Carolingian and subsequent medieval authors.⁶ Richard Krautheimer has even specified: “all Charlemagne’s political ideas, his conception of a new Empire, and of his own status were based upon the image of the first Christian emperor [Constantine]. Numerous [contemporary] documents testify to the parallel which time and again was drawn between the Carolingian house and Constantine.”⁷ In 772 Pope Hadrian I specifically hailed Charlemagne as the “New Constantine.” This was but the first time that the Carolingian ruler

6 Whereas Constantine was, and for all the obvious reasons, treated as a “saint” and the basic model for all subsequent Christian rulers by medieval authors, some modern scholars have adopted a more skeptical, even negative, position; see, for instance, M. Grant, *Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times* (New York: Scribner’s, 1994); see also K. Deschner, *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1986), esp. chapter 5, examining the bloody career of “Saint Constantine.”

7 R. Krautheimer, “The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture,” *Art Bulletin*, XXIV (1942), 36.

would be so titled.⁸ Immediately after he was crowned Roman Emperor in Rome on Christmas day, 800, by Pope Leo III, the seal of the imperial office bore this legend, *Renovatio Romani Imperii*. According to François Ganshof, Charlemagne too “considered himself, as a Roman emperor, the successor to the Christian Roman emperors, of Constantine the Great and his heirs.”⁹

Another notable aspect, previously overlooked, is the symbolic significance of the specific date chosen by Otto III to commence his search for Charlemagne’s corpse, that is, Pentecost. As it turns out, this is the exact date, in the year 337, of the death of the Emperor Constantine the Great. In his *Vita Constantini*, the emperor’s biographer, Eusebius Pamphili of Caesarea (ca. 263-339?), exactly fixed the moment of “Constantine’s death at noon on the Feast of the Pentecost.” Moreover,

All of these events occurred during a most important festival, I mean the august and holy solemnity of Pentecost, which is distinguished by a period of seven weeks, and it is sealed with that one day on which the holy Scriptures attest to the ascension of our common Savior into heaven, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit among men. In the course of this feast the Emperor [Constantine] received the privileges I have described; and on the last day of all [in his life], which one might justly call the feast of feasts, he was removed about mid-day to the presence of his God, leaving his mortal remains to his fellow mortals, and carrying into fellowship with God that part of his being which was capable of understanding and loving him. Such was the close of Constantine’s mortal life.¹⁰

Although these three historical accounts do not speculate upon Otto III’s putative motives in 1000 for seeking to discover Charlemagne’s by then legendary tomb,¹¹ called the *Karlsgrab*, they

8 Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae. A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 93, n. 93.

9 F. Ganshof, in R. E. Sullivan, ed., *The Coronation of Charlemagne: What Did it Signify?* (Boston: Heath, 1959), 39.

10 Eusebius, in P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: William E. Erdmans, 1961)*, v. I, 557.

11 See Knut Görich in M. Kramp, ed, *Krönungen: Könige in Aachen—Geschichte und Mythos* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2000), 275-82). Görich suggests that a likely motivation for Otto III’s retrieval of the *Karlsgrab* in May 1000 was his desire to inaugurate, precociously, the canonization of Charlemagne, which did occur later in 1165 under Frederick Bararossa. For more on this argument, see Görich’s “*Otto III. öffnet das Karlsgrab in Aachen. Überlegungen zu Heiligenverehrung, Heiligsprechung und Traditionsbildung*,” *Vorträge und Forschungen der Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche*

agree that the exact location of the sepulcher on the grounds of the Palatine Chapel at Aachen had been previously unknown. Thus the “finding” of it was an event taken, and in itself, to be inevitably “miraculous” in nature; the third Otto, who reigned from 996 to 1002, became known as “*mirabilia mundi*.”

Otto alone seemed assured of the spot where excavations should take place, and so he went straightaway to a certain spot within the church premises where he directly ordered the dig to begin. As though ordained by providence, the excavations were immediately successful. The first (and briefest) account of the miraculous inventio of 1000 is by an exact contemporary of Otto, Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (975-1018):

The Emperor was in some doubt as to where the bones of Charlemagne ought to be reposing; he [nevertheless] stealthily broke through the pavement [*rupto clam pavimento*, that is, in the atrium; see Fig. h], digging [*foedere*] just where these should have been, and they were indeed found right at the royal throne [*haec in solio regio inventa sunt*]. [Afterwards] he replaced with the greatest reverence the golden cross, which had been hung around the neck of him [Charlemagne], as well as the preserved portions of his vestments.¹²

Besides being considerably longer, the other two accounts differ from Thietmar’s inasmuch as they interject a much greater sense of drama. This heightened dramatic presentation befitted the nature of the miraculous epiphany on Pentecost, a feast-day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the devoutly awed Disciples of Christ on a Sunday, and fifty days after the first Easter, the one historically marking His ascent to heaven. Even though one of the other two chroniclers, Adémar de Chabannes, was himself apparently not an eye-witness (rather a later compiler), their complementary accounts both provide the circumstantial, putatively “ocular,” evidence visibly linking together the miraculously preserved effigy of the dead, but still highly venerated Emperor—before whom the stunned witnesses genuflected, as though to a saint.

Geschichte, 46 (1998), 381-430 (see esp. 389-92, 398-406, 410-20, 429).

12 Thietmar, *Theitmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, in R. Holtzmann, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, IX (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlag, 1955), 185-7.

The second account is by Count Otto of Lomello, clearly stated here to have been a participant, and so a privileged eyewitness to the spectacular encounter. In his report (transcribed in the *Chronicon Novaliciense*), the following, highly picturesque details regarding the epiphany of the dead Charlemagne are given:

After many years of study, the Emperor Otto III came to the spot where it had been adjudged by him that the [remains of the] entombed Charlemagne rested. Thus he finally came down to the site of that sepulcher [ad locum sepulture]; accompanied by two bishops and Count Otto of Lomello, the Emperor [Otto III] himself was the fourth member of the party. Count Lomello himself narrated the matter:

“Thus we entered into that place and we directly went to Charlemagne. He was, however, not lying down, such as is the custom with the bodies of other deceased persons [*non enim jacebat ut mos est aliorum defunctorum corpora*]; he was instead sitting upon a throne—and just as a living person might [*sed in quandam cathedram ceu vivus residebat*]!

His head was regally covered by a crown of gold [coronam auream erat coronatus] and his hands were covered with gloves, through which the nails had proceeded to grow, and in one hand he held a scepter [*sceptrum. . . . tenens in manibus*]. There was, however, placed above his body a stoutly built, cottage-like structure made from granite and marble [*erat autem supra se tugurium ex calce et marmoribus valde compositum*]. We had to break a hole through this structure in order to reach his body. Once we had arrived at the place where his body was found, we began to perceive the strongest odor [that of the “balsam and musk” described elsewhere by Adémar]. Immediately, we fell to worshipping him by genuflecting profoundly [*adoravimus ergo eum statim poplitibus flexis ac jenua*].

The Emperor Otto then covered his body with white vestments, cut his nails, and repaired all that was in need of it around him. None of the parts of his body had, however, decayed in the slightest [*nil vero ex artibus suis putrescendo adhuc defecerat*], even though a little bit off the end of his nose was missing; this the Emperor ordered restored with a piece of gold. After [finally] removing one of the teeth from his mouth, the Emperor then had the hut-like architectural covering rebuilt as it had been [*readeficato tuguriolo*], and then he left it behind.”¹³

‡The imagery of Otto III personally tending the body of the saint is both relevant and instructive for the construction of a new tomb for Charlemagne as a site of imperial authority. The tradition

13 Otto of Lomello, *Chronicon Novaliciense*, in *MGH: Scriptores*, VII, 106.

of the “invention” of saints’ relics and bodies was well established in medieval hagiography. Within the narrative of a saint’s vita, revisiting the tomb to ascertain the incorrupt state of that saint’s body was often crucial to proving the individual’s sanctity and the validity of the miracles that occurred at the tomb. Bede’s life of the holy Etheldreda, an abbess, former queen, and twice-married perpetual virgin, contained a lengthy description of the condition of her body when her tomb was re-opened sixteen years after the saint’s death. Etheldreda’s bones were scheduled for translation to the abbey church and their encasement in a new coffin. Upon reopening the tomb, the abbess, Etheldreda’s sister Sexburga, and a few others proceeded to wash the body and prepare it for its reburial; the saint’s successors not only found the saint’s corpse perfectly preserved and uncorrupted, but also noticed that it had been improved in death; a tumor that a physician had treated, but not cured, at the end of Etheldreda’s life had healed almost completely, with only the traces of a scar remaining.¹⁴

In hagiography, the *inventio* (discovery) or translation of a saint’s body illustrated the powerful connections possible between the holy corpse and its “inventor;” the uncorrupted body proved the individual’s sanctity and verified the authenticity of the tomb. Such moments of “translation” involved more than merely the movement of the saint; they transferred the power and authority over the relics to the new caretaker, the “inventor” of the holy tomb and corpse, appropriating the process of the *inventio* as a new funeral and a new locus of power for its celebrants.

Both Carolingian and Ottonian rulers were familiar with the tremendous symbolic force of the corporeal engagement with saints’ relics. Einhard’s *Translation of the Relics of Marcellinus and Peter*

14 The section marked by ‡ at beginning and end is added by Katherine A. Clark, Assistant Professor of History at State University of New York, College at Brockport. Professor Clark was a pre-publication reader of this article, recommending its publication. One of her comments suggested Professor Moffitt might point out how Otto III’s actions mirrored those of the tradition of revisiting, and re-opening saint’s tombs. When informed of Professor Moffitt’s death, and asked by the editor to flesh out this section, she kindly agreed to do so. For Bede’s account of the re-opening of Etheldreda’s tomb see J.A. Giles, *The Venerable Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of England* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 204-207. Etheldreda also is known as Ethythryth.

provided many anecdotes in which both Einhard and his assistants observed the handling of the exhumed relics and read the saints' holy intentions through the signs they manifested. Einhard spent the later years of Louis the Pious reign in devotion and service to the saints, acquiring saints' relics from Rome for use in the churches Einhard built on lands which Louis the Pious had granted to him and to his wife, Emma.¹⁵ Einhard related that even when stealing relics from their Roman resting place near the Via Labicana, the relic-hunters did so with an invocation to Jesus and the "holy martyrs," and "raised the martyr's body [Marcellinus] with the greatest reverence, as was fitting, wrapped it in a pure muslim cloth, and gave it to the deacon to carry and hold."¹⁶

Einhard took great pains to place the saints in the resting places they desired, including observing a miracle in which they indicated they did not want to remain in a certain church, and fashioning new coffins for the saints, which in turn generated a new miracle in which the old caskets were filled with a miraculous liquid.¹⁷ In the Ottonian period, the bishop Egbert's elevation of the rediscovered bones of St. Celsus typified what Thomas Head described as that powerful Ottonian bishop's archbishop's "innovative flair for drama, as well as his innate appreciation for the material, indeed corporal character of relics."¹⁸

The anecdote from the *Chronicon Novalicense* describing Otto III's tending of the incorrupt body of Charlemagne thus engaged the language of hagiography and applied it to the holy "family" of Charlemagne and Otto (as emperors) in the construction of the Karlsgrab. The anecdote suggests a filial piety that bound the two houses—bitter enemies in Charlemagne's own time—through

15 At Michelstadt-Steinback and ultimately at Mülheim (later renamed Seligenstadt); David Appelby, "Einhard, Translation of the Relics of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter," in *Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Thomas Head (Routledge: London, 2000), 199-200. See also Julia H.M. Smith, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, v. 13 (2003), 55-77.

16 "... invocato domino nostro Iuesu Christo et adoratis sanctis martyribus . . . Quod ut par erat cum summa veneratione suscipientes levant et munda sindone involutum diacono ferendum atque servandum tradunt," *Translatio et Miracula SS. Marcellini et Petri auctore Einhardo*, *Monumenta*, in *Monumenta Scriptores in folio* v. 15, 1.4, 241-241; originally translated by Barrett Wendel, ed., David Appelby in, *Medieval Hagiography*, 208.

17 Ibid., *Translatio* 1.10, 243-4.

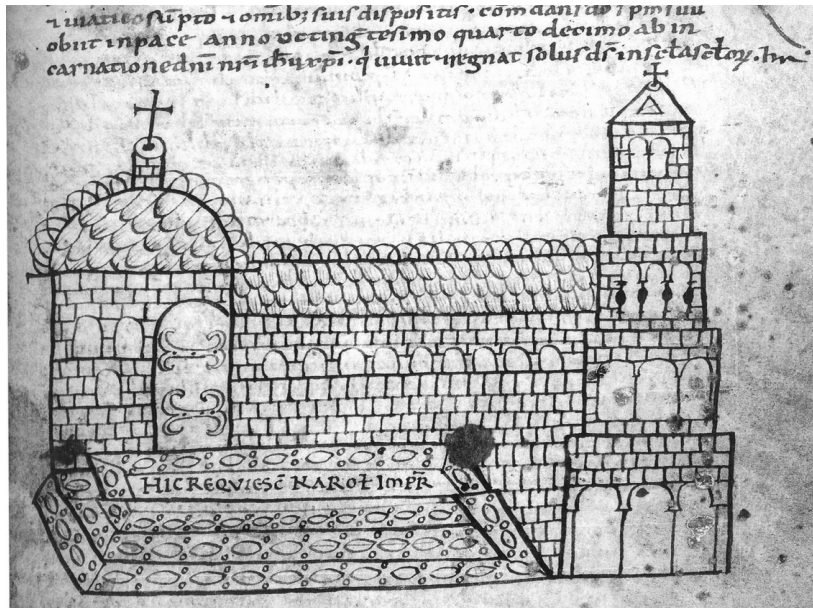
18 Thomas Head, "Art and Artifice in Ottonian Trier," *Gesta*, v. 36 (1977), 71.

the shared bond of rulership. And it must be remembered that Otto III did descend from Charlemagne through his paternal great-grandmother, Mathilda, wife of Henry the Fowler and mother of Otto the Great. The passage from *Chronicon Novaliciense* concludes by establishing a clear link between Otto's caretaking and the new architecture that Charlemagne's Ottonian successors would introduce.‡

After [finally] removing one of the teeth from his mouth, the Emperor then had the hut-like architectural covering rebuilt [reaedificato tuguriolo], and then he left it behind.¹⁹

In this case, and in the context of other evidence that will be later introduced, it may be argued that the phrase *reaedificato tuguriolo* included the “rebuilding” of a domed canopy that was placed over the original “hut-like” Edicule (Fig. c).

Figure c: Adémar de Chabannes, “*Hic requiescit Karolus imperator.*” Edicule over the Tomb of Charlemagne rebuilt in 1000,” pen drawing, ca. 1020-1034. Vatican Library (Ms. Lat. 263, fol. 235r).



That earlier “little house” built over the original burial site of Charlemagne, in its turn, probably closely resembled the architectural symbol placed upon Charlemagne’s coinage, where it impressively signifies “the Christian religion” (Fig. d). The latter motif, a

19 *Chronicon Novaliciense*, 106.

diminutive tempietto with a pedimented porch containing a Greek cross, as has been recently demonstrated, intentionally duplicates a famous sacred structure, namely the architectural covering, an “Edicule,” reverently placed over the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem by Constantine the Great around 326 (Fig. e).²⁰



Figure d: Silver denarius of Charlemagne, ca. 806, reverse. A temple front with a cross enclosed in the pedimented porch, representing the “Edicule” erected by Constantine the Great in 326 over the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem. The structure now is used to symbolize “Christiana Religio.” The obverse bears a portrait of Charlemagne with the inscription “Karolus Imp. Aug.”

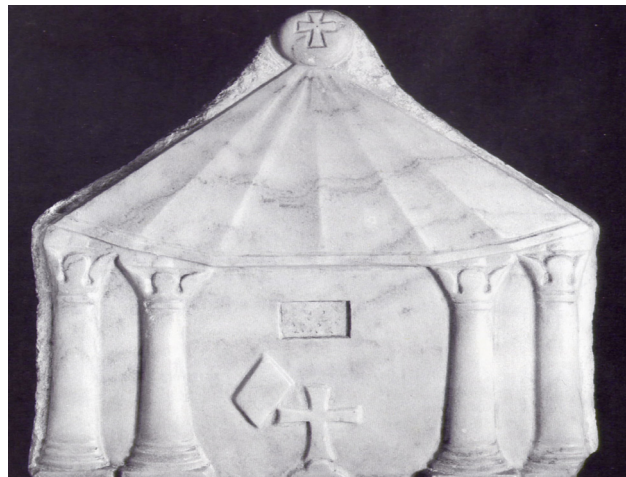


Figure e: Constantine's Edicule in Jerusalem depicted on a marble plaque from a Syrian church, ca. 600. Washington DC, Dumbarton Oaks Collection.

²⁰ For this iconographic identification, see J. Moffitt, “Charlemagne's *Denarius*, Constantine's *Edicule*, and the *Vera Crux*,” *Quidditas*, 28 (2007), 23-60.

The final, also the longest, account of the miraculous epiphany of the erect, enthroned and crowned, incorruptible corpse of Charlemagne in 1000 is provided by Adémar de Chabannes (ca. 988-1034).²¹ Adémar properly begins his lengthy account with a relation of the interment of Charlemagne in the year 814. At that time, at least so we are told here, the majestic body of the enthroned Emperor had already been itself deliberately converted into a kind of “reliquary-effigy,” particularly so since it was put together so as to contain a precious piece of the True Cross—*et in [ea] lignum Crucis positum*—presumably the relic discovered five centuries earlier in Jerusalem by Helena, the sainted mother of Constantine the Great. According to Adémar’s description,

Thus the most reverent and glorious Emperor Charlemagne died whilst wintering in Aachen [*Aquisgranus*], where he was buried. This occurred in his seventy-first year; he ruled for forty-seven years in all, forty-three in Italy, but as Emperor [only] fourteen in all. He excelled in all human deeds. On the 15th of February [814], he was buried in Aachen at that Basilica of the Mother of God [*sepultus Aquis in basilica Dei genitricis*], which he himself had ordered built.

Next comes a detailed description of the corpse as it had supposedly been arranged in 814, and again depicting it as being enthroned and placed within a vaulted crypt, and Adémar also describes the emperor as having appeared to Otto’s entourage as though he was still living:

His body, after having been embalmed [*aromatizatum*] and positioned upon his golden throne [*in sede aurea sedens positus est*], had been placed within a rounded crypt [*in curvatura sepulchri*]. Strapped to his side was a golden sword, and a golden gospel-book was clasped in his hands [resting] upon his knees [*evangelium aureum tenens in manibus et genibus*]. His shoulders were leaning against the throne [*reclinatis humeris*].

21 Adémar is a controversial figure; for a detailed analysis of his occasional dubiety, see R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Adémar of Charbanne*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995). For more on the problems associated with medieval texts relating historical events, with those possibly also generically attending the three texts dealing with the finding of the body of Charlemagne, see Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

in cathedra]. His head, linked by a golden chain to the diadem [*diadema*], was proudly erect [*capite honeste erecto*]. A piece of the True Cross [*lignum Crucis*] was deposited within the diadem. They had filled the crypt with aromatic spices: pigments, balsam and musk [*pigmentis, balsamo et musgo*] and treasures. The body was dressed in imperial regalia and robes [*indumentis imperialibus*] and a veil [*sudarium*] was placed on his face under the diadem. The scepter and shield of gold, blessed by Pope Leo [III], were placed before him, and then his sepulcher was once again sealed [*et sigillatum est sepulchrum ei*].²²

But how did Otto III come to know exactly where to look for the miraculously preserved corpse? According to Adémar,

by means of a dream [*per somnum*] the Emperor Otto was advised [*monitus est*] to raise the body of the Emperor Charlemagne, who had been buried in Aachen [*quod Aquis humatus est*]. Nevertheless, since it had been obliterated by time, the exact place where it lay had long since been forgotten. After fasting for three days, [Otto] then found him in the place [*inventus est eo loco*] perceived by the emperor in his dream [*quem per visum cognoverat imperator*]. He [Charlemagne] was found seated upon a golden throne [*sedens in aurea cathedra*] that had been emplaced within an arched crypt [*intra arcuatam speluncam*] built before [or in front of] the basilica dedicated to Mary [*infra basilicam Marie*]. His head bore a crown made of purest gold [*coronatus corona ex auro purissimo*]. The body was itself found to be uncorrupted [*et ipsum corpus incorruptum inventum est*]. After being raised, it was exhibited to the populace [*quod levatum populis demonstratum est*].

Adémar's narrative concludes with the subsequent re-interment in the year 1000 of the miracle-working and saintly Emperor—but now within the basilica (Fig. a-2 above):

The body of Charlemagne was then re-interred in the right [or southern] transept of the basilica, behind the altar dedicated to St. John the Baptist. A magnificent golden crypt was erected directly above it [*et cripta aurea super illud mirifica est fabricata*]; this spot soon became renowned as being a place of many signs and miracles [*multisque signis et miraculis clarescere cepit*]. There was, however, no thought of a solemn feast day to be put aside for him [Charlemagne], that is, besides the usual rituals [*communi more*] for the anniversaries of the dead.²³

22 Adémar, *Chronicon*, in *Adémar de Chavannes: Chronique*, ed. J. Chavanon (Paris: Picard, 1897), 105.

23 Adémar, *Chronicon*, 153-54. Brief mention should be made here of the "Prosepina Sarcophagus," now exhibited at Aachen and long supposed to have been the resting place of Charlemagne's remains. If it had ever served that function, then I believe that employ-

As evidence for the historical symbiosis of Charlemagne to Constantine, there is another striking convergence encountered in the manner of Charlemagne's burial at Aachen, and this was a purposeful act of material mimesis (and like other points raised here, this too has gone unnoticed). After his death in 337, Constantine became, as Philippe Ariès points out, "the first layman to be buried almost inside a church," namely, under the pavement of "the 'vestibule,' or uncovered entrance court, also known as the "*paradisum*." Hence, it was Constantine who had set the imperial precedent for being buried in atrio, in his case, within the forecourt (atrium) of the Church of the Twelve Apostles (also called the *Apostoleion* or *Hagii Apostoloi*) in Constantinople.²⁴ It is additionally recognized that it was already a Merovingian tradition that, for the design of their royal mausoleums, they followed "le modèle de Saints-Apôtres de Constantinople."²⁵ The Constantinian tomb-model was also familiar to the Carolingians who succeeded the Merovingians.

We learn the details from Constantine's biographer, Eusebius. In his *Vita Constantini* (IV, 60), the Greek historian had observed that Constantine "had, in fact, made a choice of this very spot in the prospect of his own death . . . and, having long before secretly formed this resolution, he now consecrated this church to the Apostles." And the end result (IV, 71) was "that the earthly tabernacle of this thrice blessed soul, according to his own earnest wish, was per-

ment only happened after the re-interment in 1000. Perhaps the first mention of this late-classical era work is as a *tumulus marmoreus*, and is found in a document dating to the reign of Frederick Barbarossa (1152-90); for this description, see T. Lindner, *Die Fabel von der Bestattung Karls des Grossen* (Aachen: Cremer, 1893), 63, concluding that "*ist es nicht möglich dass der Sarkophag [served to contain] die Leiche Karls.*"

24 P. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 52. For the term *paradisum* standing for the atrium, see J. Fleming and H. Honour, "Paradise," *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 165-6, the entry also notes that the atrium of St. Peter's in Rome was so designated.

25 A. Dierkens, "Autour de la tombe de Charlemagne: Considérations sur les sépultures et les funérailles des souverains carolingiens et des membres de leur famille," *Byzantion*, 61 (1991), 156-80. The quotation is from p.163.

mitted to share the monument of the Apostles.”²⁶ It is also of interest to point out that Eusebius also states (*Vita*, IV, 69) that the Roman Senate, learning of Constantine’s death, had ordered “paintings to his memory” to be placed in an unnamed building in Rome (probably the Lateran Palace). As recalled by Eusebius, “the design of these pictures embodied a representation of heaven itself, and depicted the Emperor reposing [meaning ‘enthroned’] in an ethereal mansion above the celestial vault.”²⁷ This textual image bears a generic resemblance to the enthroned disposition of Charlemagne’s body as it appeared in 1000, and as described above by eyewitnesses. And, a Latin translation made by Rufinus, Eusebius’s *Vita Constantini* was well known in northern Europe before the Carolingian period.²⁸

In his multi-volume *Epitome of History* (ca. 1120), the Byzantine scholar John Zonaras recorded the burial of Constantine in atrio at entrance to the *Apostoleion*. In *De topographia Constantinopoleos* (1561) by Petrus Gyllius (Pierre Gilles, 1490-1555), the first truly scholarly description of the Imperial capitol, Gyllius begins with a description of the *Apostoleion*:

Around the church there was a fine court lying open to the air. The porticos that enclosed it stood on a quadrangle.” Later, however, “Justinian [ruled 527-65] ordered it to be taken down [and] nothing remains of this church at present. No, not even its foundations.

Next, Gyllius refers to Zonaras’ description of the final resting place of the first Christian emperor:

The body of Constantine, lying in a golden coffin, was brought into the city by his intimate friends and was buried in the cloister of the Church of the Apostles. This mausoleum, Zonaras says, was built by Constantius II for the interment of his father.²⁹

²⁶ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, in Schaff and Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, I, 555, 558.

²⁷ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 558. The Greek text is transcribed in S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 32, n. 173; for an analysis of the iconographic development of the pictorial motif of “The Emperor Enthroned on the Globe,” including the one cited by Eusebius, MacCormack, 127-32.

²⁸ For the fame of Eusebius among the Carolingians, see G. Henderson, *Early Medieval: Style and Civilisation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 214-16.

²⁹ P. Gilles, *The Antiquities of Constantinople*, ed. R. G. Musto (New York: Italica Press, 1988), 172-3. Gilles erroneously claimed “Zonaras never read Eusebius” in so identifying the final burial site. But Eusebius, who died around 339, could not (of course) have known of Constantius’ later, most likely after 340, re-interment in atrio of the body of his illustrious father.

According to the old descriptions, the Mausoleum of Constantine erected by his son Constantius alongside the *Apostoleion* was domed and had a central plan; it was called a heroon or *omphalos*. Constantius was interred there in 361.³⁰ A likely model for the tomb was the octagonal, domed, Mausoleum of Diocletian (d. 313), also erected in an atrium within Diocletian's palace at Spalato (the modern Split, in Croatia) where part of it still stands, as later, in the seventh century, converted into an octagon-plan church (Fig. f).³¹



Figure f: Diocletian's octagonal mausoleum, now part of the Cathedral of St. Doimus at Split, Croatia.

Five centuries later, and also following the precedent set

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the Mausoleum of Constantine built by Constantius II, see J. Arce, *Funus Imperatorum: Los funerales de los emperadores romanos* (Madrid: Alianza, 1988), 110-13, 123, 161.

³¹ On this structure, see Arce, 102-4, fig. 33.

in 768 by his father Pepin, whose body had also been interred in front of the Abbey-Church of St. Denis (*ante limina basilicae*),³² Charlemagne was himself also to be buried beneath the pavement of an atrium, in this case, under the forecourt of his Palatine Chapel at Aachen.³³ The geography of the royal complex, which has since been largely altered, may be best understood by reference to a ground plan of the entire palace complex (see Fig. a above) and to a model recreating its appearance at time of Charlemagne (Fig. g).

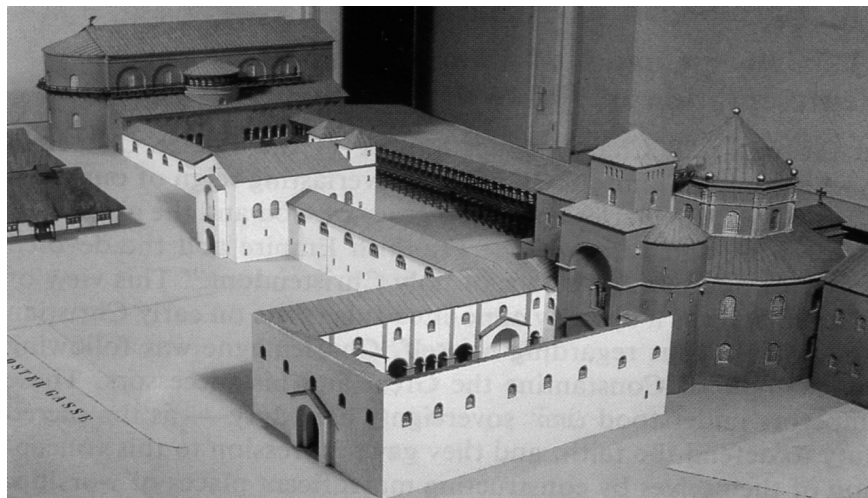


Figure g: Model of the appearance of the royal complex at Aachen around 814; the atrium is in the foreground. Aachen, Burg Frankenberg Museum.

At the top (that is, to the north) there had been erected the Royal Hall, a *Sala Regis* or *Aula Palatina* (see Fig. a-3 above); it was built in 788, and as consciously modeled on Constantine's Palatine Hall in near-by Trier. From this Palatine Hall (later demolished and now the site of the Aachen City Hall (*Rathaus*), a covered colonnade then ran directly south to the Palace Chapel (*Pfalzkapelle*, built

32 For three Latin texts describing Pepin's interment in front of St. Denis (*extra in introitu valvarum*) see H. Beumann, "*Grab und Thron Karl des Grossen in Aachen*," in W. Braunsfels, ed., *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, v. IV, *Das Nachleben* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1967-8), 9-38; see esp. notes 147, 151, 152.

33 For this conclusion see L. Hugot, "*Baugeschichtliches zum Grab Karls des Grossen*," *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 52 (1984), 13-28.

ca. 792-805 (see Fig. a-2 above), and an immense, rectangular and high-walled atrium ran due west of Charlemagne's chapel (see Fig. a-1 above, and Fig. h below).

The chronicler Thietmar, the bishop of Merseburg, mentions that, besides a "public throne" sited in the atrium, there was another *thronus regalis* that was later placed within the chapel, in the upper gallery. But the fact that the original site of Charlemagne's sepulcher also was within the atrium—and not within the chapel (where it was indeed placed after 1000)—was not recognized until the mid-twentieth century when the results of the archeological investigations of Felix Kreusch were published³⁴ (see Fig. h below). In the course of directing excavations in the now completely altered space of the original atrium, Kreusch (then the *Dombaumeister* in Aachen) located the foundations for matching, hemispherical recessions—*exedrae*, each with a radius of over three meters; these faced one another in the long-since demolished north and south walls (*Mauerwerk*). These niche-like structures were likely the remains of the footings for a transverse narthex (*Quernarthex*) erected directly west of the massive, concave or niche-like, entrance-way presently leading into the Palatine Chapel. According to Leo Hugot (another *Dombaumeister*), directly at the entrance to the *Pfalzkapelle*, there was originally erected an *augmentum* (a portico, *Laube* in German) with two columns in *antis* supporting an arch crowned with a pitched roof.³⁵ Together, the three-part ensemble at the east end of the atrium formed a *trichoros*, functioning like a *frons scenae* (theatrical backdrop) for the ritual enactment of imperial dramas.³⁶

Axial lines radiating at right-angles from the twin, north-south niches flanking the similarly recessed church façade pointed to a spot on the east-to-west, mid-axial line of the capacious rectangular forecourt, measuring 17 meters wide and running 36 meters from east to west. This convergence ("X" on Fig. h) marks the spot

34 See F. Kreusch, "Ueber Pfalzkapelle und Atrium zur Zeit Karls des Großen," in *Dom zu Aachen, Beiträge zur Baugeschichte*, IV (1958), 56-151, and his, "Kirche, Atrium und Porticus der Aachener Pfalz," in W. Braunfels, ed., *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, v. III, *Karolingische Kunst*, (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1965), 463-533.

35 See Hugot, 1984, Abb. 18: "Rekonstruierte Laube in Aachen."

36 For a pictorial reconstruction of the scenographic *trichoros* ensemble, see Kreusch, Abb. 1.

that has been identified as the site of Charlemagne's "public regal throne"[*publicus thronus regalis*]. Yet another ceremonial throne was placed inside the chapel, where it can still be seen on the mezzanine floor (but this one was evidently in place only after 936³⁷), and a third throne was placed in the Aula, or audience hall, to the north (Fig. a-3 above).³⁸ Notker Balbulus, another early biographer of Charlemagne, briefly described the ritual perambulations between one throne and the other as follows:

Our glorious Emperor Charlemagne had the habit of going to lauds at night in a long flowing cloak, the use and the very name of which are now forgotten. When the early-morning hymns were over, he would then return to his room and dress himself in his imperial robes ready for the morning functions. All the churchmen used to come ready robed to these services, which took place just before dawn, either within the church itself or in an anteroom, which was then called the outer court.³⁹

The region of the "public throne" was also the location within the open-air atrium that had evidently been chosen for the subterranean chamber—the *Karlsgrab*—which contained the enthroned body of Charlemagne, and such as this was to be discovered on Pentecost in 1000 (and such as that dramatic encounter has been described in detail). As summarized by Helmut Beumann,⁴⁰ according to these findings, the *publicus thronus regalis* (marked with an "X" in Fig. h) was placed on an invisible line drawn due west from the mid-axis of the church and six meters into the atrium.⁴¹ The tomb

37 L. Hugot, *Der Dom zu Aachen: Ein Führer* (Aachen: Einhard, 1993), 27-29 (this throne was apparently erected for the coronation of Otto I, but Hugot also notes that this most likely replaced an earlier throne, with no base, that had actually been used by Charlemagne). For the physical evidence supporting the conclusion that the assembly of the marble "*Karlsthron*" is most likely (at least in part) of a post-Carolingian or Ottonian date, see Kramp, ed., *Krönungen: Könige in Aachen*, 38, 219-20, 236.

38 For the various sites of the royal thrones, see Beumann, "*Grab und Thron*," 25-31. In note 144, Beumann cites the specialized studies dealing with this problem.

39 Notker, in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, 128-9.

40 For the specifics following on the site of the *Karlsgrab*, see again Beumann, "*Grab und Thron*," esp. 29, 35.

41 Writing in 2000 (Kramp, ed., *Krönungen: Könige in Aachen*, 182), Max Kerner similarly affirms that "*dieses Karlsgrab nicht in engeren Innenraum der Marienkirche, sondern an deren Schwelle, im vorgelagerten Atrium, zu suchen sein, wo spätestens seit 936 auch ein (wenn nicht gar der heute noch erhaltene) Karlsthron Aufnahme gefunden hat.*"

(marked with an “O” in Fig. h) was then placed upon the same axis-line, but some three meters further to the west from the throne; the grave itself is estimated to have been around 2.3 meters long.⁴²

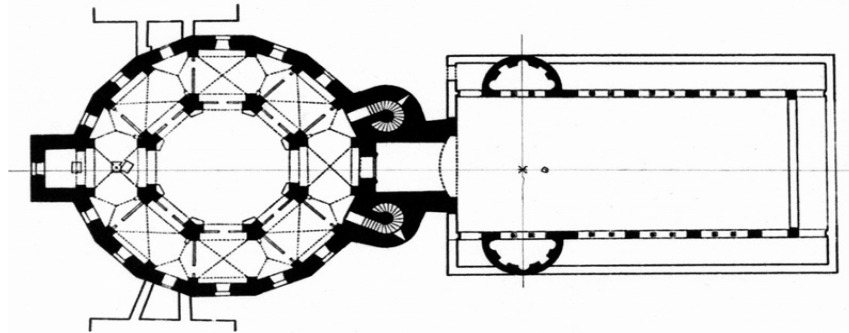


Figure h: Ground plan of the atrium originally placed in front of the Palatine Chapel, showing the approximate location of the “public regal throne” (marked by “X”) and the Karlsgrab (marked by “O”). North at the top.

According to the current consensus of archaeologically informed opinion regarding the ceremonial ensemble in the atrium,⁴³ both the grave (and its arched superstructure, sometimes called the archisolium) and the adjacent throne (a solium, with a baldacchino covering) were torn down, razed to the ground, during the Norman occupation of Aachen in 881-82.⁴⁴ However, perhaps quite soon af-

42 To sum up Beumann’s argument in “Grab und Thron,” 35: “. . . auf der Mittelachse der Kirche . . . und dicht beim Mittelpunkt der Exedra [im Atrium] einen Ort [war] der ursprüngliche Standort des Karlsthrones [und] liegt etwa 6 m westlich. . . . Das Grab selbst würde bei einer Länge von etwa 2,30 m mit seiner westlichen Begrenzung noch immer von der Rückseite eines dort stationierten Thrones mehr als 3 m entfernt sein.”

43 For instance, according to Alain Dierkens (“Autour de la tombe de Charlemagne,” 178), “solium désigne en fait la construction qui abritait le trône [des carolingiens] et qui, l’augmentum placé devant le Westbau carolingien [de la chapelle], s’avançait légèrement dans l’atrium, à l’intersection des axes du Westbau et de deux absides semi-circulaires latérales. C’est sous cette ‘laube’ qui aurait aussi abrité un autel, qu’aurait été enterré Charlemagne: sa tombe, ante limina, serait donc l’équivalent de celle du Pépin le Bref à Saint-Denis. . . . Sous le Westbau actuel, juste derrière la laube, a été retrouvée une fosse de grande taille (2,55 sur 1,10 mètres), qui convient exactement au sarcophage [dit de Proserpine] conservé (2,10 x 0,64 mètres). . . . La tombe de Charlemagne, surmontée d’un arc doré (celui de l’augmentum) avait été creusée devant l’entrée de l’église du palais.” For further details on the placement of the Karlsgrab in the atrium at Aachen, see again Beumann, “Grab und Thron,” esp. 9, 29-30, 34-5.

44 Citing old documents, Dierkens (, p. 176, n. 74), notes that, in 881, the Palatine Chapel at Aachen had been turned into a “horse stable” by the Norman invaders.

ter that disastrous event, it appears that the solium (but evidently not the archisolium) had been re-erected. Thietmar, in an account of the Emperor Otto I receiving in 936 an acclamation from the nobles in the atrium, declares that the emperor was then observed sitting upon an imperial throne (*sedes imperialis*), quite possibly on the same site as Charlemagne's "public throne," just before the coronation ceremony began in the church behind him.⁴⁵

**Several scholars have noted how the Ottonians associated themselves with Charlemagne. For instance, Rudolf Köpke and Ernst Dümmler refer to Otto's coronation at Aachen as an event meant to reference Charlemagne. His son, Otto II also was crowned king at Aachen in 961, as was his grandson Otto III, whose coronation there at the age of three was on Christmas Day, 983, perhaps a reference to Charlemagne's imperial coronation at Rome on that same day in 800. Carl Erdmann notes that father, son, and grandson, at least as described by Ottonian scholars like Hroswitha of Gandersheim and Gerbert of Aurillac (later Pope Sylvester II), stressed the notion of their "renewal" (*renovatio*) of the Roman Empire, bringing into mind the succession from Constantine to Charlemagne to the Ottonian monarchs. Ottonian scholars and ecclesiastical advisors to the Ottonian monarchs were steeped in the works and world-views passed down to them from Carolingian scholars such as Alcuin and Einhard. Probably Gerbert of Aurillac, tutor to Otto III, took the name Sylvester II when becoming pope to stress the comparison between himself and Otto III to Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.

We know Sylvester II based certain claims to territory upon the so-called Donation of Constantine (forged in the eighth century), and that Carolingian ecclesiastics were aware of the Donation. Indeed, the Donation probably influenced the territorial and political rights granted Popes Stephen II and Hadrian I in the Donations of Pepin (754) and Charlemagne (774). Walter Ullman notes that Otto III felt a particular attachment to Charlemagne, including an image clearly meant to suggest Charlemagne on Otto's imperial seal.^{46**}

45 Beumann, "Grab und Thron," 25, and giving Thietmar's Latin text, n. 118.

46 The section marked by ** at beginning and end is added by James H. Forse, editor of

Nonetheless, by 1000, almost 200 years after his interment, re-establishing the original location of Charlemagne's tomb obviously required a diligent search on the part of Emperor Otto III. In any event, we now know that the historical precedent for the placement of the grave of Charles the Great had been set centuries before by the interment in Constantinople of Constantine "*in atrio*."

Although it has long since vanished, we may now attempt a reconstruction of the superstructure erected above the tomb of Charlemagne as it might have looked in the year 1000. Our only surviving pictorial evidence is a drawing done around 1030 by Adémar of Chabannes⁴⁷ (see Fig. c above). Here the chronicler of the discovery of the body of Charlemagne in 1000 had sketched the Edicule containing the tomb, and just as that structure was explicitly identified by Adémar with an inscription: *Hic requiescit Karolus imperator*—"Here lies the Emperor Charles." Shown rising above a three-stepped plinth, and given its symbolic importance, the domed grave-marker is drawn in disproportionate scale to the surrounding architecture; the graphic result is that the outsize tomb serves to identify the diminutive and only schematically rendered church, rather than vice versa. Helmut Beumann finds this drawing to be further confirmation for his argument that "Charlemagne was buried at the entrance of his church," that is, "*in atrio*" (see Fig. h above).⁴⁸

Quidditas, to flesh out a theme Professor Moffitt raised, but was unable to address before his death. On the coronations of Otto I and II at Aachen as creating links to Charlemagne, see, for example Rudolf Köpke and Ernst Dümmler, *Kaiser Otto der Grosse* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962, rpt. of 1876 ed.), 27-38, 322-3. On renovatio see Carl Erdmann, "*Das ottonische Reich als Imperium Romanum*," *Deutsches Archiv für Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 6 (1943), 421-6; Walter Ullman, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1963), 229-246; Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society. Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1979), 77-85. Henry Meyr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany. The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 6-8, 18-21, 177-8, stresses the influence of Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* on Ottonian scholars and their blending of classical and Carolingian learning, and Otto I's focus on Aachen as Charlemagne's imperial center. On the "Donations" see *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), v. 1: 50-1, v. 3: 14, 439-6, 484-5, v. 8: 333-4. For the importance of Carolingian scholars to Ottonian ecclesiastics, and how these figures pursued common goals, see James H. Forse, "Religious Drama and Ecclesiastical Reform in the Tenth Century," *Early Theatre*, 5 (2002), 47-70.

47 The author of the sketch was identified by Danielle Gaborite-Chopin, "*Un dessin de l'église d'Aix-la-Chapelle par Adémar de Chabannes dans un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*," *Cahiers archéologiques*, 14 (1964), 233-5.

48 Beumann, "*Grab und Thron*," 36-38: "*Die einer solchen Darstellung zugrunde lieg-*

I argue that the *Karlsgrab* represented a specific type of funerary edifice. Its structure, as described by Otto of Lomello, was in the shape of a *turgurium*, or a *turguriolum*, or “little hut.” Another name for such a structure is Edicule, or “little house.” In the general sense, we find in the spatial arrangement encountered in Charlemagne’s *Pfalzkapelle*, where a sacred subterranean tomb is covered by a stone canopy and placed before a basilica, the usual pattern of the medieval *martyrium*, or martyr’s tomb. These commemorative structures, the objects of pilgrimages, were also called *aediculae*, meaning “little houses.”⁴⁹ The archetype for all those structures was, of course, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.⁵⁰

Given Charlemagne’s well-documented reverence for, and emulation of, the first Christian emperor, it is highly significant in this context that the primordial prototype for this venerable edifice had been constructed by Constantine the Great directly above the subterranean tomb of Christ, which he piously enclosed within a small-scaled, colonnaded and circular monument, a *tugurium*-like tomb-covering then known as the Edicule⁵¹ (see Fig. e above).

As has been recently pointed out, this is the same structure that Charlemagne had placed upon his silver denarius (ca. 806), where it emblematically represents “the Christian religion,” *Christiana religio*.⁵² (see Fig. d above). This initially modest building formed the exemplary spiritual core of what was later known to European as the *Santo Sepolcro* or *Sainte Sépulcre*—and to the Byzantines as the *Anastasis* (“Resurrection” or “Ascent”)—an architectur-

ende Information könnte besagt haben, daß Karl der Große vor der Schwelle seiner Kirche bestattet worden ist.” Beumann also notes: “*die Zeichnung selbst so gut wie keine Ähnlichkeit mit dem Aachener Bau erkennen läßt.*”

49 For this archetypal architectural genre, see A. Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique*, 2 vs. (Paris: Collège de France, 1943-46).

50 For the post-Constantinian evolution of the *Santo Sepulcro*, see J. A. Ramírez, *Construcciones ilusorias: Arquitecturas descritas, arquitecturas pintadas* (Madrid: Alianza, 1983), 56-8.

51 For complete details on the Edicule and the rest of the Constantinian complex erected at Golgotha, see M. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2000).

52 See Moffitt, “Denarius.”

ally evolving, symbolic structure later to become of great emotional significance for medieval Europe. Among other repercussions, the figurative Tomb of Christ later became a *raison d'être* for armies of pious Europeans embarking upon the various Crusades designed to “liberate” the “Holy Land” from its “Saracen” overlords (campaigns still very much on the minds of modern Moslems, some of whom still vigorously pursue their medieval jihad against the West).⁵³

The manner of the crucial—even archetypal—inventio (discovery) by Constantine of the tomb of Christ, and its subsequent architectural embellishment with the Edicule, were described by Eusebius. As the Greek historian explained (*Vita Constantini*, III, 25), Constantine, “moved in spirit by the Savior himself,” and just as Otto III was to do centuries later, sought to find the long-lost location of a highly prized holy tomb. Specifically, Constantine “judged it incumbent on him to make the blessed locality of our Savior’s resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all.” This momentous event is usually dated to the year 326. Immediately thereafter, states Eusebius (III, 33), to the west of Jerusalem, “the emperor now began to rear a monument to the Savior’s victory over death with rich and lavish magnificence. It may be that this was that second and new Jerusalem spoken of in the predictions of the prophets” (as described in Revelation 21). To fulfill these ends, Eusebius explains (III, 29) Constantine “commanded that a house of prayer worthy of the worship of God should be erected near [or alongside] the Savior’s tomb on a scale of rich and royal greatness.”

This was just the first step in an architectural complex erected by the Emperor upon the Mount Golgotha. (see Fig. b above) The work ordered by Constantine proceeded in three stages (III, 34-40):

First of all, then, he adorned the sacred cave itself, as the chief part of the whole work This monument [the Edicule: Fig. a-1], therefore, was first of all [to be built], as the chief part of the whole, [and it was] beautified with rare columns, and was profusely enriched with the most splendid decorations of every kind. The next object of his attention was a space of ground [di-

53 For some idea of the immense later cultural and artistic importance of the Holy Sepulcher, see Moffitt, “*Anastasis-Templum*” (with ample bibliography, and deriving much inspiration from the research of Juan Antonio Ramírez).

rectly east and adjacent to the tomb] of great extent, and open to the pure air of heaven. This atrium he adorned with a pavement of finely polished stone [Fig. a-3], and he had it enclosed on three sides with porticos of great length. At the side opposite to the cave [and the intervening atrium], which was located at the eastern side [of the complex], the church itself [the *Martyrium*; Fig. a-6] was erected. This was a noble work rising to a vast height, and of great extent, both in length and breadth.⁵⁴

Stated concisely, Eusebius's description of a typological three-part architectural complex, the tomb-atrium-commemorative church, and with these components being carefully aligned, and with all three parts running sequentially west-to-east, conforms exactly to what is known about the typology of the later architectural layout in Aachen in 1000 (see Figs. g, h above).

This physical alignment between one symbolic structure (in Jerusalem) and another (in Aachen), with the latter deliberately replicating the former five hundred years later, makes perfect sense. In the two centuries preceding the dramatic epiphany of the sainted Charlemagne's body in the year 1000, a considerable body of writings appeared which attested to a direct relationship between Charlemagne and the Holy Land. For example, around the year 968, the monk Benedict of Mount Soracte wrote an imaginative chronicle in which he pictured Charlemagne mounting an expedition to liberate Jerusalem from the Saracens, and the Moslem leader then makes the Frankish emperor the protector of the Holy Sepulcher at the very moment when he visits the tomb of Christ to pay homage.⁵⁵ According to another earlier (ca. 884), and more widely broadcast, account (Notker Balbulus' *De Carolo Magno*, II, 9), Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid Caliph (786-809), had voluntarily given Charlemagne jurisdiction over the entire Holy Land.⁵⁶ Writing earlier (ca. 829 and 836), Einhard was more explicit regarding Charlemagne's sovereignty over the *Anastasis* in Jerusalem (*Vita Karoli Magni*, II, 16):

With Harun-al-Rashid, King of the Persians, who held almost the whole of the East in fee (always excepting India), Charlemagne was on such friendly terms that Harun valued his goodwill more than the approval of all the other kings and princes

54 Eusebius, *Nicene Fathers*, v. I, 527-9.

55 Benedict, as cited in S. G. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 72.

56 Notker, in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, 148.

in the entire world, and considered that he alone was worthy of being honored and propitiated with gifts. When Charlemagne's messengers, whom he had sent with offerings to the most Holy Sepulcher of our Lord and Savior and to the place of His resurrection, came to Harun and told him of their master's intention, he not only granted all that was asked of him but he even went so far as to agree that this sacred scene of our redemption [the Anastasis] should be placed under Charlemagne's own jurisdiction.

Immediately after politically linking the Holy Sepulcher to the Frankish emperor, Einhard then sets about (II, 17) to describe the contemporary linkage, that is, Charlemagne's own architectural projects, and "outstanding among these, one might claim, is the great church of the Holy Mother of God at Aachen [*Pfalzkapelle*], which is a really remarkable construction" (see again Figs. c, g, h above).⁵⁷ Moreover, well known to the Carolingians would have been the schematic plan drawn in 670 by Alculph of the Holy Sepulcher; here Constantine's Edicule (see Fig. e above) was expressly labeled a *tegurium rotundum*, a "circular shelter."⁵⁸ In the event, this distinctive terminology characterizing none other than Constantine's Edicule now explains why the accounts of the discovery of the Karlsgrab in 1000 repeatedly described it as being a *tugurium*.

A ground plan of the architectural ensemble designed by Constantine (dedicated 335) shows the Edicule (Fig. b-1) looked east across an atrium (Fig. b-3), 20 meters deep and called the "Court before the Cross." The atrium faced the *Martyrium*, a basilica erected over Mount Calvary (Fig. b-6).⁵⁹ By this time, however, the Edicule had become covered over, and hidden by the towering Rotunda of the *Anastasis* (Fig. b-2), a domed structure over 20 meters in height. To sum up, it was at Golgotha that there was first set into place the archetypal three-part architectural scheme—the tomb-to--atrium-to--commemorative church—that was to be piously repeated at Aachen half a millennium later (Figs. a, b, h). However, rather than the

57 Einhard, in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, 70-1..

58 See R. Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V (1942), 1-33, Plate 2, fig. C, reproducing Alculph's plan of the Holy Sepulcher in 670.

59 For complete details on the Constantinian complex erected at Golgotha, see Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*..

gable-roofed Edicule (Fig. e), Adémar's drawing of the *Karlsgrab* (Fig. c) shows the bulbous dome of the Rotunda (Fig. b-2) which covered the Edicule around 335; it was, in fact, typical of post-Carolingian iconography to show the *Anastasis* as a domed structure⁶⁰

To conclude, with this evidence in hand, we have a clearer understanding of the topographical and, more importantly, the deeper Christological significance of the architectural features originally belonging to Charlemagne's long-lost, and then "rediscovered" sepulcher in Aachen. Symbolically as well as physically, the *Karlsgrab* served to link the Emperor Constantine the Great to the Emperor Charles the Great and, in turn, Charles the Great to the imperial claims of the Ottonian Dynasty.

Professor John Francis Moffitt (1940-2008) died on 1 June 2008 at his home in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Dr. Moffitt was Professor of Art History Emeritus at New Mexico State University. He published 20 books, hundreds of scholarly articles, and presented lectures across the U.S. and abroad.

*Professor Moffitt was born in San Francisco, earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the California College of Arts and Crafts (1962), and his Master of Arts in Art History from California State University, San Francisco (1963). He moved to Spain, earning a Diploma de Doctor (PhD.) in Art History from the Universidad de Madrid (1966). Spain remained a second home; he traveled there frequently. In 2007 he presented a lecture on the painting, *Dama de Elche*, a Spanish national icon, and the subject of his fourth book, "Art Forgery: The Case of the Lady of Elche" (1995).*

His many books reflect his eclectic scholarship. Among them: Spanish Painting (1973), O Brave New People: The European Invention of the American Indian (1996), Picturing Extraterrestrials: Alien Images in Modern Mass Culture (2003), Alchemist of the Avant-Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp (2003), Caravaggio in Context: Learned Naturalism and Renaissance Humanism (2004), Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Painting, the Legend and Reality (2006), and The Arts in Spain: Ancient to Postmodern (1999, reprinted by Thames and Hudson, London, 2005). Moffitt also translated numerous works such as Juan Antonio Ramírez's Architecture for the Screen: A Critical Study of Set Design in Hollywood's Golden Age (2004).

Professor Moffitt also was an accomplished visual artist, whose work has been shown in more than two-dozen exhibitions coast-to-coast. His media included: oils, watercolors, drawings, and manipulated digital photographs, see www.starving-artists.net/~JackMoffitt.

60 On this iconographic distinction, see Moffitt, "Anastasis-Templum."



*Golden Reliquary Bust of Charlemagne
(c. 1350 by An Unknown Goldsmith)
Commissioned by Emperor Charles IV
to House Charlemagne's Skull*

**Dancing in the Shadows:
Ritual, Drama and the performance of Baptisms in the Digby
Conversion of St. Paul and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*.**

Matthew C. Hansen

Boise State University

The anonymous Digby Conversion of St. Paul aims at historical verisimilitude in order to distance the on-stage baptism the play contains from the rite as performed in early sixteenth-century English churches. Philip Massinger's The Renegado (published 1624), presenting the conversion and baptism of a Muslim woman, employs specific details to establish the baptism performed on stage as a rite that, while efficacious within the contexts of the play, is markedly different in substantive performance than the form of baptism presented in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer. Both plays frame the dramatically significant and sensitive performance of the religious rite in ways that draw deliberate attention to its distance from the rite that the respective audiences of these plays would have understood and known as a significant reality of their everyday lives. In framing these on-stage ritual performances in these ways the authors demonstrate a powerful awareness of how ritual language operates according to the much later codification and explanation of language effects articulated in speech act theory.

*Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow*

*T.S. Eliot
The Hollow Men (1925)¹*

It has become a kind of commonplace of much New Historicist criticism that the onstage performance of religious rituals on the early-modern English stage was legally forbidden. One can certainly find instances of scholars asserting this to be the case, but those who make such claims fail to provide evidence of an explicit declaration of illegality.² Perhaps this supposed prohibition stems from a

1 T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), 91-2.

2 In her excellent edition of *Romeo and Juliet* in the Bedford/St. Martin's Texts and Contexts series, Dymphna Callaghan twice proclaims (neither time with any citation)

very broadly defined understanding of Elizabeth I's 16 May 1559 proclamation that led to the licensing of plays, wherein performers of interludes were expressly forbidden to perform plays "wherein either matters of religion or of the gouernaunce of the estate of the common weale shalbe handled or treated, beyng no meete matters to be wrytten or treated vpon, but by men of auctoritie, learning and wisdom, nor to be handled before any audience but of graue and discreete persons."³ The 27 May 1606 "Acte to restraine Abuses of Players" which made it an offence to "jestingly or prophanely speake or use the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghoste or of the Trinitie" in a stage play, on penalty of a £10 fine, reveals an awareness that the language of the stage had obvious limits.⁴ The Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer that opens the 1559 Prayer Book suggests that the presentation on-stage of any rite described in the book may be forbidden:

And also that if there shall happen any contempte or irreuerence to be used in the ceremonies or rites of the Church by the misusing of the orders appointed in this book, the Queen's Majesty may, by the like advice of the said comissioners or metropolitan, ordain and publish such further ceremonies or rites as may be most for the advancement of God's glory, the edifying of his Church, and the due reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments.⁵

Is the presentation of the rite of Holy Matrimony or the Ministration of Baptism inside a play necessarily a "misuse" or a deliberate act of "contempte or irreuerence" according to the Act for Uniformity?

Potentially, yes, but that it clearly or certainly was, is less decided. There is also the suggestion here that if the Prayer Book

that the on-stage performance of religious ritual was expressly prohibited: "Similarly, the religious rituals, prohibited by law from being portrayed on stage (the wedding, the funeral) had also undergone remarkable transformation in the Reformed church" (34). "Religious rituals were, in any case, prohibited from the Renaissance stage" (305). This is presumably a kind of extension of the claims of Louis Montrose and Stephen Greenblatt regarding the role of a secular theater in Renaissance England providing a substitute for the lost rituals of Medieval Catholicism.

3 E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1923), 4:263.

4 Chambers, 4:338-9.

5 Booty, 13.

rites are so abused as to be stripped of their significance that the Church will devise new ceremonies to replace those that have been rendered meaningless through abuse. If, as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose contend, religious ritual performance was evacuated by the emergence of a secular age and replaced by the performances of the theater, why did the Church not respond with a new set of rituals as the Act of Uniformity clearly reserved the authority to do?⁶

The absence of fully performed religious rituals on the Renaissance stage may be more plausibly understood as an act not of forced restraint issuing from a centralized authority but of self-imposed censorship emanating from veneration of ritual language and thus as an index of how early modern thinkers and writers internalized the power of speech acts and performatives – formulas of language that do not merely say or describe things but do things such as create obligation (in the case of a marriage, for example) or otherwise symbolically transform an individual through ritual signs, including language, and tokens.⁷

An example of the latter is the ritual of Christian baptism. In the wake of the Protestant Reformations in England, the on-stage representation of religious rituals such as marriages and baptism counted for a great deal and may indeed have come sufficiently close to the prohibited “matters of religion” singled out by Elizabeth I’s

6 Louis Montrose, “The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology,” *Helios* n.s. 7 (1980): 51-74; and Stephen Greenblatt, “Shakespeare and the Exorcists,” *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 94-128.

7 Current scholarship on the mechanisms of state censorship in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period suggests that the system was far less pervasive and successful than once thought; see especially Deborah Shuger, *Censorship And Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Important work informing my thinking on the effect of censorship on the representation of performative ritual language includes N.W. Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Cyndia S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); Cyndia S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001); Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority: Elizabethan and Jacobean Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990); Janet Clare, “Censorship and Negotiation” in Andrew Hadfield, ed., *Literature and Censorship in Renaissance England* (Houndmills; Palgrave, 2001) 17-30; and Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

1559 proclamation. Certainly there are no fully performed on-stage marriages in the extant corpus of dramatic texts from this period; but what of baptisms? While baptisms are largely absent, two texts—one that pre-dates the Elizabethan proclamation and one that follows it by approximately 60 years—reveal insights into the specific limits of what could and could not (whether as a result of state-sponsored censorship or self-restraint) be shown on stage as representations of the baptismal ritual.

The anonymous Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* aims at historical verisimilitude in order to distance the on-stage baptism from the rite as performed in early sixteenth-century English churches. Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (published 1624), presenting the conversion and baptism of a Muslim woman, employs specific details to establish the baptism performed on stage as a rite that, while efficacious within the contexts of the play, is markedly different in substantive performance from the form of baptism presented in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, the only sanctioned and recognized form of the ritual performance.

Both plays frame the dramatically significant and sensitive performance of the religious rite in ways that draw deliberate attention to its distance from the rite that the audiences of these plays would have understood and known as a significant reality of their everyday lives. Thomas M. Greene argues that the playful allusions to ritual and the *ad hoc* improvisations of alternate forms of ritual invented for inclusion in plays and texts of the Renaissance are parodic and constitute important evidence for the antilurgical thrust of the Reformation.⁸

I wish, however, to argue the opposite, to suggest that the

8 Thomas M. Greene, "Ceremonial Play and Parody in the Renaissance," in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark, Del., 1989), 284–85. See also in Douglas F. Rutledge, ed. *Ceremony and Text in the Renaissance*: "The power of ceremony, the magical efficacy of ceremony, was more subtly called into questioned [sic] by a half-conscious indifference or skepticism that seems to emerge in a variety of ceremonial contexts." (12–13). Although I fundamentally disagree with Greene's conclusion that all substitute rituals constitute parody and his assertion that speech act theory is insufficient to explain the complex hermeneutics of ritual in drama, I am nonetheless indebted to his groundbreaking work in historical semiotics.

absence from the stage of the actual rituals of the church such as the Ministration of Baptism and the alternate or substitute forms of ritual that playwrights in the early modern period invent to stand in the stead of the actual Prayer Book rites represent not a disrespect for the sanctioned rituals, but a deep-seated veneration of them. By clearly demarcating the limits of what theatrical language can and cannot do, and contrasting that with what ritual language in its proper context does, early modern playwrights maintained the separate and special otherness of ritual language and ensured that religious ritual did not become mere display.

The on-stage presentation of a sacramental ritual runs the risk of de-valuing the proper performance of the ritual in its sanctioned time and place; aware of this risk, the Digby author relies on historical details and other coded signals to diffuse these tensions and to present not the genuine ritual but a shadow of it—the shadow of a shadow. Similarly, Massinger frames the moment of on-stage baptism in his play in ways that markedly distance it from the rite as performed in the contexts sanctioned by the Book of Common Prayer. Both playwrights found the sort of shadow between motion and act, between idea and reality that could contain both the didactic and entertainment ends they sought without unraveling the hermeneutics of either ritual performance or dramatic fiction.

Scholars studying *The Conversion of St. Paul* in the Digby manuscript have articulated a range of views concerning the mechanics of staging the play and have in particular been concerned with determining where the audience stood in relationship to the action performed. Audience position and either fixity or mobility is no doubt important to the uptake of the play but scholarship to date has not fully focused on what exactly is being taken up and in particular how the conversion and baptism of the fictionalized St. Paul relates to baptismal practice and meaning in the church.⁹

9 See F.J. Furnivall, *The Digby Plays*. New Shakespeare Society, 1882; rptd. EETS.ES 120. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1896); rptd. 1930, 1960; Glynne Wickham, "The Staging of Saint Plays in England" in *The Medieval Drama*, ed. Sandro Sticca (Albany: SUNY Press, 1972), 99-119; Mary del Villar, "Some Approaches to the Medieval English Saint's Play," *RORD* 15/16 (1972-73), 83-91; Glynne Wickham, ed., *English Moral Interludes* (London: Dent, 1976); Donald C. Baker, J.L. Murphy, and L.B. Hall, eds., *The Late Medieval Religious*

Whether the audience remains stationary or moves to various stations to experience the play need not influence the central issue I wish to explore here, which deals with the staging of the conversion and subsequent baptism of Saul. While audience progression may link the play more concretely to the ritual actions of prayer inside of the church, I maintain that the play's structure reveals that the key moments of conversion and baptism—however important their didactic function of recalling the individual audience members' own faith and baptism—are presented in a way that reaches more towards historical verisimilitude than towards the on-stage performance of sacramental ritual.

In addition to debates over the practical details of staging these plays, scholarly attention to date has been paid to some of the practicalities and hermeneutical challenges of presenting miracles on stage; however, far less consideration has been given to the potential disruptions of systems of significance in presenting religious ritual action inside of a dramatic fiction. Darryll Grantley has explored the likely stage effects employed in late-medieval theatrical practice to portray miraculous events. Drawing on play texts and contemporary accounts, Grantley concludes that these stage effects were likely both complex and sophisticated; since the stage effects “themselves appeared to be miraculous, they contributed to the credibility of the wonders on stage.”¹⁰ While a late-medieval English theatre audience was primed to believe in miracles, surely, no matter how great the stage effects, these audiences would not actually confuse the pyrotechnics of the stage for a genuine miracle.

In the Digby text of *The Conversion of St. Paul* there is not only miracle—God speaks and exercises divine power through lightning and other effects—there is also ritual. The story told is that of the biblical Apostle Paul, who, prior to his conversion, was a powerful force in the persecution of early Christians. His

Plays (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), xxviii; Clifford Davidson, “The Middle English Saint Play and Its Iconography” in *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute/Western Michigan UP, 1986).

10 Darryll Grantley, “Producing Miracles,” *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. Paula Neuss (London: D.S. Brewer, 1983), 78.

conversion represents a miracle, and his baptism the ritualized, formal acceptance of divine will.

Tension and anxiety over the nature of drama, and in particular the relationship between the church's performative rituals and drama, are not necessarily strictly the provenance of twentieth-century literary scholars and cultural theorists. In their own right the writers and producers of late medieval and early modern English drama were keenly aware of these tensions.

Moreover, their critics certainly were. The principal anti-theatrical treatise of the earlier period is the well known *A tretise of miraclis pleyinge*. The anonymous author of *A tretise* identifies a central tension, the conflict between word and deed, in the fictional representation of biblical miracles:

sithen miraclis of Crist and of hise seintis weren thus efectuel,
as by oure bileve we ben certein, no man shulde usen on bourde
and pleye the miraclis and werkis that Crist so ernystfully
wroughte to oure helthe. For whoever so dothe, he errith in the
byleve, reversith Crist, and scornyth God.¹¹

The author of this treatise clearly distrusts the sort of amazing stage effects employed for the on-stage representation of miracles, not so much suggesting that the audience would confuse them for genuine miracles but that any counterfeit of divine action is *de facto* against the will of God.

How can the miraculous works of Christ and, perhaps of more importance, the ritual representations that the Church uses to recreate those miracles in the present be presented on stage and not be seen as a reversal, a devaluing of not only the original historical event but the ritualized action that seeks to recreate the significance of Christian miracles for believers? The author of *A tretise* does not single out rituals specifically, but in his concern (echoing Plutarch's redaction of Plato's comments on mimesis) does identify the kind of hermeneutic challenge that is presented in the potential disruption of the relationship between word and deed that infuses ritual words

11 Clifford Davidson, ed. *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute/Western Michigan UP, 1993), 93.

and actions with actionable power when these rituals are framed by a performative fiction.¹²

So sithen thise miraculis pleyinge been oneley singnis, love
without dedis, they ben not onely contrarious to the worschipe
of God—that is both in sign and in dede . . .¹³

Here the author has his finger on a central theory of ritual practice: “ritualization” occurs through the empowered interaction of word and deed; ritual is both thought *and* action.¹⁴ The one without the other—words without belief, belief without performed words and actions—is void of its complete significance.

A sermon, for example, clearly aims to instruct and inspire through impassioned, believed words. But it is not a ritual *per se*. While sermons can and often do taken on a performative aspect they do not rely on the magical power of invoked words to achieve a transformative end. Like a sermon, ritual words uttered out of context—outside of the appropriate ritual form or frame—do not enact ritualized power in the same way that ritual words uttered by appropriate ritual actors, who believe in the potential of ritualization through specific words and deeds, do. “[F]or these miraculis pleyinge been verrey leeing as they ben signis without dede and for they been verrey idlenesse.”¹⁵

There is indeed a theory of ritual and dramatic performance underpinning the concerns of *A tretise of miraculis pleyinge*, a theory that has greater complexity than has generally been acknowledged.¹⁶

12 Barish, *Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, 34.

13 Davidson, *Tretise*, 99.

14 I take the term “Ritualization” from (and use it as defined by) Catherine Bell in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 112.

15 Davidson, *Tretise*, 99.

16 Another version of this theory would later be articulated by the Prague Circle in the 1920s. Jindrich Honzl, avant-garde theatre director and one of the central artist/theorists of the Prague Circle asserts: “Ritual actions not connected with a real, nonsymbolic action exceed the limits of the normal, disrupt the individual’s mental health or the stability of social relations and have an antisocial effect.” See Jindrich Honzl, “Ritual and Theatre,” *The Prague School: Selected Writings, 1929-1946*, ed. Peter Steiner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 149.

The author(s?) of the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* was, like the author of *A tretise of miraculis pleyinge*, acutely aware of the hermeneutic challenge of presenting a serious church ritual inside the frame of a holiday play and the important role that context and convention play in generating one kind of meaning while avoiding other kinds of meaning.¹⁷

Victor I. Scherb has commented on the frame structure of *The Conversion of St. Paul* arguing that the central conversion scene is framed on either side by the stable groom scene and Paul's baptism.¹⁸ Scherb reads the stable groom scene as a comic foreshadowing of Paul's conversion in which a proud man is made humble and changed to a "new lore."¹⁹ The frame around the central conversion of Paul is then completed by Paul's baptism; the baptism itself is a completion of the divine will through human actors.²⁰ Scherb further argues that the presentation of the baptism serves a larger purpose:

Baptism is, of course the means by which Christians are initiated into the community of faith and, in effect, become converts. Paul's experience is thus linked to the audience's own and, by extension "þis blyssyd sacrament" in which they have also participated provides them with their own moment on the road to Damascus.²¹

While Scherb's discussion of the play's frame structure is useful, he arguably does not go far enough in exploring the complexity of this structure and the details of the scenes that comprise the frame of the central conversion episode.

17 As J.L. Austin would much later make explicit, context is supremely important to the efficacy of speech acts. See Austin's "Rule A.1" in *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, second ed., 1962) 14.

18 Victor I. Scherb, "Frame Structure in The Conversion of St. Paul," *Comparative Drama*, 26 (1992), 122-39.

19 Ibid., 131.

20 Ibid., 133.

21 Ibid., 133.

Scherb is certainly right that one way in which the frame structure creates meaning is to comically foreshadow the conversion and then to translate the meaning of Paul's conversion into a reminder of personal conversion and salvation through a remembrance of baptism. However, if the stable groom scene is a comic foreshadowing of Paul's conversion and baptism, it is also a parody of it. More recently, Irena Janicka-Swidarska has argued that the stable groom scene is only "loosely connected with the main subject, through the motif of the horse."²² On the contrary, I would argue, following Scherb, that the structure of the play reveals a far more considered and intricately linked exploration of ritual and anti-ritual through parody.

The stable groom arrives on the scene and attempts to affect a kind of self-generated social conversion. The stable groom's scene is linked with ritual baptism, serving as one bookend around the central conversion scene, the other bookend being a representation of the ritual itself. The details of the stable groom scene also reveal a social fantasy in which the stable groom can enact his own social advancement by proclamation, or, more specifically, denial of his social status. The details of Saul's conversion as presented here are likewise rife with social and power significance. Saul is here clearly presented as a member of the knightly class; his conversion brings him low—literally and figuratively—and through his baptism he is brought into a kind of universal equality with all believers. It is necessary to note that the writer of the Digby play was not alone in seeing baptism—much like death and the Last Judgment—as a great equalizer of Humankind. One of the Patristic writers, St. John Chrysostom in his *Baptismal Instructions* notes that

It is certainly marvelous and contrary to expectation, but this rite does away with all difference and distinction of rank. Even if a man happens to enjoy worldly honor, if he happens to glitter with wealth, if he boasts of high lineage or the glory which is his in this world, he stands side by side with the beggar and with him who is clothed in rags, and many a time with the blind and

22 Irena Janicka-Swidarska, "Two saints' plays/conversion plays from Bodleian Ms Digby 133." *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies*, 38 (2002), 279-94, 281.

the lame. Nor is he disgusted by this, because he knows that all these difference find no place in the world of the spirit, where one looks only for a soul that is well disposed.²³

The Digby stable groom has a far more modest vision. He does not dream so big as to believe that he can suddenly move from the serving class to the ruling class or to a state of universal equality, but does dream of transcending his humble existence when he asserts (to another servant) that he is no hosteler but rather a gentleman's servant (lines 89-91). His fellow servant undoes his claim by describing a kind of anti-baptism:

In good fayth, I wenyd yow had bene an hosteler verely!
I sye suche another jentylman wyth yow a barowful bare
Of horsedowng and doggys tordys, and sych other gere.
And how yt happenyd a mervelous chance betyde:
Your felow was not suer of foote, and yet he went very brode,
Butt in a cow tord both dyd slyde! (96-101)²⁴

Here the stable groom, by some sort of "mervolus chance" or quasi-miracle, falls and is immersed in horse and dog excrement. These earthly (and *earthy*) elements begrime the stable groom and reaffirm his identity. The narrated scene thus works as an inversion of both the conversion scene which follows it where, by divine miracle, Saul falls from his horse and is converted from his Christian-persecuting ways, *and* is a parody of the baptism ritual (including the staged version which follows Saul's conversion) where the candidate is immersed in water infused with the Holy Spirit and washed clean in such a way as to become a new person. There is no conversion here and no transformation. Indeed, this is an anti-ritual, an everyday event, for surely as a stable groom this servant dealt in feces on a regular basis—which serves to deny the stable groom the transformation he attempts to enact through words. There is a divergence in word and deed here (although interestingly, we only "see" the stable groom's anti-baptism through the words of his fellow servant), a divergence

23 Paul W. Harkins, tr. *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions. Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation No. 31* (New York: Newman Press, 1963), 48.

24 All quotations and references are to The Digby Conversion of St. Paul in *Early English Drama: An Anthology*, ed. John C. Coldewey (New York: Garland, 1993) 164-185. Line numbers are listed parenthetically.

which I argue only continues as the drama goes on to present the biblically documented conversion and baptism of Saul.

The stable groom refuses to be undone by the assertions of his fellow servant, claiming that he has never seen him before. The stable groom twice denies his fellow servant, refusing to acknowledge his true identity and seems well on his way to at least a third denial when he as suddenly abandons his pretense of social transcendence. When the First Knight addresses the stable groom as such and commands him to do his job, the stable groom complies, reaffirming the social hierarchy not only through his actions, but also through his words. Word and deed are reconciled:

MILES 1: Now, stabyllgrom, shortly bryng forth away
The best horse, for owur lorde wyll ryde.
STABLE-GROOM: I am full redy.
Here ys a palfray,
There can no man a better bestryde
He wyll conducte owur lorde and gyde
Thorow the world; he ys sure and abyll
To bere a gentyllman, he [ys] esy and prophetabyll. (120-26)

Or are words and deeds truly reconciled here? This is, after all, the very horse that throws Saul and thus is instrumental in his conversion. Acknowledging a divine agency that is larger than any human power—presented in the drama as a “fervent” or flash of lightning—it is nonetheless tantalizing to read the unruliness of the horse as foreseen, if not somehow planned and anticipated, by the disaffected stable groom.²⁵ Independent of such difficult psychological character circumspection, however (how can we know what a fictional character truly does and does not know?), it is necessary to observe that the stable groom’s claims are, as in his own attempts at social advancement, comically ineffective.

Perhaps a further underlying chord to the humor in this scene rests in the significance of names and naming. The stable groom wants to be known as, and addressed as, a gentleman’s servant. The difference in response that the stable groom makes when addressed

25 The moment of Saul’s conversion was of considerable iconographic significance in the late-Middle Ages. See Davidson’s discussion of the visual elements and resonance with paintings and church windows in “The Middle English Saint Play and Its Iconography,” *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute/Western Michigan UP, 1986), especially 98-105.

as “hosteler” by his fellow servant and “stabyllgrom” by the First Knight is predicated on differences of class and power such that the entire scene operates as a conservative reminder that one must not over-reach their place in the social order.

Perhaps the joke is also a linguistic one lost to us in the recesses of time. Is this stable groom hostile towards the label “hosteler”? There is little evidence—apart perhaps from this scene—for any such connotative difference between “hosteler” and “stable groom.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition) cross-references “hostler” or the shortened form “ostler” with “groom.”

However, the *Middle English Dictionary* illuminates the possible sources of this term as an insult. While “hoster” (and later “hostiler”) is in use meaning an “innkeeper” from c. 1300, two other terms may have relevance here. The first is “hostiāri” (Latin ostiarius), a “Doorkeeper, *ostiary*, the lowest of the minor orders in the church” which is in use from 1475. The second is a secondary meaning for “hostiler” which can mean both an innkeeper in a general sense or perhaps more specifically a “brothel keeper” or even a “prostitute.”²⁶ The stable groom, by responding to a label with potentially negative connotations, seeks to reform and re-name himself.

To baptize is also to christen (as the word is used within the play at line 319) and thus to reform and re-name. A tertiary meaning of “christen” is also to give or receive a name at baptism. The *OED* dates the first usage of “christen” in this tertiary sense (to give or receive a name) to 1405. One such historical example of a new name received in baptism is the central figure of the Digby play, Saul. The play is consistent with the book of Acts, however, wherein the shift from pre-Christian Saul to Christian Paul is not immediately and explicitly linked with baptism but simply occurs several chapters later. The Digby playwright adheres to the details in Acts quite faithfully:

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who

26 See *Middle English Dictionary*, “hostiler” 2(b).

appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9: 17-19, NIV)

A few chapters later—specifically at Chapter 13, verse 9—a seemingly significant fact is dropped casually and in passing: “Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit . . .”

The fundamental change in individual name as a part of christening or baptism, if predicated on the story of Saul’s conversion and renaming as Paul, is far less explicit in the biblical details than one might expect. The accepted effects of baptism—transformation that is registered in part by a new name—is thus absent from the play. The stable groom attempts to transform and rename himself only to fail while the character of Saul is transformed in ways consistent with the Biblical record, but notably different from the rite and its effects as the audience would have known and witnessed it as part of the rituals of the church.

St. John Chrysostom’s *Baptismal Instructions* include the repeated injunction that candidates for baptism are baptized into Christ and thus put on Christ.²⁷ Chrysostom explains that the newly baptized are new creations through the power of the Water and the Word.²⁸ Chrysostom, glossing Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, explicitly asserts that “Faith in Christ and Baptism are a New Creation,” further explaining that this is not merely a change in appearance (although Chrysostom often uses the image of being newly-clothed and wearing new garments—a figurative and literal truth of the baptism) but that the change, the new creation, is fundamental.²⁹

27 Harkins, *Baptismal Instructions*, 41, 47, 176.

28 Ibid., 137-39.

29 Ibid., 71.

Within the drama, the use of a change in costume carries greater significance for communicating such a fundamental change. Saul, once converted sheds his costume, presumably either armor or rich garments signifying his class and station, for “dyscyplys wede” (S.D. 501). While Chrysostom does not point to individual re-naming as part of the ritual significance of baptism, he does suggest that those re-created through baptism take on the name of the Faithful and the Newly-Illumined. Moreover, it is the power of Christ’s name invoked that gives the ritual act of baptism its power.

Eamon Duffy discusses the power of the “vertu of names” and specifically the name of Christ as a charm and as ritual words.³⁰ The links to magic and superstition that the power of Christ’s name carried in the late Middle Ages in no way diminishes the power such a belief held in the popular imagination. Names and words held significant power. Such a belief is a prerequisite of course for ritualization; but words do not have power independent of their context, a reality to which the Digby author is clearly sensitive.

The significance of names within the ritual enactment of conversion and baptism then is slippery and so too in the context of the Digby play is the signification of a dramatic representation of conversion and baptism. The words of the rite as presented in the drama are strikingly real. Ananias confers “thys crystening”(319) upon Saul in order to purge him of sin and recreate him as whole, “*in nomine patris et filij et spiritus sancti, Amen*” (331). The words here invoke the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and as both Chrysostom’s *Baptismal Instructions*, *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* (c. 1357) and the theories of ritual practice codified by Bell all powerfully suggest, it is these very words that in proper context, provide the power for the ritual act to take place.

There is more to the ritual than merely the invocation of the Trinity, however. While crucial to the ritual, the words are not the sole constituent. Actors are needed of course, in this instance

³⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 - c.1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 284-5.

a candidate and a priest; and one crucial property is also required: water. Chrysostom discusses the nature of the water, its sanctification through the Holy Spirit and its spiritually cleansing and recreative powers no less than a dozen times.³¹ Another document more contemporary to the Digby plays than the writings of Chrysostom, *The Lay Folks' Catechism* (c. 1357), likewise stresses the significance of water in the rite, making the distinction that baptism must be done “anely in water, / For nanothir licour is leuefull tharfore.”³²

In the text of the Digby *Conversion* there are elements that we are left to speculate upon in terms of performance, the most crucial of which is the use of water. Saul, restored to sight, implores Ananias “at the watery streme / Baptyse me, hartely I the[e] prate, / Among your numbyr that I electe and chosen be may!” (308-10). Ananias then leads Saul “Onto this well of mych vertu” where he instructs him to kneel and then “crysten[s]” him as noted above. While several key elements are present it is crucial to note that the ritual as presented on stage does not appear to follow the precise form of words—apart from the Latin invocation of the Trinity—that comprised the official ritual. The contextual details of the ritually significant water are also suspect.

Coldewey glosses Ananias’s reference to “the watery streme” (308) and “this well of mych vertu” (311) to mean a font, and Clifford Davidson concurs, stating that: “While the text suggests that the baptism should take place at a stream or brook, the evidence of iconography would suggest that in fact some kind of baptismal font could have been used.”³³

The iconographic and more significantly the hermeneutic significance of such a property presents potentially momentous

31 Chrysostom appears to advocate adult baptism and full immersion – two ritual controversies that will not be discussed here but that are an important component of the larger historical and intellectual context of possible on-stage representations of baptism.

32 T. F. Simons and H.E. Nolloth, eds. *The Lay Folks' Catechism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), 62, lines 288-9.

33 Davidson, “Saint Play,” 102.

conflicts, however. An on-stage baptism at a well of some sort, or as Saul details, a stream or brook would heighten the scene's sense of historical removal from the audience's present. Moreover, the visual tableau created by the presence of stream or brook links Saul's baptism to the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. To move the baptism closer into the late-medieval Catholic Church would complicate the already complex relationship between drama and ritual unnecessarily.

Benjamin Griffin has suggested that we look to Saints plays as the precursors of the English History play; I would likewise maintain that a desire for historical representation—as opposed to a representation of lived ritual experience—is at the heart of this particular saint's play.³⁴ A genuine baptismal font, of course, would contain Holy Water, and while neither Chrysostom nor the *Lay Folks' Catechism* are explicit on the consecration of the baptismal water, the editor of Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions* points out that the *Apostolic Constitutions* as well as Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Jerusalem all stress the necessity of consecrated water in the baptism ritual.³⁵

The ritual power of baptism is, as Eamon Duffy has observed, powerfully linked to exorcism; Duffy asserts that medieval baptism was in fact as concerned with the expulsion of the Devil as it was with the ritual cleansing and reunification with God asserted in the baptismal liturgy. Elaborate prayers and ceremonies preceded the immersion of the child at the font. “These ceremonies centered on the exorcism and blessing of salt and of baptismal water, and finally of the child.”³⁶

If the water in the on-stage representation of Saul's baptism is that of a stream (real or somehow part of the stage scenery

34 Benjamin Griffin, “The Birth of the History Play: Saint, Sacrifice, and Reformation” SEL: *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 39 (1999), 217-37.

35 Harkins, *Baptismal Instructions*, 216-17 n. 22.

36 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 280.

through, for example, a backdrop) or a well and not a baptismal font, this perhaps serves as a coded language to the audience, reminding them simultaneously of the shadowy or representational nature of the performance and the historical remove of the scene being played. Such a performance is no less effective in reminding the audience of their own baptism, which is clearly part of the overall didactic purpose of the play as Scherb suggests. The distance in performativity between the ritual as witnessed inside the church walls and on the holiday stage maintains the difference between a dramatic representation of ritual and the genuine performance of that ritual; these details serve as a reminder for the audience that this is a dramatic performance and not a ritual performance. Moreover, this distance serves to protect and maintain the sanctity of the ritual performance; outside the frame of dramatic performance, when the complete ritual is performed by the appropriate clergy—those who are “in wit and in will for to gyff it” in the words of *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*—and not by mere players, it will retain its powers for ritualization.³⁷

Looking through the frame of a fictional performance then, the audience is required to distinguish between the historical Saul and the actor representing him, between the true rite of holy baptism (a ritual performance) and a fictional representation of it (a dramatic performance). The text provides subtle clues as to how this distance was likely achieved in performance, revealing the likelihood that the author was aware of these tensions. The ritual act of baptism inside the frame of a dramatic fiction is deliberately incomplete thus avoiding the problematic situation of a debasement of a significant ritual act.

The actor is not re-baptized although a near-enough approximation of the rite is achieved to portray the historical baptism of the biblical Saul.³⁸ This is not so much necessary because the

37 Simons and Nolloth, *Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 64, line 290.

38 Chrysostom specifically denies that a second baptism can bring about a second remission of sins (see 239 n. 49). *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* discusses the issue of a second baptism, insisting that in the form of the baptism if it

sal rightly be taken als halikirk teches . . .

audience lacks the sophistication to distinguish between fact and fiction as because in the *enactment* of the baptism, ritual fact is wholly predicated on the forms and context of words and the ritualized interaction of word and deed; if the words are truly to have power, if they are truly able to do the work that believers maintain that they do in their proper context, then either additional cues or contextual framing—or altogether different words—are necessary to prevent the properly performed and contextually-framed ritual utterances of being stripped of their transformative power.³⁹

A similar framing action is placed around the performance of an on-stage baptism in Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*. Like the baptism performed as part of the Digby *St. Paul*, the baptism performed as part of the dramatic action of Massinger's play is framed in ways that highlight its distance from the liturgically sanctioned ritual. Indeed, in one of the few articles published on this play Peter F. Mullaney argues that the "apparent seriousness" and "surface realism" of this performance is part of a larger pattern in the play whereby "religion is divorced from the real world and from human significance so as to become part of the artifice in plays that seek to move audiences rather than to inform them."⁴⁰

It is important first to look at the specific details of the

. . . that he that takes it
Be nouthir lered, ne of lawed, baptized before;
For if the prest be in were of him that sal take it,
Whethier he be baptized before or he be nought,
Than sall he say the woress upon this wise—
If thou be noght baptized, I baptize the
In the name of the the fadir and the son and the haligast.
(page 64, lines 292-8).

39 The fear of just such a stripping away of ritual power is suggestively what motivates revision of the Late Banns in Chester sometime in the later mid-sixteenth century (c. 1560s or 1570s) prohibiting the counterfeiting of ritual and specifically the baptism ritual. See Lawrence M. Clopper, "Lay and Clerical Impact on Civic Religious Drama and Ceremony" in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, eds. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989), 102-37; especially 103, 109.

40 Peter F. Mullaney, "Massinger's *The Renegado*: Religion in Stuart Tragicomedy," *Genre*, 5(1972), 138-52, 149.

“baptism” that is performed on-stage in Massinger’s play. After the illicit love of the Christian Vitelli and the Muslim niece of the Viceroy of Tunis, Donusa, is discovered, the two are to be executed. Vitelli urges Donusa to “Dye in my faith like me” (4.3.151) and she agrees, rejecting Mohammed: “Then thus I spit at *Mahomet*” (4.3.158), and consents to be baptized.⁴¹ In the scene immediately following, Vitelli consults Francisco, a Jesuit Priest, on the means of effecting a baptism, asking the priest “Whether in me a layman, without orders / It may not be religious and lawfull / As we goe to our deaths to doe that office?” (5.1.30-2). Francisco resolves him:

A question in it selfe, with much ease answer’d;
Midwiues vpon necessity performe it,
And Knights in Holy-Land fought for
The freedome of Hierusalem, when full
Of sweat, and enemies blood, haue made their Helmets
The fount, out of which with their holy hands
They drew that heauenly liquor: ’t was approu’d then
By the Holy Church, nor must I thinke it now
In you a worke less pious. (5.1.33-41)

What is thus established is an argument for the performance of the right *in extremis*, supporting, for the purposes of the plot, the efficacy of its performance based on precedent. Both precedent and eventual stage action are notably not the church ritual.

The imagined location of Donusa’s “baptism” is not inside a church; there is no font, no altar. The authority baptizing her is not an actor costumed as a priest and the language used to represent the ritual is decidedly not the language of the *Book of Common Prayer*. A servant enters with water; per the stage directions published with the play when printed in 1624, Vitelli “Throwes it on her face” as the symbolic cleansing and “baptism” that corresponds with his lines:

41 This and all subsequent quotation from *The Renegado* are taken from the *Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, 5 vs., ed. P. Edwards and C. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 2: 1-96

Throwne thus upon the forehead, it hath power
To purge those spots that cleave vpon the mind,
If thankfully receiu'd. (5.2.111-16)

Thus, while the action represented is symbolic of a baptism, the form is decidedly distant from the ritual with which Massinger's audience would be familiar. The demands of a verisimilar setting (a Muslim nation without Christian churches) and the overly dramatic nature of the play (the eponymous renegade, Antonio Grimaldi, redeems himself in the play's conclusion by rescuing Vitelli and Donusa, saving their lives and enabling them to return to Italy) lead the playwright to invent a substitute for the liturgically-sanctioned ritual. This substitute satisfies the needs of the plot without threatening to demean the church ritual as it makes no real attempt to put anything approximating the proscribed ritual on stage.

In between the two scenes I have discussed (4.3 and 5.2), we are told in passing, another ritual has been performed off stage: the marriage of Donusa and Vitelli—"the forme / And ceremony past" (5.2.59-60)—has been achieved with the exchange of vows, presumably under the supervision and authority of Francisco. But the actual ritual, like the actual ritual of baptism, is absent.

While there may be considerable dramatic and artistic (as well as chronological time) between the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* and Massinger's late-Jacobean *The Renegado*, they are linked by a sensitivity to the limits of what sorts of miracles and transformations—especially as subsequently embodied and codified as religious rituals—the theater can or will represent. The theater can not or will not borrow the script of sanctioned religious ritual performance and attempt to put that performance, imbued by the community with the power to transform in genuine ways, into the "as if" of theatrical performance. Both the *Conversion of St. Paul* and *The Renegado* provide us with texts deeply sensitive to the hermeneutic Gordian knot present in the presentation of words infused with ritual meaning inside of a dramatic entertainment

While a critical and theoretical vocabulary did not yet exist to identify some of the complexities of how ritual words convey meaning and how the elements of ritual can be deliberately manipulated to prevent the process of ritualization, those processes

nonetheless existed. In manipulating the details of ritual performance and dramatic performance, both Massinger and the Digby author signal their awareness of these processes and contribute to an ongoing dialogue on the construction of meaning through the ritual and non-ritual enactment of words and deeds. These playwrights clearly understood that between the idea and the reality there exists a shadowy space with enormous room for both significance and play.

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Conversion of Saint Paul: Jean Fouquet
Livre d'Heures d' Etienne Chevalier (c. 1450-1460)



***Utopia Transformed: The Calculated Indirection
of Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset****

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*Thomas Starkey's effort to employ guarded speech and to distance himself from some of the risky views discussed in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (1529-1536?) emulated similar features of Thomas More's Latin *Utopia* and, in fact, sought to improve on More's striking dialogue. Though doomed by the break between Henry VIII and Rome (and that between the king and Starkey's dialogue's chief speaker), this unfinished work exhibits a particularly ambitious and in some ways quite skillfully wrought humanist project.*

Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* has continued to provoke detailed and sophisticated analysis for nearly five centuries, but an early work by another author, which was intended as a kind of commentary on, and elaboration of, *Utopia*, has not been given its proper place in the record. This work was written by Thomas Starkey, a young Oxford humanist and close associate of Reginald Pole. Having studied in Italy for a number of years, Starkey decided to put forth his perspectives in a text emulating both the classical dialogue and *Utopia*, but also making the composition more accessible by using the English language.

Starkey's *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, a work clearly written in emulation of More's playful text, has generally escaped the attention of literary critics, though analysts of Tudor politics are increasingly finding it of interest. This lack of critical commentary has been mainly due to the inaccessibility of a reliable text before Thomas F. Mayer's 1989 edition and to the unfinished nature of Starkey's unique text.¹ Most of the work done on Starkey's *Dialogue*

1 Mayer's edition was preceded by those of Kathleen Burton (1948) and J. M. Cowper (1871). See Mayer's comments on these unsatisfactory editions in *Thomas Starkey: A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (Camden 4th Ser., 37. London: Royal Historical Society, 1989) xvi.

has in fact been done by readers, primarily historians or social theorists, for whom the text provides evidence of Italian political influence upon Tudor England, and Starkey's own evident sympathy with the artistic and philosophical dimensions of *Utopia* as Platonic dialogue has received little consideration.² This paper will argue that Starkey envisioned his own dialogue as a project that would both appropriate the anti-tyrannical Platonic literary technique of *Utopia* and extend its impact by minimizing its playful elements. Underlying this argument is the assumption that Starkey's *Dialogue* is itself engaged in an interlocution with More's dialogue that is sometimes adversarial. Though Starkey's literary effort remains frozen in draft form, it also remains a bold and original exploration of dialogical possibilities in an ominous decade, which had already seen brutal devastation done to two of the world's great cities.³

The date of composition of the *Dialogue* has been debated, but evidently the developments in the relationship between Henry VIII and Rome and particularly between the King and Reginald Pole eventually made the work impossible for Starkey to finish, since Pole, on whose moral authority Starkey's dialectic is grounded, became Henry's mortal enemy in 1536, and he must have been regarded with suspicion at least as early as the executions of Cardinal Fisher and Sir Thomas More in 1535. Mayer's view that the work was nearly all written "between 1529 and 1532" is based on speculative inferences about Starkey's intentions and on paleographical considerations including the paper on which the manuscript was written. This carefully formulated view possibly does not sufficiently consider

2 Mayer, for example, asserts, "Starkey's plans rested mainly on Aristotle and his Italian humanist followers" (*Thomas Starkey: A Dialogue* xiii). Walter M. Gordon explores the classical dimension of *Utopia* in "The Platonic Dramaturgy of Thomas More's Dialogues," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1978), 193-215. In her 1965 University of Colorado Ph.D. dissertation ("Thomas Starkey: Tudor Humanist"), Dorothy Cameron Jones thoughtfully adumbrated some of the fundamental dimensions of the dialogue genre: "In the dialogue there is intrinsic naturalness and liveliness which allows for variety in tone and expression, while the semblance of reality permits the writer to advance the thought of the work by the interplay of personality and character" (41-42). Jones, however, did not go on to explore the implications of these qualities of Starkey's work.

3 For the violence against Rome in 1527, see Luigi Guicciardini, *The Sack of Rome*, trans. and ed. by James H. McGregor (New York: Italica, 1993). For the violence against Tenochtitlan in 1521, see Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortes, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 485-530.

the likelihood that Starkey's intentions were mutable in the period between the Sack of Rome in 1527 and the arrival of Pole's attack on Henry's conduct in 1536, so scholars should probably note both Mayer's dates and those set forth earlier, as Mayer notes, by G. R. Elton, who "thought Starkey probably wrote it between 1532 and 1534 and revised it two years later."⁴

The most compelling evidence of Thomas Starkey's consciousness of Thomas More's *Utopia* appears immediately as the *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* opens. The character Thomas Lupset is visiting Reginald Pole (later Cardinal Pole and eventually Archbishop of Canterbury under Queen Mary), cousin of Henry VIII, at Pole's ancestral estate of Bisham. Lupset opens the conversation with great courtesy and a certain verbose diffidence, which vanishes as Pole invites him to speak further about what is on his mind. Lupset responds:

I have much & many tymys marvelyd resonyng wyth my selfe,
why you mastur pole aftur so many yerys spent in quyet studys
of letturys & lernyng, & aftur such expeyence of the manerys
of man, taken in dyvers partyss beyond the see, have not before
thys settylyd your selfe, . . . applyd your mynd to the handelyng
of the materys of the commyn wele here in our owne natyon to
the intent that, bothe your frendys & cuntrey myght now at the
last receyve & take some frute of your long studys wherin you
have spent your hole youth as I . . . ever toke hyt to the same
purpos & end (1).⁵

This passage, as a number of scholars have pointed out, clearly echoes the opening of the "dialogue of counsel" in the *Utopia*.⁶

⁴ Thomas Starkey: *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* x.

⁵ This and all quotations of Starkey are from Mayer's edition of the text. I have made no effort to reproduce any features of Mayer's apparatus, and I have silently provided occasional end-punctuation where necessary. In one exchange, I have for the sake of clarity put each speaker's words in separate paragraphs and placed speaker designations in bold type. James M. Pictor cites a passage following the one just cited and compares its language to that of one of Starkey's letters to Cromwell, pointing out that they share "The same humanistic ideal of knowledge's being perfect only when put to use for the good of the common weal," *Thomas Starkey's An Exhortation to the People, Instructing Them to Unity and Obedience: A Critical Edition* (New York: Garland, 1988), 62, n.7.

⁶ See Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 36. In an earlier article, Stanford E. Lehmberg's discussion of Starkey's debt to *Utopia* is particularly helpful, "English Humanists, the Reformation, and the Problem of Counsel," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 52 (1961), 74-91. Regarding the "dialogue of counsel," Romuald Ian

There, Peter Giles, impressed by Hythloday's knowledge of other nations, remarks,

Why, my dear Raphael, I wonder that you do not attach yourself to some king. I am sure there is none of them to whom you would not be very welcome because you are capable not only of entertaining a king with this learning and experience of men and places but also of furnishing him with examples and of assisting him with counsel. Thus, you would not only serve your own interests excellently but be of great assistance in the advancement of all your relatives and friends (55).

Although Giles suggests that Hythloday join the court of a king, while Lupset wants Pole to get involved with "the materys of the commyn wele" in England, both More's and Starkey's dialogues focus early upon the question of whether the educated man should apply himself to private studies or to political activity. If More's Latin *Utopia* embodies More's commitment to the latter, Starkey—who after all had before his eyes the example of More's rise to power—goes beyond More's example with his own political dialogue by composing the work in English and thus extending the audience of the work to a wider range of those who would be directly affected by reforms in England. Given the contemporary official resistance to putting Scripture into English (William Tyndale was in exile for his heretical activities, including his unauthorized translations), and, given the surprisingly radical nature of some of Starkey's characters' views, it looks as though Starkey was willing to throw himself into the thick of politics without much regard for his own safety. In any case, Starkey's dialogical effort to out-More More never achieved sufficient contemporary attention to have any effect, for by the time Starkey seems to have been ready

Lakowski observes, "More's first readers, as the prefatory letters, especially Budé's, recognised, could see in the debate between Hythloday and Persona More the fundamental crisis of contemporary humanism as to whether the new humanist learning could be used effectively to reform society," *Sir Thomas More and the Art of Dialogue*, Dissertation, University of British Columbia 1993 (online edition at *Early Modern Literary Studies* <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/work/chapters/lakowski.html>), chapter 3, paragraph 58. For further commentary, see Lakowski's excellent *Utopia* bibliography at the same location. For a more general bibliography on English Renaissance dialogue, see Oliver Schoell's dissertation *Die Prosadiologe der Englischen Renaissance (1528-1545): Erscheinungsformen und Strukturen* online at Deutsche Nationalbibliothek archive <http://deposit.ddb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?idn=971680957>.

to finish the work political developments in England had made its message unacceptable. More's negative view of Henry's proposed marital adjustments, along with his advocacy of Papal power, was already making the classical humanism, which had earlier seemed so promising, appear irrelevant to English political reality. Pole's eventual announcement of his rejection of Henry's policy was his 1536 book *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione*, in which Pole expressed shock at the royal violence expressed in the executions of Sir Thomas More and Cardinal John Fisher.⁷

In view of Henry's willingness to destroy these distinguished men, one must conclude that Pole would have become a bitter enemy of the king upon the arrival of this book. This development would have been a good reason for Starkey *not* to promote a personal literary production in which a character named Reginald Pole develops a sometimes severe critique of the contemporary régime. In fact, Starkey's *Dialogue* must have become a liability for its author at least by 1536, especially when one considers the anxiety felt by Sir Thomas Elyot regarding the possibility of being suspected of possessing any of John Fisher's works.⁸ No doubt Starkey's 1536 *An Exhortation to the People Instructing Them to Unity and Obedience* was composed in hope of demonstrating that despite Starkey's unpublished dialogue, his long association with Reginald Pole and the Italian humanists, his loyalty to the king was beyond question; the style of the document itself betrays its author's stunned recognition of the fearsome nature of the Henrician monarchy.

Starkey's own dialogue of counsel departed from that of More in some noteworthy respects. Neither of Starkey's interlocutors is named Hythloday ("Nonsense"); both of them are based upon significant and well-connected historical figures known quite well

7 Translated as *Pole's Defense of the Unity of the Church* by Joseph G. Dwyer (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1965).

8 See Elyot's letter to Cromwell in *The Letters of Sir Thomas Elyot*, ed. K.J. Wilson, *Studies in Philology*. Texts and Studies 73.5 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 26-27.

by Starkey himself.⁹ Lupset, a friend of More and Erasmus (and editor of the second edition of the *Utopia*), had spent a part of his youth in John Colet's house.¹⁰ Pole, who, according to Joseph G. Dwyer, "held a legitimate claim to the throne of England almost stronger than Henry's" (vii), was of the house of York and a man of great distinction in his world. More's friend William Latimer had been Pole's Oxford tutor. Thus this dialogue is represented as occurring between two luminaries of Tudor humanism, one of them a close kinsman of Henry VIII, and Starkey's pattern accords in this respect with that of More's *Utopia*, which had included Cuthbert Tunstall, More himself, and Peter Giles, the Dutch humanist.

Another departure from More's dialogue of counsel occurs in the outcome of the opening exchange between Pole and Lupset. After Lupset has stated his concern about Pole's failure to enter public life, he continues in a reproachful manner to elaborate this concern, alluding thrice to "plesure" as though Pole's life of private study were somehow hedonistic, and then concluding:

You see your cuntrey as me semyth requyre your helpe, & as
hyt were cry & cal unto you besyly for the same, & you as

9 The manuscript indicates that Starkey made a late substitution for one of his interlocutors. Mayer describes the alterations in the text which indicate the change of mind about "Lupset," who had previously been "Le" (*Dialogue* xi and *Thomas Starkey* 94). He identifies Starkey's original "Le" with Geoffrey Lee and, finding it unlikely that the change would have been made after Lupset's death in late 1530, sees the change as possible evidence that much of the dialogue was written before that time. However, Starkey's decision to place Lupset posthumously in the dialogue would have made perfect sense as a tribute to a gifted friend who had died early, or it may have been that Lee himself saw the dialogue and wanted out of it. It is also worth noting that both More and Erasmus had publicly argued with Edward Lee, who became Archbishop of York in 1531 and that More himself had dedicated his translation of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola to Joyce Lee, quite possibly the sister of Edward and Geoffrey (see *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, v. I, xl). Pole may have been offered the archbishopric of York in 1530, according to Thomas F. Mayer's *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 55.

10 In his *John Colet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), John Gleason follows John Archer Gee's suggestion that a character in one of Erasmus' colloquies was based on Lupset (166). Gee presents this idea in his *The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1928), 35-41). If Gleason and Gee are correct, here is another possible reason Starkey may have put Lupset in his dialogue, since by doing so he would have been following Erasmus' lead and perhaps strengthening or refreshing his connections to the humanist network. Lupset himself wrote at least one dialogue ("A Treatise of Charitie," Gee 206-231), and Pole later wrote dialogues as well (see Mayer, *Reginald Pole* 88).

drownyd in the plesure of letturys, & pryvate studys gyve no yere therto, but forgettyng hyr utturly suffur her styl to want your helpe & succur, apon your behalfe not wythout gret injury wherfor mastur pole now at the last wake out of thys dreame, remembyr your cuntrey, loke to your frendys, consydur your offyce & duty that you are most bounden unto (2).

Lupset's aggrieved tone and his description of the condition of England makes this passage notably different from the much more casual scene in which Hythloday is advised to lend his knowledge to kings. Pole, however, responds with a rather grave playfulness, raising objections simply in order to see how well Lupset can counter them. While approving of Lupset's intention, Pole at first pleads inexperience in ruling even himself, and then he brings up the traditional conflict between the active life and the contemplative life. Stating the basis for the latter, he concludes:

knolege of god of nature & of al the workys therof, schold be the end of mannys lyfe, & the chefe poynt therin of al men to be lokyd unto, wherfor the old & antique phylosopharys forsoke the medelyng wyth materys of commyn welys & applyd themselfys to the secrety studys & serchyng of nature as to the chefe thyng wherin semyd to rest the perfectyon of man, & thus to them hyt apperyd that prudence & pollycy were not to be comparyd wyth hye phylosophye (3).

Lupset annihilates this argument with citations of Aristotle. The two ways of life are essentially connected, he argues. Showing no respect for Pole's anonymous "idul and slomeriing" (24) old philosophers, Lupset neatly wraps up his refutation:

al be hyt that that hye phylosophy & contemplayon of nature be of hyt selfe a grettur perfectyon of mannys mynd, as hyt wych ys the end of the actyve lyfe, to the wych al mennys dedys schold ever be referryd, yet the medelyng wyth the causys of the commyn wel ys more necessary & ever rather & fyrst to be chosen, as the pryncypal mean wherby we may attayne to the other, for hyther tendyth al prudence & pollycy, to bryng the hole cuntrey to quyetyne & cyvylyte, that every man & so the hole may at the last attayn to such perfectyon as by nature ys to the dygnyte of man dew (5).

In other words, social order makes philosophy possible, so the true lover of wisdom must devote himself to politics. Implicit here is that anyone enjoying philosophy while avoiding politics is a drone. An underlying implication may well be that the effect of More's *Utopia*, which Jean-François Vallée writes "was artfully meant to destabilize, provoke and transform the friendly reader," has been wasted.¹¹

Pole tries another dodge, but Lupset, his patience diminishing, makes short work of his objection, exhorting Pole "wythout any mo cavyllatyonys" (7) to get involved in public life. Pole responds by bringing up the problems posed by cultural relativism. How may men know what is right in society when different societies have different customs? Lupset's response is that these different customs result from differences in civil laws made by each state to suit its own circumstances. The natural law within each state, however, is the same everywhere. The civil laws are intended to enable man to live in accord with his nature, and insofar as they do so they are correct, however they might differ between nations. Here is the first major surprise of the dialogue. Though the Christian world has been subjected to increasing internal tensions from the time of Martin Luther's emergence through that of the Sack of Rome in 1527, Lupset makes his response an argument for tolerance. He argues that such customs as the Christian abstention from meat on Friday, priestly chastity, and monogamy are matters of civil law, strongly suggesting that in states where such practices are not followed the customs might still be in accord with the law of nature. He maintains of Jews, Saracens, Turks, and Moors that

so long as they lyve aftur the law of nature, observyng also
theyr cyvyle ordynance as mean to bryng them to the end of the
same, they schal not be damnyd" (35).

This is a long, eloquent, and effective speech by Lupset, and Reginald Pole finds it persuasive. Here we come to the second departure from More's dialogue of counsel. While Morus and

¹¹ Jean-François Vallée, "The Fellowship of the Book: Printed Voices and Written Friendships in More's *Utopia*," in *Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue*, ed. Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 56.

Hythloday remain in disagreement about participating in public life, here Pole and Lupset come to an accord on the subject. Pole confesses that he has agreed all along but has wanted to hear Lupset argue the case. He sums up:

maystur lup I am content let us agre apon thys, let us take thys as a ground, that every man ought to apply hymselfe to the setting forward of the commyn wele, every man ought to study to helpe hys cuntrey (15).

While this mutual resolution contrasts to the dramatic situation that occurs in *Utopia*, it must be noted that the agreement reached by Starkey's characters is precisely the conclusion reached by More years earlier and announced indirectly by him in his Latin dialogue. In the passage which follows, Starkey pays More the tribute of imitation--an imitation the more significant because *Utopia* had not been translated into English. Starkey, at least in the earlier stages of composing his work, would have expected More and More's friends to see the Pole-Lupset dialogue upon its completion. Here Pole, having voiced an agreement in principle with Lupset, points out that politics has its practical hazards:

yet ther ys a nother thyng to be consyduryd, wych hath causyd many grete wyse & polytyke men to abhorre from commyn welys, & thys ys the regard of tyme & place, for though hyt be so that a man to meddyl wyth materys perteynyng to the wele of hys hole cuntrey ys of al thyng best & most to be desyryd, yet in some tyme and certayn place hyt ys not to be temptyd of wyse men, wych ryght wel perceyve theyr labur to be spent in vayn, as in tyme of tyranny or in such place where they that rule are bent only to theyr pryvate wele, what thynke you among such the conseyll of a wyse man schold avayle, wythout dowte hyt schold be laughyd at, & no thyng at al hyt schold be regardyd, no more then a tale tollyd among deffe men, wherfor hyt semyth not wythout cause they ever absteynyd in such tyme & place from medelyng wyth materys of the commyn wele (15).

This entire passage resounds with echoes from the corresponding section of *Utopia*. In More's work, Hythloday, having cited some hypothetical examples of honest advice he might give a

king, concludes: "To sum it all up, if I tried to obtrude these and the like ideas on men strongly inclined to the opposite way of thinking, to what deaf ears should I tell the tale!" (97). Like Hythloday, Pole refers to Plato's failed experiment in Sicily, and, like Hythloday, he cites the classical comparison of the philosopher to a man taking shelter from a storm.¹²

Lupset responds to Pole's caution by conceding that some prudence is desirable, but he goes on:

how be hyt I thynke agayne also, that ther ys nother so much respect of tyme nother of place to be had as many men juge, wych thynke the hiest poynt of wysdome to stond therin & so naroly & so curiously they pondur the tyme & the place, that in al theyr lyfys they nother fynd tyme nor place, they loke I trow for platos commyn wele, in such expectatyon they spend theyr lyfe, as they thynke wyth grete polytyke wysdome, but in dede wyth grete frantyke folly, for of thys I am sure that suche exacte consydering of tyme hath causyd many commyn welys utturlly to perysch, hyt hath causyd in many placys much tyranny, wych myght have byn amendyd yf wyse men in tyme & in place wold have bent themselfe to that purpos, levyng such fon respecte of tyme & of place. (16)

Here Lupset voices a motive that should be remembered during any consideration of this dialogue as a whole. Later in the text, Pole and Lupset express opinions that must have been dangerous, given Henry's usual treatment of dissent, and it seems almost incredible that Starkey would have expressed such opinions. Whether or not he actually submitted his full text for anyone else's perusal--and this question remains a mystery, the only conceivable impulse for his putting so much labor into composing this dialogue is that stated here by Lupset. Wise men have a duty to amend tyranny, even at their own risk. This passage appears to be a response to More's analogy of politics to drama, in which tragic speeches are out of place in comedy. Lupset's point is that it is better to risk being ludicrous than to wait too long. The allusion to folly might even

12 *Utopia*, 16-23. More attributes this metaphor to Plato. Starkey changes the comparison somewhat and attributes it to Plutarch. See the note in *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter, v. 4 of *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1965), 377.

suggest Lupset's friend Erasmus' long search for the right place to apply his learning. Thomas More, despite Hythloday's perspective, had long been in political life by this time, and though Starkey has taken More's dialogue as his paradigm, he has no more been uncritical in so doing than was More in his use of Plato.

Like *Utopia*, Starkey's *Dialogue* responds to its literary antecedents, assenting, negating, and making counter-assertions. Starkey, however, employs the defensive or precautionary distancing effect of dialogue with less caution than did More. Here the guardedness of the language seems entirely insufficient to obviate blame for the nature of the views set forth. While Starkey, like the arch-dialogist Plato and unlike More, never appears in the work at all, his use of English as his medium and his explicit consideration of the English *status quo*, along with the specific proposals for reform in England, notably diminish the distancing which makes the *Utopia* such a playful enigma.

Starkey's motive in choosing Reginald Pole as principal explicator of the proposed reforms is also a most interesting question. While Pole may have been and probably was the highest-ranking of Starkey's personal friends, the implications of such a noble character's trenchant critique of the English regime would have been unfathomable. Although both More and Plato included friends in their dialogues, and Starkey thus had the authority of precedent in doing so himself, it seems almost impossible not to conclude that including Pole as radical dissident would have been quite perilous at least for Starkey and in all likelihood for Pole as well—assuming that Starkey would not have attributed such views to the latter without some justification—unless Starkey believed himself to be somehow safe from the wrath of the king. Such security—and this of course is speculative—might have arisen (if only in Starkey's mind) because of Henry's affection for Pole or even from Starkey's hope for patronage from his fellow dialogist who was Lord Chancellor. Aside from such speculations, we can only wonder at Starkey's temerity and, in view of the political views proposed in his dialogue, at the apparent

impunity with which he developed his ideas. Clearly, the calculated indirection of Starkey's dialogue was rendered less innocuous as the royal authority responded to what it perceived as threats from those whose affinities to Rome remained powerful, and thus this work, whose public appearance seems to have been precluded by the king's break with Rome, provides a unique basis for exploration of the interaction of humanism and political force.

Starkey's dialogical technique in this work is fairly sophisticated. While Walter M. Gordon has explicated the Platonic literary techniques which shaped More's *Utopia*, most of the explication of this work has been done by analysts who are considerably less interested in its careful artistry. Thomas F. Mayer and Åke Bergvall, for example, assume that Pole is a fairly uncomplicated mouthpiece for Starkey's own programs.¹³ This dialogue, however, does represent an effort to reproduce the give-and-take of an actual conversation between two men of learning and substance. As explained earlier, Pole tricks Lupset into arguing for a position Pole has already accepted. Later, whenever Pole makes an assertion with which Lupset disagrees, Lupset objects with such frequency that Pole becomes impatient with him. After Pole has attacked the abuses of legal guardianship, Lupset defends the concept, citing in his argument the fact that such guardianship was established in England by William the Conqueror. Pole's response is a bit sharp:

13 Although Mayer begins to critique the *Dialogue* by acknowledging that "... the same sort of 'polyphonic' structure which Arthur Blaim detects in *Utopia* also characterized the *Dialogue*" (106), it is not long before he assumes that the positions put forth by individual interlocutors are uncritically represented as Starkey's own positions, as, for example, "A major plank of Starkey's programme called for nobles to be sent to converted monasteries in order to 'lerne ther the dyscyplyne of the commyn wele'" (116); and "Starkey boasted that 'our pepul of englond . . . [are the] most rych & welthy of any commyns aboute us'" (117). Despite Mayer's announced appreciation of the potential of the dialogue for subtlety, then, these passages reflect a somewhat simplistic practical procedure. Mayer's reference above is to Blaim's article "More's *Utopia*: Persuasion or Polyphony?" *Moreana: Bulletin Thomas More* 19.73 (March 1982): 5-20. Bergvall, in "Reason in English Renaissance Humanism: Starkey, More, and Ascham," *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 3.3 (1993-1994), 213-25, takes a similar approach, though he does explain that he does so because the dialogue's interlocutors' "positions are not really at variance" (225). In a brief response to Bergvall, however, Patrick Grant, in "Of Fountains and Foundations: An Elaboration on Åke Bergvall," *Connotations* 4.3 (1994-95), 228-232, demonstrates a fine critical perception, pointing out a fundamental metaphorical pattern in Starkey's figurative representation of fountains and foundations.

wel mastur lup. Set what face you wyl apon thys mater, you can not persuade me thys ordur to be gud, specyally when I loke to the perfayt commyn wele wych I wold myght be stabylschyd here in our cuntrey, let hyt be so that at the tyme of the fyrst entre of the conquerour or tyranne cal hym as you wyl thys maner myght be for the tyme convenyent, but now yf we wyl restore our cuntrey to a perfayt state wyth a true commyn wele we must schake of al such tyrannycal custumys & unresonabyl bandys, instytute by that tyranne when he subduyd our cuntrey & natyon (77-78).

Lupset's response is apologetic in tone, and he promises not to delay Pole's further explication. Pole replies:

mastur lup. Therin you dow well, for yf you schold tary our communycatyon wyth sophystycal argymentys, we schold not thys day note halfe the erorys wych I purpos to talke wyth you of, for ther ys no thyng so true & manyfest, but the suttlylte of mannys reson may devyse somethyng to say contrary & to impugne the same, as in thys wych now I wyl speke of wych me semyth ys so manyfest an erreure in our law that no man may hyt deny, & yet I can not thynke but you wyl fynd some what to lay agayne hyt (78).

Lupset, unintimidated, answers:

hyt may welbe but I promys you as I have sayd befor I wyl not repugne for no study nor desyre of victory, but only for the inventyon of the truth, & equyte for you know wel that dowtyng & laying somewhat agayne the truth maketh hyt oft tymys to appere more manyfest & playn, therfor let us see what thyng hyt ys that you thynke so manifest afaute.

Not only does the dialogue here exhibit some dramatic vitality, but it also reveals a playful self-consciousness. Discussing serious matters, the two characters incidentally remind us that they are human—as of course they are not—and Lupset's remarks remind us not only that we are reading a dialogue but also that one dimension of dialogue is to extend the reader's perspective in a particular way. Lupset here playfully retaliates against Pole, who had, as the conversation began, pretended to have doubts about his own suitability to engage in the political life, telling Lupset at one

point “you cal them Cavyllatyons, wych I cal resoning & dowtyng for the cleryng of the truth” (7). Such moments as this in the text inform us of Starkey’s consciousness of the aesthetic potential of the dialogue form. Later, another animated exchange breaks up the incipient monotony of Pole’s itemizing of English problems. Pole has finished critiquing errors in English law, and here he turns to English social customs. The exchange follows:

po. fyrst & most pryncypal of al yl custumys usyd in our cuntre commynly aftur my jugement ys that wych touchyth the educatyon of the nobylte, whome we see custumably brought up in huntyng & haukyng dysyng & cardyng etyng & drynkyng & in conclusion in al vayn plesure pastyme & vanyte & that only ys thought to perteyne to a gentylman even as hys propur fayt offyce & duty as though they were borne therto & to no thyng els in thys world of nature brought forth.

Lup. Wy syr I pray what wold you have them to dow, go to plow & to carte or to lerne some other craft to get theyr lyvyng by, as a thyng requyred of necessitye?

po. mastur lup. What I wold have them to dow now the place ys not here to schow, & declare, wych hereaftur I wyl not omyt but that thys they dow hyt is certayn & to al men by experyence knowen, wych aftur myn opynyon ys no smal destructyon of our commyn wele that we now seke & desyre to see stablyschyd here in our cuntre, for of thys poynt hangyth a grete parte of the veray welth of the hole commynalty.

Lup. Surely thys thyng ys amys, wherfor procede you ferther, I wyl not repugne agayn so manyfest a truthe (86).

Lupset quickly recognizes that his objection was ill-considered, but the alacrity of his retreat in the face of Pole’s implied rebuke is amusing, and his last statement does not look entirely serious, which points out by contrast the relative humorlessness of Pole. It must be remembered, of course, that Starkey’s dialogue is an unfinished work, and that the character called Lupset, as Thomas Mayer has explained, was originally a “Mr. Le.” So any evaluation of the development of this character in the dialogue must be open to possible objection on the ground that Starkey may have had at

different times different personality traits in mind for this character, at least if he was intending for any perceptible relationship to exist between the character and its historical counterpart. Yet it does seem that the Lupset of the dialogue loves a good argument, whereas Pole is sometimes impatient with objections. And certainly Starkey demonstrates his own skill at creating character and in maintaining extended dialogue without reducing the secondary character to an affirmative abstraction. For example, when Lupset suddenly concurs with a sequence of Pole's assertions about abuses in the church, Pole reacts with suspicion:

mastur lup. you are in thys materys veray esy to persuade you
make no objectyonys aftur your maner in other thyngeys wherfor
I somewhat feare that we admyt over quykly thes fautys in the
church for some pryvate hate that we bere agayne the prestys &
prelatys therin (88).

Lupset reassures Pole, but in this passage again we see the skill of a dialogist who is concerned with verisimilitude. Instead of leaving Lupset's sequence of agreements to stand without comment, Starkey has Pole notice it, as a reader would, and question Lupset's motive.

Thus the dramaturgy of Starkey's *Dialogue* shows the same kind of sophistication and play that characterizes both More's *Utopia* and Plato's dialogues. Starkey's characters discuss Plato, with Pole emphasizing the basic agreement between Plato and Aristotle, but Starkey's evident intention in this work is to "English" the dialogue in a new way, borrowing as convenient from Plato—especially in creating a work of art as his vehicle of thought—and extending some dimensions of the political teaching of More's *Utopia* to apply unequivocally to contemporary England. Despite the danger that was involved in this latter task, Starkey believed himself morally obligated to promulgate humanist politics and a program of Church reform. With Thomas More having led the way into the active life, Starkey must have, given More's rise to political prominence, viewed the indirectness of the presentation of political reality in *Utopia* as excessively cautious, and his departures from More's procedure show a desire to bring more matter and less art to the world of actual

politics. At the end of the first day's talk, having persuaded Pole to describe the "veray & true Commyn wele," Lupset exhorts him,

but here of one thyng I pray you take hede that in thys your devyse of your communycatyon thys commyn wele & you folow not the exampul of plato, of whose ordur of commyn wele no pepul apon erth to thys days coud ever yet attayn (18).

As J. W. Allen pointed out in 1928, this passage is "doubtless with reference to Plato and More."¹⁴ Lupset goes on:

therfor loke you to the nature of our cuntrey to the maner of our pepul, not wythout respect both of tyme & of place, that your devyse herafter by the helpe of our most nobul prynce may the soner optayne his fruit & effect.

Starkey was fully aware that in the fourteen or so years since *Utopia* had been first published More's political insights as set forth in that book had produced no such "fruit & effect" as hoped for, and he wished consequently to make his own views on English government much more explicit than those suggested in *Utopia*.

Like More, however, Starkey strongly advocated basing government upon reason and upon nature, and, as a logical result of such a political conviction, he makes Reginald Pole—himself of royal blood—voice vehement opposition to tyranny. Thus although Starkey was affected to some extent by contemporary political theory,¹⁵ the essence of his theory of government is classical. And of the classical political philosophers, the most vigorous (and experienced) opponent of tyranny was Plato, whose chosen mode of literary expression More had found a suitable medium for his own critique of the English *status quo*.

Employing this same medium, Starkey has Pole develop a radically anti-autocratic view that not only condemns tyranny but even rejects hereditary monarchy itself. Such a view is particularly

14 J. W. Allen *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1928), 144.

15 See Mayer *Thomas Starkey, passim*, and the assessment of the *Dialogue* by Alistair Fox in *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500-1550*, ed. Fox and Guy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 47-50.

interesting when one considers King Henry's strenuous efforts to ensure his own succession. But Pole's opposition to the inheritance of kingship is only one of a number of extreme measures he proposes to Lupset in the dialogue. He also advocates strict limitation of the king's power by means of a ruling council, the replacement of the English common law with Roman law, the revival of the defunct position of Constable of England, and a number of other improvements that almost seem calculated to render Henry VIII apoplectic. Pole also recommends conciliar appropriation of papal power and cancellation of the requirement of chastity for secular priests. Although these proposals are authorially attributed to Henry's noble cousin Pole, Henry, if he had read this work himself, would have known who had set them to paper, and there is no doubt that he would have found them an affront to his sovereignty. In fact, Pole explicitly attacks the concept of the king's privileged relationship to God. He tells Lupset:

And now to our purpos even as every partycular man when he folowyth reson ys governyd by god & contrary blyndyd wyth ignorance by hys owne vayn opynyon, so hole natyonys, when they lyve togyddur in cyvyle ordur instytute & governyd by resonabul pollycy are then governyd by the provydence of god & be under hys tuytyon, as contrary, *when they wythout gud ordur & polytyke rule they are rulyd by the violence of tyranny, they are not governyd by hys provydence nor celestyal ordynance*, but as a man governyd by affectys, so they be tormentyd infynyte ways, by the reson of such tyrannycal powar, so that of thys you may se that hyt ys not god that provydyth tyrannys to rule in cytes & townes nomore then hyt ys he that ordeynyth yl affectys to over run ryght reson (110-111).

Italics here are editorial. By this time, Pole has firmly established that England is a country "wythout gud ordur & polytyke rule," and, consequently, despite an occasional passage of rather faint praise of Henry VIII, Pole's conclusion is that England is "rulyd by the violence of tyranny." He continues:

hyt ys not man that can make a wyse prynce of hym that lakkyth
wyt by nature, nor make hym just that ys a tyranne for plesure,
but thys ys in mannys powar to electe & chose hym that ys both
wyse & just & make hym a prynce, & hym that ys a tyranne so
to depose.

This comment may remind the reader of Pole's earlier criticism of royal succession, a point of view about which Lupset warned: "syr, take you hede here what you say, for thys poynt that you now touch wyl seme peraventure to many, to sowne to some treason" (68).

Starkey, then, was conscious of how the ideas of his principal speaker might be interpreted as a threat to the theoretical basis of Tudor rule. Despite his dramaturgic self-exclusion from the dialogue, he yet remained in danger of accusation of treason, especially as Henry moved away from Rome and toward consolidation of his own control of the English church. The executions of the Carthusians, of Fisher, and of More, along with Pole's subsequent literary attack on Henry, made the theories set forth in the *Dialogue* ever more dangerous to Starkey. The radical and specific nature of those theories abrogated any guardedness of speech that the dialogical formulation of the work might otherwise have made possible. Where More's dialogical distancing in *Utopia* artfully effected the playful presentation of serious political theory, Starkey seems to have made such demands on this distancing that the ultimate effect of his dialogue is to convey a sense not only of his theoretical perspicacity but also of his almost incredible lack of prudence.

While Starkey certainly learned a great deal from More's *Utopia*, he also, in rejecting the rules of the game of Henrician practical politics, failed to learn that *how* one communicates in the active life can be as crucial as *what* one intends to communicate. Although he emulated More in writing political dialogue, Starkey rejected the Platonic subtlety of *Utopia*, thus ultimately succeeding only in creating peril for himself—and for Pole—in a world increasingly under the control of a suspicious and brutal autocrat.

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Cardinal Reginal Pole (1500-1558)

The Italian, Spanish, and English Fencing Schools in Shakespeare's England

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Three styles of fencing were taught in England during the Elizabethan era: Italian, Spanish, and English. Non-historical plays of the Elizabethan period are examined to consider what style of fencing was used on stage, and perhaps taught to the actors in plays such as Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and others. Historically, scholars have chosen to argue that actors of this period were taught an Italian or Spanish style of fencing, often glossing over the English style. I argue that the unique English style of fencing was probably taught to Elizabethan actors. Showing that these three fencing styles have distinct features that differentiate the English style from the other two styles, I also offer interpretations of what these exhibitions might have looked like on stage.

As a fight choreographer and ten-year member of the Society of American Fight Directors, I am interested not only in knowing what style of fencing Elizabethan actors learned, but also from whom they learned it. I have trained and competed in modern fencing with the epee, foil, and saber, and studied classical Italian fencing. My experiences with the complexities of stage combat leads me to believe that understanding the foundational style of fencing used by Elizabethan actors may provide insights for modern productions of early modern plays.

During the Elizabethan period, three distinct schools of fencing were taught: Italian, Spanish, and English. Each style has a distinct form, emphasis, and weapon length. For the most part, Elizabethan history scholars have divided themselves into two camps: those who argue for the Italian school, such as Louis B. Wright, and those who argue for the Spanish school, including historian James Jackson and Elizabethan fencing scholars Craig Turner and Tony Soper.¹ All choose various historical references and then analyze

1 Louis B. Wright, "Stage Dueling in the Elizabethan Theatre," *The Modern Language Review*, 22.3 (1927), 256-75; James L. Jackson, "They Catch One Another's Rapiers: The Exchange of Weapons in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990), 281-98 and "The Fencing Actor Lines in Shakespeare's Plays," *Modern Language News*, 57 (1942), 615-22; Craig Turner and Tony Soper, *Methods and Practice of Elizabethan Swordplay* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990).

fencing scenes from plays to support their points of view. However, very little research has been done on the school of English fencing as a means by which actors could have gleaned their knowledge and techniques of stage combat. Evidence indicates that an English company called the London Masters of Defense was the primary source of instruction for actors learning how to fight on the stage.

The three sections of this paper address three styles of fencing taught in Elizabethan London—Italian, Spanish, and English—in order to discuss the uniqueness of each style. Investigating each school's footwork, guards, and fighting emphasis reveals the differences between the schools and how their styles might look on stage. Each section presents what scholars have written about that particular style of fighting, and why those scholars believe Elizabethan actors used that school of fencing on stage.

I then offer evidence that questions their theories. I turn my attention to the London Masters of Defense to present evidence of their connections with actors of the Elizabethan era and analyze the arguments of scholars who suggest that actors learned fencing from the Italian masters. I also discuss three famous fencing masters of the time, examining the costs of their lessons, the types of pupils they instructed, and their reputations as noted by the nobles and members of the middle class. Finally, I examine the evidence of the London Masters' teachings appearing in two texts by Shakespeare, noting particularly how Shakespeare seems to mock the Italian style of fence, and then demonstrate that the London Masters of Defense most likely taught fencing to the actors of Shakespeare's company.

The London Masters of Defense was a company comprised of English fencing masters who taught in and around London from the early 1500s to the mid-1700s. Its students performed in theatres across the London area. The company taught a wide variety of weaponry, including long sword, backsword, bastard sword, quarterstaff, and rapier and dagger. Investigating the style in which the London Masters taught offers insight into how fight scenes might have appeared on stage. But to investigate the dramaturgy of fight

sequences, one must examine the background of the English culture of arms during the Elizabethan era.

The sixteenth century in England could be considered a golden age of arms. As Ralph Holinshed remarked in 1586:

Seldom shall you see one of my countrymen above eighteen or twenty years old to go without a dagger at the least at his back or by his side Our nobility wear rapiers with their daggers No man traveleth by the way without his sword or some such weapon.²

Roger Ascham, in *Toxophilus* (1545), notes:

For of fence in everie town there is not only Maisters to teache it . . . but there hath not fayled also which have diligently and well-favourbly written it and is set oute in printe that everie man may rede it.³

Not only did Elizabethans have the ability to learn from various fencing masters across the country, but they could also view fencing matches where fighters displayed their skill for all who wished to witness it. According to fencing historian Luigi Barbasetti, English fencing masters were first organized under Henry VIII in 1540 and displayed their skills, as well as their students, for the public. Typically they performed in such places as the Bull Inn, Bel Savage Inn, the Swan, the Theatre, the Globe, and Blackfriars because their own schools would not hold the admiring public that wanted to attend.⁴

These events became so popular that, in 1597, Phillip Gawdy suggested the entire city seemed to be shut down on one occasion, as all were in attendance at a fencing contest at the Swan.⁵ Similarly, a French traveler by the name of De Richefort gives a full description of a publicly staged fencing match in 1590:

2 Ralph Holinshed, *Chronicles* (London, 1586-7), 227.

3 Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. Edward Arber (Westminster: A. Constable, 1895), 2.

4 Luigi Barbasetti, *The Art of the Foil, with a Short History of Fencing* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932), 208.

5 Ibid., 239.

Commonly, when any fencing masters are desirous of showing their courage and their great skill, they issue mutual challenges, and before they engage, parade the town with drum and trumpets sounding, to inform the public there is a challenge between two brave masters of the science of defense We went to see one combat, which was performed on a stage in the middle of the amphitheatre where on the flourishes of trumpets and the beat of drums drew their swords, and immediately began to fight, skirmishing a long time without any wounds The taller had the advantage, for according to the English style of fence they endeavored to cut than to push [thrust] as seen in the Italian or Spanish style. . . .

The tall one struck his antagonists wrist, which he almost cut off. But did not prevent him from continuing the fight The little man gave him a stroke which took off a slice of his head and almost his whole ear.⁶

The fact that De Richefort writes that fencing matches were performed at amphitheatres suggests that rather large audiences came to witness the fencing display, and the parade of the two fencing masters through the streets accompanied by trumpets and drums obviously was meant to draw a crowd.

His account also presents an interesting picture of how these fights were performed. For one thing, the weapons used in the match were sharp enough to slice a wrist open and cut off an ear. Another interesting fact is that the fight began immediately and lasted quite a long time before blood was drawn. This point implies that both fighters were skilled enough at their craft to fight for a period of time without inflicting damage, and that their athleticism allowed them to fight for an extended period of time. De Richefort specifically states that both fencers fought “according to the English style,” indicating that even a non-Englishman could recognize this particular style and contrast its techniques against other popular styles of the time.

If a Frenchman could differentiate an “English style,” then it must be assumed that Englishmen could tell the difference in styles

6 George L Hoskins, *The Life and Times of Edward Alleyn Actor, Master of the Kings Bears, Founder of the College of God's Gift at Dulwich*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 131-2.

of fighting as well. My own work in fencing and watching other martial art competitions suggests that ability to differentiate fighting styles. For instance, although one may not be Japanese, Korean, or Chinese, when witnessing martial art competitions from these schools, distinctions among them emerge. I, for one, have noticed that in the Japanese martial forms the movements are very rigid and staccato. On the other hand, movements in the Chinese forms are soft and fluid like a fast paced *tai-chi*, as opposed to almost robotic actions in the Japanese forms. It is my contention that the martial art forms from Italy, Spain, and England are just as uniquely different and that the Italian and Spanish, therefore, could be perceived as dissimilar from the English style of fence. It seems from the accounts of Holinshed and Ascham that swordplay during the Elizabethan period was a popular sport and, most Elizabethans would understand, at the least, the basic sword fighting style practiced in England. The question is whether these accounts by Holinshed, Ascham, and De Richefort indicate how fights were performed for plays?

There is some evidence that points to a realistic portrayal of stage fights in the theatre. First, a contemporary description in *The Rich Cabinet Fuyrnished with Varietie of Excellent Discriptions* (1616) says that actors were known for “dancing, actiuitie, musicke, song, elloquention, abilitie of body, memory, skill of weapon, and pregnancy of wit.”⁷ These lines suggest that the actors were skilled swordsmen. Evidence of their skill can be seen in the Middlesex County Records of Early English Drama, which reveal that several actors such as Gabriel Spencer, an actor for Henslowe, dueled with and killed a “skilled swordsman, James Feake with a sword costing 5s by a wound in the eye at the barbers in Holywell Street parish of St. Leonards, Shoreditch.”⁸ The ability to target and hit one’s opponent in the eye takes great skill simply because the head is such a small target. Spencer himself was later killed in 1598 in a duel with

7 Thomas Gainsford, *The Rich Cabinet Fuyrnished with a Varietie of Excellent Discriptions* (London, 1616).

8 *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford*, ed. John R. Elliot (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 75.

sometime actor and playwright Ben Jonson.⁹ Other examples of actors and playwrights participating in duels are recorded in Pepys' diary in 1666, which states that an actor named Smith killed his opponent in a duel.¹⁰ It appears that actors were skilled enough to win actual duels, which would take some skill at the sword.

Playscripts also yield examples of an actor's swordsmanship. In Thomas Heywood and William Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea* the script gives some explicit directions for the action of the duel between Forrest and Rainsford. According to the stage directions, "They fight and pause." Then, "They fight—Forest loseth his weapon." Forrest "guards himself, and puts by with his hat-slips—the other running, falls over him and Forrest kills him."¹¹ The stage directions indicate that, in this fight at least, the duel was not merely a quick "one, two, three, and home," but was fought at some length with a good deal of suspense. In Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, two scholars observe a fight on stage with rapier and dagger and comment upon the fight: "ah, well thrust!" and "But marke the warde [guard]."¹² The lines indicate an attempt on the playwrights' behalf to display the skill of the actors in fighting, as the two scholars draw attention to the actors' skill with the Italian¹³ thrust and unique guard position. From examples such as these, as well as availability of London fencing masters showing off their proficiency, fighting on the Elizabethan stage seems to have been a display of skill and a representation of a "real" fight, not a mere stylized presentation.

9 Marchette Chute, *Ben Jonson of Westminster* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), 75-6.

10 Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London: n.p., 1666). <http://www.pepys.info/1666/1666jan.html> (accessed April 10, 2009).

11 Thomas Heywood, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood* (London, 1874), *Fortune by Land and Sea*, II.ii.

12 Robert Green, "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay," in *English Renaissance Drama*, ed. David Bevington (London: W.W. Norton & Co, Inc., 2002), 129-181.

13 The Italian and Spanish schools of fencing were based on thrusting and point work while the English school emphasized the cut. It seems here that the thrust was to be the main emphasis in this play, perhaps to let the audience know or be aware of the non-English nature of the fight.

The Italian Fencing Style

According to Elizabethan fencing instructor George Silver, who in 1559 wrote *Paradoxes of Defense* and *Bref Instructions upon My Paradoxes of Defense*, two masters taught the Italian style of fence in England—Rocco Bonetti and Jeronimo, whom Silver calls “Bonetti’s boy.”¹⁴ The unique stylization of the Italian school is best summed up in the works of Silver, the earlier treatise of Italian fencing master Capo Ferro in *The Art of the Sword* (1570), and the Italian fencing master Fabris Schermo’s *The Science of Arms* (1606). Silver explains how the Italians put emphasis on thrusts rather than cuts, indicating the style used the quickness of the thrust over the cut. This technique created a specific stance in fighting, indicating an almost fully extended arm raised and aimed at the opponent’s body. A clearer picture of this can be drawn from the plates of Ferro, as seen below:

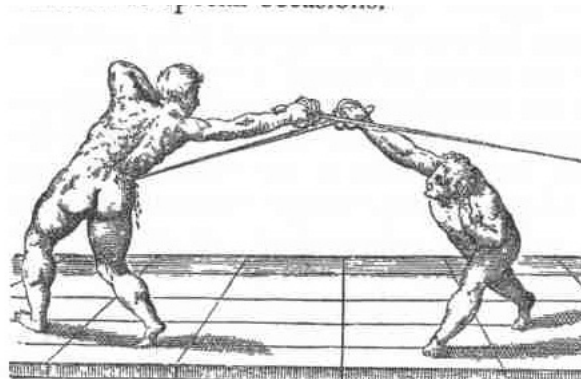


Figure 1: *Fabris- Ferita di quarta, contra una terza. Time thrust taken on the adversary’s feint of disengagement. Notice the low stance on the right.*

14 George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defense* (1599), in *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*, ed. James L. Jackson (Delmare: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1972), 562.



Figure 2: Capo Ferro- a figure showing the prima guard. This is an unguard Position not a lunge. Lunges would be deeper and lower.

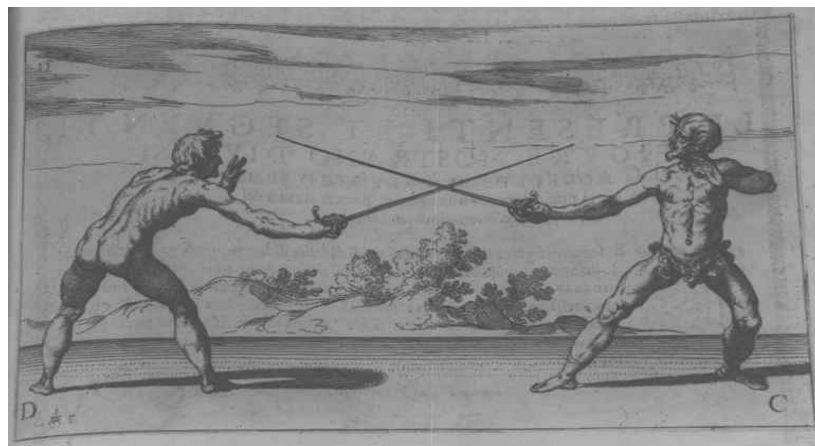


Figure 3: Capo Ferro- Demonstrating fighting distance and low stance.

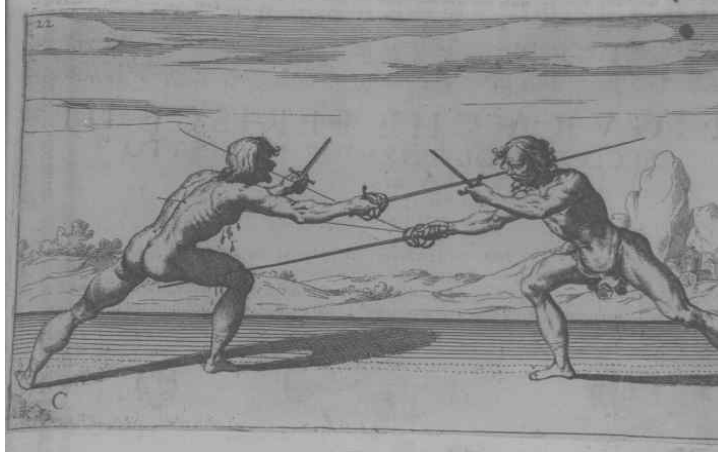


Figure 4: Capo Ferro- A counter attack on the blade. Notice again the deep stances.

In the preceding illustrations, notice the length of the weapons as they reach for the opponent; also notice how low and grounded the fighters' stances are. These stances were used to give a more powerful thrust in the fight as well as to eliminate targets in the legs and lower parts of the body. Because of the low stance, this style eliminates any and all low parry positions. In other words, parries are not made with the tip of the sword pointing to the ground. All parries are made with the tip up or pointing toward the opponent. At any attempt by the attacker to thrust or cut at the leg, the defender must be low enough to parry with guards that are close to the chest and head. This is quite a contrast from other fighting styles prevalent in England, as will be discussed below.

The Italian style of fighting made popular in England by Bonetti and Jeronimo typically is considered by such theatre scholars as McCollum, Turner, and Soper and Elizabethan historian Wright to be the style taught to Elizabethan actors and most frequently used on stage. Examining each scholar's reasoning illuminates their conclusions as to how and why actors came to learn this particular style of fence.

McCollum argues that actors gleaned their fencing training from Bonetti, an Italian fencing master who arrived in London in 1571 and, by 1584, was occupying a room in Blackfriars.¹⁵ In her short article, McCollum gathers historical documents that speak of Bonetti's time in England. She does an excellent job of tracing the steps and places where Bonetti trained and how he finally ended up teaching at Blackfriars in London. During his time at Blackfriars, acting troupes were performing and rehearsing their plays in the same place. From the conclusions of dates and places, McCollum surmises that Bonetti would have a monetary basis for teaching at Blackfriars because the actors would have taken lessons from him. She concludes that teaching at Blackfriars would most likely have Shakespeare and Bonetti meeting and perhaps going over the fencing in scenes that Shakespeare wrote.¹⁶

In the same vein, Louis Wright emphasizes the likelihood of Bonetti's teaching actors to fight because the fight master occupied Blackfriars at the same time acting troupes used it.¹⁷ While both Wright's and McCollum's speculations seem plausible, after researching more about Bonetti's lifestyle and personality as well as his fee scale for lessons, it appears highly unlikely that he would have taught any actors.

Bonetti's attitude toward the working class is made evident in Silver's *Paradoxes of Defense*. According to Silver, Bonetti was approached by the London Masters of Defense, and asked to show the English masters his mastery of the sword. However, Bonetti refused because they were of a lower social class than he.¹⁸ During the Elizabethan era, actors were considered servants of their patrons and were deemed to be in a class below that of the merchant

15 Blackfriars was also the home to a group of fencing masters called the Masters of Defense, an historical fact that many scholars have seemed to ignore or mention only as an afterthought. Blackfriars also was Shakespeare's private theatre.

16 Linda McCollum, "Rocco Bonetti," *The Fight Master: Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors* 9 (May 1986): 13-17, and "The Fencing School in Blackfriars," *Blackfriars Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998), <http://home.netcom.com/~cecilymc/article1.html> (accessed May 24, 2008).

17 Wright, "Stage Dueling," 256-75.

18 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 562.

and working-class citizens of London. Therefore, it seems reasonable that, if Bonetti would not teach the working class his style of fence, he would see those of even lower social status unworthy as well. Bonetti also made some outrageous claims about the English, claiming that he could “hit anie Englishmen with a thrust upon anie button,” meaning that Bonetti could thrust and hit every button on the Englishman’s doublet before the Englishman could parry his attack.¹⁹ Comments, like this one, as well as his refusal to prove his swordsmanship, led to a constant barrage of threats and challenges from the London Masters, eventually forcing him to flee to Scotland in 1571.²⁰ On his return to London two years later, his comments were apparently not forgotten because threats still came from the merchant class and the London Masters. That dislike escalated to such a degree that, on one occasion, Bonetti was attacked and beaten half to death by men carrying oars.²¹

The attack on his life led Bonetti to appeal to the Privy Council twice, first in September 1578 and then in July 1579. According to historical records gathered from the book of minutes, at the first hearing, Bonetti was unable to name the perpetrators, and the case was dropped.²² In the second hearing, Bonetti complained of threats not only against him but also against his wife, and this time the Privy Council put two men in prison until Bonetti said they could be released, a Francis, living in Blackfriars, and one Isaac, living in White Friars.²³ Although the exact threats against him are not known, their threats were severe enough to cause them to be imprisoned. It appears from these records that whenever Bonetti’s name is mentioned, there is always a story of distress or adversity aligned with it, and it seems that Bonetti was not welcome in London. Not only did Londoners seem to dislike Bonetti, but it also appears that the Oxford crowd disliked him, possibly because he ignored the mid-

19 Ibid., 563.

20 Turner and Soper, *Elizabethan Swordplay*, 16.

21 Sir Harris Nicholas, *Proceedings of the Privy Council* (London, 1833), 43.

22 Ibid., 44

23 Ibid., 46.

dle class as he made his lease in Blackfriars.²⁴

Bonetti's disdain of the middle class is also apparent in his selection of students, for by all accounts he taught only noblemen and gentlemen of the court.²⁵ Bonetti thought the Italian style of fencing should be reserved for the upper class, and actors would have appeared to Bonetti as commoners unworthy of instruction in the sword. Silver indicates that Bonetti was charging £20 to £100 a lesson. As a frame of reference, a laborer's wage was about 6 pence a day, a craftsman's about one shilling (12 pence = 1 shilling; 20 shillings = 1 pound). Basic admission to a theatre was 1pence and actors made no more than 5 to 10 shillings a week.²⁶ An actor would have to work for four months in order to pay for one lesson from Bonetti. Based on these figures, it seems unlikely that an actor or even a shareholder could afford Bonetti's lessons.

Bonetti's expressed dislike of the English, especially the merchant and rising middle classes, coupled with the incredible cost of his lessons, make it unlikely that Bonetti would have taught Elizabethan actors to fight for the stage.

The Spanish Fencing Style

Another popular style of fencing in the Elizabethan era was that of the Spanish school. Evidence from the period credits Italian Vincenzio Saviolo with bringing this style to England and teaching it. John Marston remarks upon Saviolo's style in his *Scourge of Villainy*:

Oh! Come not within distance Martius speaks
Who ne'er discourseth but of fencing feats,
Of counter time, fincture, sly passataes,
Stamazzone, resolute stoccataes,
Of the quick change with the wiping mandritta,
The caricado with th' imbroccata,
The honorable fencing mystery

24 Linda McCollum, "Rocco Bonetti," *The Fight Master: Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors* 9 (May 1986), 13-17.

25 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 562.

26 Ibid, 63-4; Alwin Thaler, "Minor Actors and Employees in the Elizabethan Theatre," *Modern Philology* 20 (1922), 49-60.

Who does not honor? Then falls he in again
Jading our ears: and somewhat must be sain
Of blades, and rapier hilts, and surest guard,
Of Vincentio and the Spanish's ward.²⁷

Marston's lines not only give favorable mention to the quality of Vincentio's sword fighting but also partially describe his sword fighting in the Spanish style.

Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence* reinforces Marston's lines as he explains how a student of Saviolo's Spanish school was thought to be a

better man with his rapier than the Italian, Frenchman, high
Almaine or any other country man whatsoever, because they
in their rapier fight stand upon so many intricate trickes . . .
in his fight, both safely to defend himself and to endanger his
emie.²⁸

Silver's *Paradoxes* gives an encompassing survey of the manner of the Spanish fighting:

They stand as brave as they can with their/Bodies straight up-
right, narrow spaced, with/their feet continually moving, as if
in a dance/Holding forth their arms, and rapiers in front of/ their
bodies or their enemies.²⁹

Other fencing masters of the time period, such as Spanish fencing master Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez, state that the swordsman will shift from one posture to another, looking for an opening in the adversary's defense or seizing an opportunity for an attack as the adversary is changing postures. The swordsman will also attack an oncoming attack while closing the line of attack.³⁰ Figures 5, 6, and 7 below help to illustrate what Silver and Narvaez say about the Spanish school:

27 John Marston, "The Scourge of Villainy," in *The Plays of John Marston*, ed. W Harvey Wood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934), III. xi.

28 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 511.

29 Ibid., 511-12.

30 Ramon Martinez, "The Demystification of the Spanish School," <http://www.martinez-destreza.com/articles/spanish1.htm> (accessed April 9, 2009).

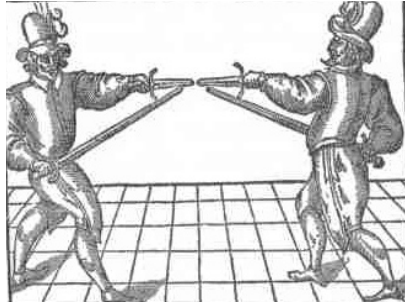


Figure 5: Vincentio Saviolo- Showing second guard with rapier and dagger illustrating the circle movements and passes with a partner.



Figure 6: Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez- Illustrating shifting postures with appropriate footwork in a dance like fashion.

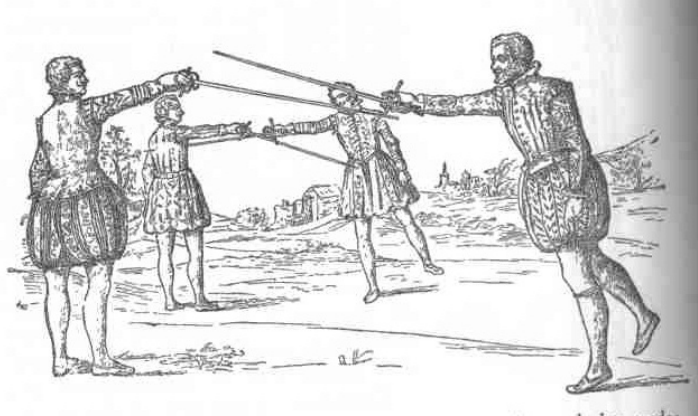


Figure 7: Jeronimo de Carranza- gaining the advantage by traversing (shifting weight to move the body quickly forward then thrusting your opponent on an angle by turning your body).

These plates from the work of Vincentio Saviolo, Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez, and Jeronimo de Carranza help illustrate what Silver suggests about the Spanish fighting style. Notice how the feet seem to be in motion and the hand and rapier are in front of the fighter so as to slap or attack the thrust of the opponent's blade away.

Turner and Soper, as well as theatre historian James L. Jackson, contend that the Spanish style as illustrated above is written about in the plays of Shakespeare, John Marston, and Christopher Marlow. Jackson suggests that evidence of the Spanish style can be found in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which, he says, "demonstrates knowledge of the style as well as a style most likely taught to actors by Saviolo himself."³¹ Jackson also concludes, based on historical records, Saviolo took over Blackfriars from Bonetti after his death. However, much like McCollum and Wright, Jackson, Turner, and Soper also do not look into the entire historical record of Saviolo's life to test the likelihood of Saviolo's teaching actors the Spanish style of fence. For instance, Saviolo states,

31 James L. Jackson, "The Fencing Actor Lines in Shakespeare's Plays," *Modern Language News* 57 (1942): 615-621.

The art and exercise of the rapier and dagger is much more rare and excellent than anie other It is a noble science for gentlemen of honor and nobility.”³²

This passage implies that the style Saviolo teaches is not meant for any other but those belonging to the noble and gentlemen class. The passage seems to confirm Silver’s remark: “Saviolo, like his predecessor, Bonetti, only taught nobles and gentlemen of the Court.”³³

Other historical evidence points to the improbability of Saviolo’s teaching in Blackfriars. John Florio, in 1578, writes that Saviolo taught at the “sign of the Red Lion.”³⁴ Silver states that Saviolo taught at the court at London and in the country within the space of seven or eight years.³⁵ Silver’s remarks suggest that while in London, Saviolo taught only at the court and did not teach at Blackfriars. Silver also states that Saviolo taught outside of London, for seven to eight years traveling across England. According to historical records, Saviolo arrived in London in 1590 and died in 1599. If Saviolo traveled around the countryside for seven to eight years and spent perhaps only two years in London teaching at the court, it is highly unlikely that actors would have spent enough time training with Saviolo to learn anything except the basics of fighting. The records of the London Masters of Defense indicate that students would study and practice sword fighting for eight years until they achieved fluency in a weapon,³⁶ and, according to fencing historian Egerton Castle, Spanish and Italian fencing masters would train new students for eight to ten years in order to perfect their style of fence.³⁷

The time spent in teaching beginners seems to indicate two possibilities: one, that actors could not have become proficient in the Spanish style of fence taught by Saviolo, or two, that actors could

32 Saviolo, *His Practice*, 192-3.

33 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 564.

34 John Florio, *Second Frutes* (London, 1591), 66.

35 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 564.

36 *Sloane Manuscript 2530* (London, 1590), 5-28.

37 Egerton Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence: From the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1969), 97.

have come to him already trained in swordplay and learned the Spanish style from him. However, since contemporaries write that Saviolo taught only at court, it is highly unlikely that actors went to court to learn from him. In light of this evidence—that Saviolo taught only nobles and gentlemen of the court, and that Saviolo was unlikely to have taught at Blackfriars—there still is a question as to how playwrights seem to have modeled their stage combats after Saviolo, like Shakespeare did with Tybalt's fencing style in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Jackson, Turner, and Soper point out that Shakespeare must have had knowledge of Saviolo's style of fencing, as is evident in *Romeo and Juliet*. However, *knowledge* of a style is not the same as *training* in that style. For example, I can have knowledge of Bruce Lee and his style of martial arts, and might even be able to reproduce a small portion of his techniques, but it does not mean I am trained in his style or an expert in martial arts. Jackson suggests that knowledge of the Spanish style is evidence that Shakespeare was trained in it. I argue that Shakespeare simply knew about Saviolo. He might have encountered Saviolo by reputation in print as early as 1591, because Florio, who knew Saviolo, provides the first extant description of him in *Second Frutes*, a work that Elizabethan historian Kenneth Muir suggests Shakespeare read.³⁸ Castle notes that Saviolo was a very popular figure in England as it seems that that many of the nobles flocked to his school.³⁹ Castle cites George Silver's book, which states, "this wan [Saviolo] got much, still continuing their false teaching and to the end of their lies," and, "The Nobles all came running to him with their capes."⁴⁰ John Florio, in his seventh dialogue of his *Second Frutes*, comments on Saviolo,

There is no man that teaches with more dexterity and nimbleness.
He has skill in every kind of weapon . . . but at most with rapier
and dagger . . . He vaults most nimble and is most patient.⁴¹

38 K. Muir, "Shakespeare and Florio," *Notes and Queries*, 197 (1952), 493-5.

39 Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, 114.

40 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 565.

41 Florio, *Second Frutes*, 187.

Rapier and dagger fighting was taught to the nobles at court, who seemed enthralled with the Spanish style, which came from Saviolo, and Silver's and Florio's comments seem to indicate the popularity of Saviolo among the English nobles.

Unlike Bonetti, Saviolo's teaching was so popular and in such demand that he printed his work in three fencing manuals in 1595. Castle asserts "no master of fence is likely to have written a book until he had acquired a widespread reputation as a teacher."⁴² Further, Elizabethan playwrights based many of their ideas on popular works of the time. For instance, John Jowett argues that Shakespeare got the idea of *Romeo and Juliet* from popular author Arthur Brook's long poem, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, written in 1562,⁴³ which also supplied hints for the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Jowett also contends that Shakespeare was inspired by other works, such as the work of Plautus for *Comedy of Errors*, Ralph Holinshed's *Chronicles* for many of his history plays, and Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalynde* for *As You Like It*.⁴⁴ Thus, it would seem in character for Shakespeare to use Saviolo's text as a model for Tybalt's fencing style in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Shakespeare may have been influenced by the writings of Saviolo, but perhaps he may have used his writing not to praise the Spanish style, but to mock the style generally, and Saviolo in particular. Relations between Spain and England were strained at the time. According to historian Chris Trueman, during the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign, a rift occurred between England and Spain.⁴⁵ Relations between the two kingdoms had been declining slowly from 1558 to 1568, but in 1568 the English seized some Spanish bullion

42 Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, 4. It is important to point out that neither Rocco Bonetti nor Jerinomo is known to have published a fencing manual, which is why I believe Silver and the Masters of Defense questioned his capability as a teacher.

43 William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 396.

44 Ibid., 250, 655.

45 Chris Trueman, *Elizabeth I and Spain*, History Learning Site, http://www.historylearning-site.co.uk/elizabeth_spain.htm (accessed June 1, 2008).

ships that had been blown into English waters. These ships had gold on board that was to be used to pay for Alva's army in the Netherlands. The Spanish responded by seizing English merchant ships that were docked in Antwerp, and from that point on open hostilities existed between England and Spain until 1604.⁴⁶

There is some evidence that popular animosity toward Spain became deep-seated among the English, and continued long after the Armada, Elizabeth's death, and the peace treaty King James I negotiated with Spain in 1604. Antimo Galli in 1613 wrote about an incident in the theatre in which the patrons supposed a foreigner to be a Spaniard and "whistled and jeered at him in such a fashion" that he would never go back to the theatre again.⁴⁷ Many historians believe this popular bitterness against Spain arose from the Spanish Armada's attempt to invade England in May of 1588. Queen Elizabeth made a speech recording the victory over the Spanish and is quoted as saying, "I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too and think foul scorn against Spain."⁴⁸ Shakespeare appeared in the theatre-scene in London a scant four years later. Thus, Shakespeare might reflect the same attitude against Spain as did the Queen and many an Englishman of his time. Therefore, we might conjecture that he would not praise a Spanish style of fence but perhaps mock it. Perhaps, in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare uses Saviolo's popular text to mock the Spanish style that it teaches.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* includes terminology found in Saviolo's fencing manual, as Tybalt's fencing style seems to show a strong Spanish influence. Mercutio remarks, after Tybalt has insulted Romeo, "Alla stoccata carrie it away."⁴⁹ Florio describes Saviolo as particularly adept at the *stoccata*, and Silver describes the best ward to be the *stoccata*, as taught by the Italian masters

46 Ibid.

47 Antimo Galli, *Letters from the Florentine Correspondence* (London, 1613), 17.

48 Elizabeth I, *Speech to the Troops at Tilbury* (London, 1588), 1.

49 Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.

Jeronimo and Saviolo.⁵⁰ There are other references in the play to Tybalt's fencing style being influenced by Saviolo. Mercutio calls him a "Courageous Captain of compliments" and a "Gentlemen of the first and second Cause."⁵¹ These lines seem to make Mercutio allude to Saviolo's second book, *Of Honor and Honorable Quarrels*, in which Saviolo outlines the reasons for engaging in combat and the types of quarrels and argument that suffice for an aggressive answer, referring to this as the "code duello."⁵²

Another interesting insight into Tybalt's purportedly Saviolo-influenced style of fencing is seen in Mercutio's mockery, when he calls Tybalt the "king of cats." Saviolo introduced the forming of the left hand, which usually was covered by a mail or leather glove, into a cat-like formation in order to paw or beat away quickly the attacker's sword. As seen in figure 8, the hand held thus could be interpreted as resembling a cat's pawing, beating away yarn or a mouse. The picture comes from Saviolo's text showing a Spanish style of fighting with the left hand raised in a cat-like position; thus, Shakespeare may be using Mercutio's "king of cats" to poke fun at this rather odd-looking stance.



Figure 8: Vincentio Saviolo- Illustrating a fighter's free hand in a cat like fashion to beat an opponent's blade away.

50 Silver. *Paradoxes of Defence*. 72. A ward is a defensive position that fencers take. It could also be called an unguard position.

51 Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv.

52 Vincentio Saviolo, "Of Honor and Honorable Quarrels," in *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*, ed. James L. Jackson (Delmare: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1972), 311-488.

Mercutio makes other derogatory comments regarding Tybalt's fencing style when he calls Tybalt a dancer (an attribute Silver gives to the Spanish style of fighting), stating that his own sword will make Tybalt dance.⁵³ Mercutio adds that Tybalt fights as one sings a prick-song, keeps time, distance, and proportion.⁵⁴ These lines seem to infer that Tybalt fights as a dancer, and one could almost sing a tune to Tybalt's dancing feet. The dance-like movement discussed in Saviolo and illustrated earlier in this section could be evidence that Shakespeare may have been mocking Saviolo in Mercutio's musical allusions about Tybalt's fencing style. Silver's description of Saviolo's fencing style helps to illuminate Mercutio's derogatory comments. Silver writes that according to Saviolo, the combatants stand as brave as they can with their bodies' straight upright, narrow spaced with their feet, continually moving as though they were in a dance.⁵⁵ Mercutio's insults appear to mock Saviolo's insistence that this technique results in the "fatal prick of the rapier."⁵⁶ Shakespeare, via Mercutio, seems to be making fun of Saviolo's treatise on fencing, especially the passage where Saviolo says,

I think it necessary that everyone should learn this arte, for as a man has vice and can sing by nature, he shall never do it with time and measure of music unless he has learned my art.⁵⁷

The idea of Shakespeare's using his text to subvert the ideals of the noble class is not uncommon. I suggest that the fight scene in *Romeo and Juliet* not only may be a satire on the Italian masters (Saviolo and Bonetti), but also, by using Tybalt as the epitome of the arrogant nobleman, an oblique tweak of the noblemen who favored the Spanish style. It seems clear that Shakespeare had knowledge of the boasting ways of the Italian masters, perhaps from the writing of Silver. He also seems to have been well aware of the current change in fashion among the nobility from the English style of swordplay

53 Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.

54 Ibid., I.iv.

55 George Silver. *Paradoxes of Defence*. 512.

56 Vincentio Saviolo. *His Practice*, 252, 269.

57 Ibid., 206.

to the more ornate Spanish style. Shakespeare's seeming disdain for the Spanish style would indicate that Shakespeare was not a student or follower of the Spanish school. Therefore, Shakespeare's mockery of the Spanish style and Saviolo's attitude toward those of lower class strongly suggest that Shakespeare and his company would not have taken lessons from Saviolo.⁵⁸ This conclusion leaves the London Masters of Defense as the most likely source of instruction for Elizabethan actors.

The English Fencing Style

The fencing style taught by the London Masters of Defense is different from the Spanish and Italian styles. The Italian style emphasizes the thrust over the cut and uses low stances, and the Spanish style calls for fencers to stand straight with knees only slightly bent and move in a dance like fashion. The English fencing style, as described by George Silver, places an emphasis on the cut over the thrust and a medium stance, thus appearing to fit somewhere in between the Spanish and Italian styles. The English style also advocates a direct confrontation approach as opposed to the dance-like movement of the Spanish. Figures 9, 10, and 11 illustrate the English style of Elizabethan fencing master Joseph Swetnam. For he "true guard," Swetnam explains:

Keep thy Rapier hand so low as the pocket of thy hose at armes end, without bowing the elbow joint and keep thy left hand right with the left cheek . . . beare the arm out stiff"⁵⁹

58 J. Aylward. *The English Master of Arms*. (London: Routledge, 1956), 51.

59 Joseph Swetnam, *The Schoole of The Noble and Werthy Science of Defence* (London, 1617), 15.



Figure 9: The “true guard.”

For the “carelesse or lazie guard” Swetnam suggest that one should “lay thy point of your rapier upon the ground a foot wide of your left side over thwart your body, and let the hilt of your rapier rest upon your right thigh.”⁶⁰

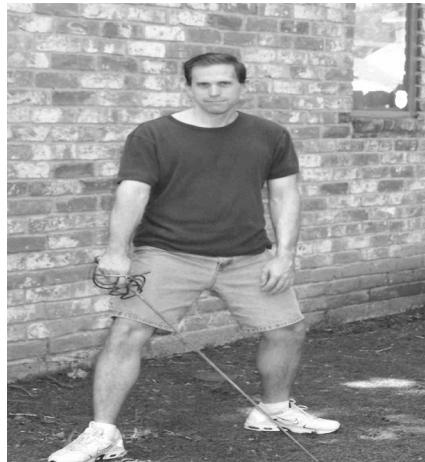


Figure 10: The “carelesse or lazie guard.”

For the “fore-hand guard.” Swetnam writes that one should “Put thy Rapier hand under thy left, alwaies keeping the point of thy Rapier something variable, and yet something directly about the girdle-
stead of thy enemy.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁶¹ Ibid., 112.



Figure 11: The “fore-hand guard.”

These examples of the English style are unique features not seen in the Spanish or Italian schools. The English style, then presents a third fencing style that Elizabethan audiences might witness in a fight on stage. I believe the English style was most likely seen on the Elizabethan stage, and was taught to actors by members of the London Masters of Defense.

The London Masters of Defense was the officially recognized guild of fencing teachers in and around the city of London, at least until the Italians entered the scene. Like other guild companies, it kept meticulous records and looked after both the welfare of its practitioners and the training of recruits. The London Masters of Defense did not just teach rapier and dagger but a myriad of weapons, including sword and buckler, quarterstaff, long sword, backsword, and many others. The historical documents for this company deal with professional matters, such as dues received, students trained, and rivalries between the company and other fencing schools taught by foreigners.⁶²

I am assuming that Joseph Swetnam and George Silver were members of The London Masters of Defense. I base this hypothesis on Silver’s intricate knowledge of the London Masters of Defense,

⁶² Herbert Berry, *The Noble Science* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 65.

his animosity toward the Italian takeover of fencing schools, and his own fencing manual, *Bref Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defense*, which outlines an English style of fighting. Besides the work of Silver, I also gleaned information about the organization from an incomplete manuscript, attributed to the London Masters of Defense, entitled *The Noble Science*, also known as the *Sloane Manuscript 2530*.

The surviving manuscript details how the company tended to the welfare of practitioners and the training of recruits, the care for aged masters, and the hiring of qualified people to teach in the schools. Also given are fees charged per lesson, 4 to 5 shillings, plus an unknown cost to advance in ranks.⁶³ What the manuscript lacks is information about the style of fence the school taught; however, Silver fills in the gaps about the style taught by the London Masters of Defense as well as the purpose of the school.

The information provided in the *Sloane Manuscript*, and in the works of George Silver, shows how the London Masters of Defense came to offer and teach fighting techniques for the merchant and lower classes at fees an actor could afford. I also propose that the fencing masters of the London Masters of Defense held the same contempt for the Italian upstarts that came into the city to teach only the upper-class citizens. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be seen as a guide and example of the Masters of Defense style of "playing for the prize," which was how students moved up in rank within the company. This is similar to any type of martial arts training where, in order to advance to a higher rank, a student must take a test, which the teacher grades.

To understand how the London Masters of Defense felt about the Italians encroaching on their livelihood and the way they taught and trained their students, it is important to understand their history.

63 *Sloane Manuscript*, 26, 29, 31. It could also be ascertained that, since the London Masters of Defense taught a variety of weaponry, the actors might have learned to use long sword, quarter staff, and bastard sword from members of the company. This training could have given the actors the ability to fight in many of the historical plays, which would use medieval or older weapons.

In 1540, Henry VIII granted letters patent to the Masters of the Noble Science of Defense, who had organized to prevent unauthorized fencing schools in London from making a profit.⁶⁴ Roger Ashem, in his diary, notes that the schools of the London Masters of Defense were found in every part of London.⁶⁵ For a time, the Masters of Defense enjoyed rising popularity, not just among the commoners but the nobility as well, through their teaching and superior fighting.⁶⁶ This was before what scholars Craig Turner and Tony Soper coin as the Italian “invasion,” which led to some altercations between such Italian masters as Bonetti, Jeronimo, and Saviolo and the Masters of Defense in London. Robert Morsberger paints an interesting picture of the Masters of Defense during the Italian invasion. With the coming of the Italians, many of the upper class and nobility of London flocked to the fashionable Italian fencing schools.⁶⁷

The Commons probably saw little of the fighting techniques of the Italian masters. They taught in closed rooms, allowed only the upper class to view their teaching methods, and they seldom displayed their art to the public. On the other hand, the English fencing masters displayed their students’ techniques in the guildhalls and the theatres, where the students competed to attain higher rank in the company.⁶⁸

The *Sloane Manuscript* outlines a long list of techniques for how best to play for a prize; its contents can be summed up as having to make a hit on your opponent. The fencing demonstration was called “playing for the prize,” and the ranks, in ascending order, progressed from Scholar to Provost to Master. Each match would be judged on how many hits a student could inflict upon his opponent, as assessed by a panel of four judges. Students fought with dulled weapons and were judged based upon their skill. When a student

64 Turner and Soper, *Elizabethan Swordplay*, 9.

65 Ashem, *Toxophilus*, 97.

66 Tuner and Soper, *Elizabethan Swordplay*, 14.

67 Robert E Morsberger, *Swordplay and The Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage* (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1974), 14.

68 *Sloane Manuscript*, 31.

acquired proficiency in two weapons, he would advance to the next level.⁶⁹ Before each match, the challengers would parade through town with accompanying trumpets sounding, to advertise that there was a challenge about to be played.⁷⁰

These contests were popular from about 1555 to 1590. According to historical records, some of the theatres used were the Theatre, the Curtain, and the Bel Savage. E. K. Chambers notes that the Globe was sublet to the London Masters to give a public demonstration of their skill.⁷¹ Phillip Henslowe demanded a share of the takings when members of the London Masters of Defense engaged his Rose playhouse for a challenge on November 4, 1598.⁷²

With these events performed at London theatres the Commons, probably including actors, playwrights, and the shareholders of the theatres. Evidence of common knowledge regarding “playing for the prize” appears in Ben Jonson’s play, *Cynthia’s Revels*:⁷³

BE IT KNOWN to all that profess arms that we, A.B., Master of The Noble science of Defense, do give leave and license to our Provost, C.D. to play his Master’s Prize against all Masters in their subtile mysterie at these weapons, viz: longsword, sword and buckler, Morris pike, and rapier and dagger. These are to give notice that our said Provost will be present the ...th day of the present month to perform and do his utter most for the achievement and bearing away of the prize.
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!⁷⁴

According to fencing historian J. D. Aylward, “playing for the prize” followed a typical set of rules such as the number of passes the fighters were allowed to take during the fight. Aylward speculates that, if the rules were set up for the beginning fencing scholar by the London Masters of Defense, the student would be given a number of passes or movements that were allowed for him to take,

69 Ibid., 25.

70 Morsberger, *Swordplay*, 62-3.

71 E.K Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 361.

72 Phillip Henslowe, *Henslowe’s Diary* (London, 1591-1601), 101.

73 Other plays that reference playing for the prize include *Every Man in His Humor* and *Sir Clymon and Sir Clamydes*.

74 Ben Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels* (London, 1601), V.ii.

and in that set number of movements he had to hit his opponent a set number of times.⁷⁵

I contend that Shakespeare gives a physical example of such bouts in the final scene between Hamlet and Laertes (Act V, scene ii). In that scene Osric seems to set up rules for the match as though the fighters were “playing for the prize:”

Osric: The King, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

After the rules are established by Osric, and agreed to by the combatants, the bout is described in the playscript as follows:

King Claudius: Set me the stoops of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire:
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,
'Now the king dunks to Hamlet.' Come, begin:
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Hamlet: Come on, sir.

Laertes: Come, my lord. (They play)⁷⁶

Hamlet: One.

Laertes: No.

Hamlet: Judgment.

Osric: A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laertes: Well; again.

King Claudius: Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;

⁷⁵ J. D. Aylward. *The English Master of Arms*, 35. George L. Hoskins, *The Life and Times of Edward Alleyn Actor, Master of the Kings Bears, Founder of the College of God's Gift at Dulwich* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952) details the French traveler Di Richefort's description of fighting for the prize.”

⁷⁶ Manuscripts and other sources describe *play* as an act of proving one's skill with weaponry. In this scenario, the weapons are dulled and no one is injured.

Here's to thy health. (Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within)
Give him the cup.

Hamlet: I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile. Come. (They play)

Another hit; what say you?

Laertes: A touch, a touch, I do confess.⁷⁷

Note that there is a judge (Osric) for this bout and that there are no actual blows struck that could result in injuries to either party (at least not yet). This sounds very much like what the *Sloane Manuscript* describes as “playing for the prize.” The structuring of this scene seems to reveal that Shakespeare was, at the least, knowledgeable of Elizabethan exhibition fighting, and as I have argued earlier, many of these exhibitions were performed at theatres in the London area including Shakespeare's Globe. The Hamlet-Laertes fight scene is revealing evidence of Shakespeare's fencing knowledge, which far exceeds learning from a distance, or through manuals.

Shakespeare shows himself to be well versed in the art of fencing through his stage directions concerning the fencers. I agree with James L. Jackson, who believes that the *First Quarto* stage direction, “They catch one another's Rapiers” indicates that each combatant seized the other's rapier with his free hand, demonstrates a detailed knowledge of swordplay.⁷⁸ According to Jackson, the exchange of rapiers was a

fairly advanced move known as the left hand seizure, a move in which the fencer takes his opponents hilt with his left hand and twists the weapon outward from his grasp⁷⁹.

The defender's only response is to take the same action, grasping the attacker's hilt with his left hand and disarming him, the two actions resulting in an exchange of rapiers. The left hand seizure disarm is discussed in three fencing manuals,⁸⁰ including Saviolo's manuals

⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.ii.

⁷⁸ James L Jackson, “They Catch one Another's Rapiers: The Exchange of Weapons in *Hamlet*” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990), 281-98.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 282.

⁸⁰ Giacomo Di Grassi's and Vincentio Saviolo's works both talk about this disarm. In Jackson's article, “They Catch one Another's Rapiers,” he says he had tried to reconstruct

and George Silver's *Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defense*.

Unlike Saviolo's manuals, Silver's system is largely defensive and is a response to the Italian rapier-style fighting, so Silver taught a technique that could be called the left-handed seizure. He writes that, when one combatant can take his opponent's sword with his left hand, then he should pivot his body backward and to the left, drawing back his own weapon. He thus holds his enemy immobile and threatens him with his point; the backward movement is to avoid the enemy's taking a similar grip. Silver suggests further that the only effective response to this grip is to take a similar grip of the opponent because each person can overpower his opponent's right hand with his left and disarm him.⁸¹ During this movement, a disarm and an exchange have occurred.

I do not find it surprising that Silver and other fencing masters of the time wrote about this type of disarm, nor do I want to quibble about how Shakespeare could have learned it from Silver's text. As already noted, I found it quite difficult, especially with Silver's text, to understand the intricacies of how this disarm exchange works, and I maintain that most people, trained or not, would find it difficult if not impossible to imitate this movement without a teacher to guide them. What I find most remarkable is that Silver's text was not printed until 1898, meaning that the text could only have been circulated in manuscript during Shakespeare's time. Probably, therefore, Shakespeare and his actors had to learn this technique directly, from either George Silver himself or other members of the London Masters of Defense.

Furthermore, unlike the Italian masters in London (who charged anywhere from £20 to £100 a lesson), the London Masters charged only 4 to 5 shillings a lesson.⁸² Actors and people of

these fencing masters' moves based on their texts, but found it too difficult because Saviolo nor Di Grassi do not give enough details.

81 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, 596-598.

82 *Sloane Manuscript*, 113.

lower classes could afford to take lesson from the English Masters.⁸³ Jay Anglin, in his essay “The Schools of Defense” suggests that the London Masters of Defense was “founded expressly to meet the needs of the lower orders of society, who found defensive skills useful in a hostile and violent environment.”⁸⁴ According to the *Sloane Manuscript*, two individuals with connections to the theatre played for prizes in order to move up in rank among the company of English fencing masters: playwright Robert Greene and actor Richard Tarlton appear to have taken tests.⁸⁵ Evidence suggests both men had some connections to Shakespeare. All this leads me to conclude that members of the London Masters of Defense are the most likely instructors who trained Elizabethan actors, and therefore, the most common fighting style seen on the Elizabethan stage was the English style of fence.

I believe there is more information to be discovered about the Elizabethan actor’s fencing knowledge and techniques. I have examined only two of Shakespeare’s plays in this article: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. However, there are numerous other works—such as *All’s Well that Ends Well*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and many of his history plays—that could be examined to demonstrate and convey the actor’s knowledge of swordplay and its English roots. Further investigation into more of texts of Shakespeare and other early modern playwrights might reveal more about the influence and style of the London Masters of Defense.

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83 Also, although there is no historical evidence to support the following claim, it still should be considered that perhaps the LMOD or other fencing schools offered special rates for actors, while in return their style of fence or teaching could be seen by hundred in the audience, thereby garnering interest in their fencing school. This might be a reason why there are so many references to the style of fencing seen in the plays of the time period.

84 Jay P. Anglin. “The School of Defense in Elizabethan London.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (1984): 393-410.

85 *Sloane Manuscript*, 32-33.

DELNO C. WEST AWARD WINNER (2009)

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**The Convent as Cultural Conduit:
Irish Matronage in Early Modern Spain**

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Irish catholic women religious who migrated to Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries established a strong tradition of schools, hospitals and charitable institutions. Education and learning were important to Irish communities, and were recognised within Spain. Irish nuns and their convents were not part of an enclosed tradition and outreach work was a central aim. Sponsorship links between women were part of a collective plan, and cultural matronage by and for women appears to have been very effective. Censorship by the Inquisition and tridentine orthodoxy was contested by women's religious houses which resisted censorship of book collections and art works. This article explores the links of cultural matronage between Irish women and their resistance to patriarchal efforts to control them.

It is often assumed that due to enclosure catholic convent spaces were private, and that enclosure rules after 1563 drew a deep division between those in holy orders and the society they had withdrawn from. This was not the case in relation to Irish convents established throughout the Iberian peninsular from 1590 onwards. The women who founded, sponsored and lived in these convents were not part of an enclosed tradition. Irish female learning was renowned, and continued to be prized within Spain, a country first-generation, Irish migrants had entered for religious and political reasons. These women, and their surrounding networks and communities developed trading, medical and educational networks. Female sponsors, or matrons, were central to the development and sustained role of female education and medical orders. Matronage of these institutions and spaces has remained an area overlooked by scholars who have tended to focus upon Irish incomers roles' in the clergy and the Spanish military.¹

1 Recent studies include the Irish in Europe project's three volume edited collections,

A lengthy historical relationship existed between Spain and Ireland stretching back to the middle ages, with well developed trade links between the south of Ireland and its ports, and north west Spain. Irish settlement in La Coruña was well established in the sixteenth century, and included the founding of an Irish college in Santiago de Compostela.² From 1608 onwards Irish people were granted equal citizenship if they had lived in Spain for ten years and had made a contribution to their communities.³ Irish convents were established from 1590 onwards in La Coruña, Santiago, Madrid, Valladolid, Salamanca, Seville and Cadiz, as well as Lisbon. None of these were enclosed. They all focused upon outreach work as part of their active missions. The majority were Dominican or Benedictine, and were educational or medical orders.

Post tridentine reforms emphasised enclosure, the privatising of spaces within the convent walls. Celibacy and chastity were re-emphasised. Charitable industry was also re-emphasised, and this was something that Irish nuns in particular developed outside the convent, as well as inside. When targeted by regional archbishops to place grills on windows and refrain from outside visits, teaching, or other active mission activities, the Abbesses of the Irish convents would reply by citing the rule of St. Benedict, chapter 64, which obliged the nuns to work and convert.⁴ Educational reforms originally introduced by Jesuits into their schools and colleges after 1563 ironically fostered a degree of autonomy. Female religious

Thomas O'Connor (ed.) *The Irish in Europe, 1580-1815* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001); Thomas O'Connor & Mary Ann Lyons (eds.) *Irish Migrants after Kinsale, 1602-1820* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003); Thomas O'Connor & Mary Ann Lyons (eds.) *Irish communities in early-modern Europe* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).

2 See Patricia O'Connell, *The Irish College at Santiago de Compostela, 1605-1769* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

3 Philip III granted full Irish citizenship to loyal catholic émigrés from 1608 onwards. This was prompted by close ties which had existed during the previous century, and the Spanish view that the Irish were loyal catholics who had fought a war with England to preserve catholicism.

4 The rule of St. Benedict established that the head of the house was the most important person in the monastery or nunnery. This meant that in practice the Abbess or the Prioress had similar rights and privileges as abbots, rendering them powerful women who could, if necessary, communicate directly with the papacy.

adopted some of those ideas, broadening the constituency of their scholars. They were active agents in choosing to remain in outreach work, including pastoral, educational and medical duties.

Early Irish migrants were often elite and wealthy. This first wave of migrants was religious and political, not economic. Their sense of elite status was constantly referred to by themselves, and by their Spanish sponsors. The Condé de Caracena, governor of Galicia, advised Philip II that the Irish were 'the right kind of catholics'.⁵ They had fought a war for Catholicism. Wealthy Irish female migrants were part of septs, that is, a large group claiming to belong to a common named ancestor. This could be a sept chief of the O'Neill's or the O'Donnell's, a highly regarded sept. Irish wives did not have to name their children's father until they were on their deathbed, and notions of legitimacy, primogeniture and monogamy were not part of the old Irish sept culture. The power of women to inherit, and to disseminate wealth was considerably greater in Ireland than in most other European states. This sense of elite status meant that Irish women and men had themselves re-ennobled when they settled in Spain.⁶ Sources also show that there was one Irish female memorial (will) for every ten men's memorial,⁷ a very high percentage for the early modern period.

Matronage was vital in oiling the processes of assimilation. Monarchy and government could not have any hope of control in a composite kingdom without keeping the regional elites happily involved in their government. For first generation Irish migrants' assimilation was the apogee of their expectations and plans. What was important was the contribution which Irish (mainly elite) incomers could provide in terms of wealth, education and culture to the, at times, economically unstable domestic Spanish economy with its huge skill gaps in terms of the lack of educated linguists,

⁵ Estado Legajo 225, Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS).

⁶ Manuscripts held in the Archivo General de Simancas relating to Irish communities are full of examples of elite Irish re-ennoblement.

⁷ The AGS holds manuscripts which detail Irish women and men's memorials.

as well as merchants. The Spanish monarchy and governments made clear their continued support of Irish incomers to maintain co-operation and reward loyal service. Matronage, as well as patronage needs to be seen in terms of what could be received, and what could be distributed. The disposal of matronage and patronage included the granting of titles, lands and offices to loyal Irish, and a reciprocal relationship based on Irish sponsorship of schools, colleges, churches and hospitals within the peninsular. When mapped against the foundations established by men in the same period, boys' schools, colleges and hospitals for men, we can see that almost as many institutions and projects were established by women, with the exception of universities. However, ironically, Irish female religious were not, in their schools and colleges, subject to the level of authoritarian control and inspection of their buildings, teaching methods and book collections.

Censorship of vernacular texts and materials initiated within the Inquisition did not impact upon female spaces in the way it impacted upon male spaces.⁸ Inspectors and inquisition functionaries could enter monasteries and boys' schools, but could not search convents.⁹ Any male outsider who attempted to gain entry to an Irish convent was informed swiftly that he was not allowed in any of the private rooms. This meant that convent buildings were uniquely feminised spaces, and surviving books and manuscript collections show among other banned literature, a variety of humanist texts including Pliny, Plutarch, A History of the Jews, Latin and Greek grammars (Greek for girls was banned on the basis that it could cause their brains to explode), natural history collections, animal studies, shells and books on poisons as well as other pharmacological works. Convent building show that during the sixteenth and the seventeenth

8 For a useful discussion of Inquisition censorship of texts and prohibited books see John Edwards, *Torquemada and the Inquisitors* (Gloucester: Tempus Press, 2005) especially chapter 6.

9 Although the Dominican order was founded in order to drive the Inquisition forward it appears that Dominican sisters and their matrons in Spain played no part in this, and actively subverted it in their own houses.

centuries the spaces for *bibliotecas* and scriptoriums increased to house collections and work spaces, including the use of desks. The Dominican convents in Valladolid, La Coruña and Lisbon had large library buildings, and extensive library collections.¹⁰

Irish convents operated matronage through a number of intersecting networks including business and finance, land sales and mortgages, local people as employees, education of girls who were poor as well as wealthy, medicine, and the dissemination of texts, art and architecture. It was not unusual to find both Irish and Spanish women leaving land and property to women friends and relatives. Schools and hospitals were gifted in many women's wills. Dominican and Benedictine orders were static in Spain, and became landowners.

Female religious included a number of Irish women who purposely sponsored religious orders and their missions. Matronage of these projects was deliberate and sustained. A focus upon some micro-historical case studies illustrates this self conscious sponsorship by women of women. Pride in ancestry was an important feature in both Irish and Spanish senses of belonging. Sept or clan networks stretched across the Iberian peninsular.¹¹ James Casey notes that Spanish clan networks of sponsorship and honour were central to reward and promotion within Spanish society.¹² This reward system also applied to Irish incomers. Tombs and burial chambers were costly. Irish women, and in particular, Doña Catalina Warnes, married to a Spanish man, sponsored the Hospital for Women in Cadiz. Vast amounts were donated to the hospital including equipment, a pharmacy, and the decoration of the chapel

10 The Dominican convent in Lisbon, Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso (Our lady of Good Success) still survives and functions as a school and college. For a useful history see Honor McCabe O.P., *A Light Undimmed. The Story of the Convent of Our Lady of Bom Sucesso, Lisbon, 1639-2006* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2007).

11 Septs were dynastic lineages, which included landholding, and were based on kinship, shared names and shared ancestors, although at times this was a person who was greatly admired rather than blood kin.

12 James Casey, *Early Modern Spain* (London: Routledge, 1999), 194-195.

which included sumptuous sculptures, three grandiose tombs for the Irish matrons, and stone slabs with epitaphs and genealogies.

In many towns and cities, and in particular successful port economies like Seville during the sixteenth century and Cadiz during the late seventeenth century, there was a veritable explosion of matronage and investment in buildings for women, and sponsored by women. A case in point is the aforementioned Women's Hospital in Cadiz. Its full name is the Iglesia del Hospital de Nostra Senora del Carmen. The year 1634 saw the construction of one of the first and oldest women's hospitals. This was exclusively for women and girls. Three key Irish matrons were Doña Alfonsa O'Brien, Doña Catalina Warnes and Doña Eugenia Maria Meleroy, who are all buried in the vaults of the hospital chapel. They had all invested heavily in the hospital creating and supporting provision of distinctive wards, children and adult women being separate, infectious diseases separate, and funding for the pharmacy, as well as a fund to purchase small toys for younger children who were confined to bed, but who became bored.¹³ The hospital chapel also included art works by El Greco, his "St. Francis" is still displayed in the chapel today. The hospitals' sculpture collection included "Our Lady of Sorrows" and "St. Catherine of Alexandria."¹⁴ No expense was spared on the hospital building and infrastructure.

Beauty and practicality combine to create a peaceful space for girls and women who needed treatment and never were turned away. Hospital admittance books show women from the peninsular and throughout Europe being treated, and there is reference to a "mulatta" from Africa who was treated.¹⁵ Space was accessed by all. Some Spanish convents developed fairly ascetic ways of living, however, Irish convents never tended to asceticism. Existing Irish convent art collections including that of the Lisbon convent (still

13 Protocolis Cadiz 1024, Archivo Historico Provincial de Cadiz (hereafter AHPC).

14 Today the building serves as an administrative centre for the diocese of Cadiz, however, it operated as a women's hospital until the early 1970s.

15 Protocolis Cadiz 1014, AHPC. Folios not numbered.

a teacher training college for girls) continue to be curated by the nuns. The proliferation of convent art had more than just a religious dimension. The painting of St. Paula in the chapel of the Lisbon convent show how nuns taught girls in small tutored groups, and with books, manuscripts, ink, quills and desks. Schools operated a sliding scale of fees, charging wealthy parents more, and citing the need for equipment for the bibliotecas and scriptoriums.¹⁶

The reign of Philip II saw the proliferation of art, and not just for the private spaces of the wealthy and the elite. Rosemary Mulcahy has recently analysed the filtering down of art in institutional spaces.¹⁷ The use of cheaper materials became common, and a wider constituency of European artists and craftspeople were brought into court and the art world, including a number of women. One, Catalina de Ribera y Mendoza, became a painter at court and beyond.

Catalina was a *beata*, a lay religious woman. Her matron was Joanna of Austria, wife of Philip II. Catalina was known as the Queen of accessories. However, she in turn sponsored the Irish convent in Seville that had sheltered a cousin of hers who had sought sanctuary from Inquisition investigation. Consequently, a Spanish woman sponsored by the Queen in turn sponsored an Irish convent. The links between Irish and Spanish women existed through sponsorship and also the safety afforded by convent sanctuary.

The filtering down of matronage can also be seen in the investment Irish women made, even when they lived outside of convent spaces. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Irish women sponsored sixteen hospitals in Seville, paying larger amounts to those which were exclusively for women and girls. Three significant female sponsors were Maria Penelope Clan, Elena Josefa Linza and Santiago Moffet. Their sponsorship of missions, including one in the Phillipines shows that women had wide interests

¹⁶ Protocolis Cadiz 4458, AHPC. Folios not numbered.

¹⁷ Rosemary Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 14-15.

in missions, particularly Irish ones. They appear to have wished to put their own stamp on catholic projects.¹⁸ An interest in physical geography is evidenced in the wishes of Maria Clan, whose will included the gift of her map collection to female friends.¹⁹ This was by no means a unique gift. Mother Maria Evangelista, Abbess of the convent of St. Anne and St. Joseph in Valladolid had geography on the schools syllabus, and commissioned a painting of herself against a background of books, quills, ink, vellum, books and a globe.²⁰

In Cadiz, Irish women sponsored twenty churches throughout the city, and the charitable projects for the poor and needy. Altogether twenty-two women, from Leonor de Grados, in 1626, to Maria Carmen Barron, in 1783, sponsored churches in the city.²¹ Two convents were also left money in trusts, with strict stipulations about how finance should be consistently donated over the years.²²

They also mediated cultural influences. As well as payments towards book collections in girls schools (many of which were retained despite being included on the banned lists of censored books during the 1590s), they also sponsored the alteration of female symbology. The emergence of *La Divina Pastora*, the virgin shepherdess, was a contentious figure for many ecclesiastics and secular authorities.

The figure of the wholesome pastoral shepherdess was contentious as she represented the rural working woman. This was an image too close to working women, as opposed to the idealised, clinicised Mary. Although *La Divina Pastora* was never as contentious a symbol as Mary Magdalene, with her supposed prostitute past, she was, nevertheless meant to be jettisoned for the

18 Contratacion 5638; Santo Domingo 111; Ultramar 162, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI).

19 Contratacion 5638, AGI.

20 This painting is displayed in the Convent of St. Anne and St. Joseph today.

21 Protocolis Cadiz 320; Protocolis Cadiz 5114, AHPC.

22 Protocolis Cadiz 5150; Protocolis Cadiz 1024, AHPC.

more traditional and conservative Mary mother of Christ. Convents retained their sculptures of La Divina Pastora, and Mary Magdalene, with censorship prompting the retention of these figures. The St. Clare convent in Valladolid hid their sculpture of *La Divina Pastora* in a cupboard. The response was similar to the resistance to censorship of book collections.

How widespread were these networks, and what do we know of the meanings and motivations of these female sponsors? Wills are invaluable sources as they often state very clearly what women wished to do with their own money. After the usual instruction about masses, and the division of monies and lands, came the reasoning for this. Irish women were very clear about the fact that they wished to promote female learning. Writing as well as reading was to be taught, as well as language and linguistic skills. In Ireland women were able to leave their money and worldly goods to anyone they chose to, and this tradition continued in Spain. Allyson Poska notes that within Spain, even poor women were able to leave inheritances to their female friends and relatives.²³

Whilst not completely even handed towards both genders, the relatively egalitarian inheritance customs of Castile and Gaelic Ireland had enough in common to allow the continuation of female to female sponsorship. This played some part in the broader context of assimilation, and the ability of both Irish and Spanish women to operate considerable power over not just the money or land which they owned, but other goods too. In this way book collections were gifted and preserved, whilst banned books from male schools and colleges came under scrutiny and were periodically destroyed.²⁴

In Seville three notable Irish matrons, Maria Penelope Clan, Elena Linza and Santiago Moffet, all independently wealthy,

23 Allyson Poska, *Women and Authority in early Modern Spain. The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 43-46.

24 Many convent book collections from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries still exist as curated collections, like that of the library in the convent of St. Clare in Valladolid. Sadly, others have been broken up as convents have been closed.

specified that their money and property be left to girls' schools, and also to be used in establishing educational projects in South America. Spanish and Irish settlement was central to the colonising process throughout South America. Irish matrons wished to see convents and schools there. The size of these convents drew attention from various Popes, who deemed them to be too large. Attempts were sometimes made to close large convents when the Pope would pronounce that the convent was not in fact a convent, but a city of women. That was the response to a convent reputed to number one thousand women. Not all of the women residing within convent compounds were nuns, some were *beatas*, that is women who made the vows of celibacy and obedience, but not of poverty, in order to control their own finance.

A number of wealthy Irish women lived in the Irish convents of Corpus Christi in Valladolid, and the Dominican convent in La Coruña. These women were often, though not always widows. They made plain in their wills that they wished everything they had, including land and buildings bought in Spain, to go to the convents and their missions and projects.²⁵ In addition, the numbers living in convents were further swelled by pupils, servants and formerly wicked women on the road to reformed behaviour, for example former prostitutes. The dubious figure of Mary Magdalene, the reformed prostitute, loomed large in the fear of papal authorities as well as secular authorities over nuns' work with poor women, and the reforming of their behaviour.

The suspicions attaching to nuns and other women in their communities was one reason for interference, bans, proscriptions and censorship of texts, and art works. Ironically, it was often the religious authorities themselves and their knee-jerk misogynistic reaction to female spaces and choices that forced female religious and their sponsors to circumvent reactionary clampdowns. Convents resisted in the ways they were practised at. The Abbess used her considerable authority to chastise regional archbishops and lesser

²⁵ Hospital Real, Libro de Testamentos 172, Archivo Historico Universitario de Santiago de Compostela.

church functionaries who tried to censor and destroy books, and interfere with teaching and the curricula. Benedictines would cite the order of St. Benedict, the rule they lived by. Teaching, learning, linguistics, and the broader sponsorship of female learning continued, often in the teeth of opposition. The convent, therefore, continued as a cultural conduit and subversive institution throughout the early modern period.

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*Newcastle upon Tyne
Black Gate, View from the Castle Keep*

Notes

Architectural Chastity Belts: The Window Motif as Instrument of Discipline in Italian Fifteenth-Century Conduct Manuals and Art

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*Offering advice on a range of topics from the quotidian to the extraordinary, from superstition to scientific, fifteenth-century conduct manuals appealed to readers of all Italian social classes. This essay focuses specifically on manuals which prescribe behaviors for women, and investigates the reception of these precepts and the extent to which these notions informed and transformed women's lives. Specifically, I examine one piece of advice which recurs throughout instructional literature during this time: the prescribed notion that women should remain far removed from their household windows for the sake of their honor, reputation and chastity. Widely read manuals, such as Alberti's *Della Famiglia* and Barbaro's *Trattati delle donne*, promulgated windows as literal "windows of opportunity" to further vice, lust, adultery, vanity and profligacy. Furthermore, these concerns are addressed in texts beyond the realm of the prudent, instructional literature; the theme recurs as metaphor for deviancy in contemporary fiction and portraiture. Boccaccio's *Decameron*, for example, features several tales in which women carry out affairs by way of their bedroom windows. Within the genre of portrait painting, both Fra Filippo Lippi and Sandro Botticelli painted interior scenes which featured women positioned at windows. The synthesis of these seemingly disparate sources reveals a complicated moral climate that undoubtedly had decisive consequences for Italian women during the fifteenth century.*

The Italian Quattrocento was an era of shifting paradigms, emerging identities and cultural ideologies. As the Italian thirst for excellence burgeoned throughout the fifteenth century, prescriptive literature flourished and the family, newly recognized for its central importance to the welfare of the state, began to take precedence in the hearts and minds of civic humanists. Francesco Barbaro and

Leon Battista Alberti were amongst the first to promote domestic order and virtue as fundamental elements of society. Their treatises on the family affirmed that if the family upheld strong morals and strove for excellence then the state would correspondingly prosper and earn universal renown.

Generally, it is thought that the emphasis on the family helped to redeem the status of women, providing them greater autonomy and influence. However, my research reveals the contrary – not all attention was positive attention. As daughters, wives, mothers and brides-to-be were recognized for their domestic contribution to society, their freedom of action underwent increasingly strict surveillance as the home was equated with honor, virtue and proper codes of conduct. To maintain these ideologies women were literally confined to the household to which the family honor was attached. Thus, women and home collapsed into one, a composite symbol of status, familial wealth and prestige.

The spatial construction of honor became more complicated as certain spaces within the home evaded easy classification, and as a result, considered morally ambiguous. Liminal spaces, such as windows, balconies, and loggias were suspect because they belied the integrity of the architectural boundary between public and private spaces. These interstices were problematic for Quattrocento moralists. Essentially feminine because they were a part of the home and masculine because they allowed participation with public life, windows and other household openings were, both literally and figuratively, voids in regulatory ideals of the period. Prescriptive literature responded to the paradoxical position of these openings by inflating the behaviors over which male heads of households had to be wary and deflating the possibilities of movement for women. For example, Barbaro praises the tenets of the Greek Gorgias, “who wanted women shut up in their homes so that nothing could be known of them except for their reputations.”¹ Similarly, in Alberti’s treatise

1 Francesco Barbaro. “De Re Uxoria,” *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists and Government and Society*, eds. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 203.

Della Famiglia, the main speaker, patriarch Giannozzo dictates instructions to his wife to mind the household possessions carefully he maintains that in order for her to be dutiful she “must not spend all day sitting idly by with your elbows on the window sill, like some lazy wives who always hold their sewing in their hands for an excuse, but their sewing never gets done.”² In popular culture, these orifices were continually used as symbols of deviant behavior and settings for clandestine affairs: small “windows” of opportunity that allowed female protagonists to manipulate their confinement and interact with the public.

The popular sources I examine here, Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Botticelli’s *Woman at a Window*, are secular works. Roughly a century separates them, yet each assumes the domestic setting, thus providing a unique glimpse into daily customs and family life and each includes the window as a central motif, both familiar, tangible object of contemporary life and highly charged symbol of transgression. With the synthesis of these distinct sources, I endeavor to unveil, or more appropriately “unlock,” a common discourse that reveals fifteenth-century attitudes about women’s confinement for the purpose of safeguarding chastity. I will begin with discussion of one of Boccaccio’s hundred tales, a tale of marital strife and feminine guile, and then I will examine Botticelli’s enigmatic painting of a woman poised in her bedroom window.

Neiphile’s story, one of the tales told on the seventh day of the *Decameron* that recount the “tricks women have played on their husbands,”³ relates the tale of a Florentine merchant, Arriguccio, and his wife Sismonda. From the outset of the tale, the narrator portrays Sismonda favorably and demonizes Arriguccio by listing the many social ills he has committed. Neiphile describes Arriguccio as “a merchant of enormous wealth . . . who had the absurd notion of

2 Leon Battista Alberti, *I Libri della Famiglia* I-IV, tr. Renée Neu (Watkins, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 222.

3 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, tr. Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 417.

marrying above his station – even today it’s a thing merchants are always doing. He made a wholly unsuitable match with a young gentlewoman, Sismonda.”⁴ Moreover, he is so busy that he has become neglectful of his wife and his household. In a few short introductory passages, Neiphile maligns Arriguccio and justifies to his audience whatever future action Sismonda will take against him.

Reduced to loneliness, Sismonda soon finds a lover in a handsome local man, Ruberto. The lovers blissfully carry out an affair for some time, until finally, Arriguccio suspects his wife’s infidelity and thereby promptly transforms himself from a neglectful ignoramus to a jealous and vigilant husband. However, the adulterers are too fond of one another to easily quit their affair without first employing a little ingenuity. Recognizing the access that the window provides to the public realm (Neiphile tells us that her window “overlook[s] the street,” and allows for frequent passersby), Sismonda contrives a plan that will allow the affair to continue undetected. Each night while she prepares for bed, Sismonda attaches a long string to her toe, routes it out the window and onto the street where it is in easy reach for Ruberto to pull when he wishes to see her. If the circumstances allow, Sismonda then invites Ruberto in for a night of lovemaking just a stone’s throw away from where Arriguccio sleeps soundly.

Their devious plan is successful for some time, but finally, one night as he readies himself for bed, Arriguccio discovers the string attached to his wife’s toe. Driven by powerful suspicion, he unties the string from Sismonda’s toe, affixes it to his own, and anxiously awaits what will unfold next so, at last, he may uncover his wife’s treacherous ruse. Fatefully, Ruberto arrives that same evening to call on Sismonda – unbeknownst to him that the wearer of the string on the other side was no longer his beloved – and he proceeds to tug on the line as usual. Feeling the tug at his toe, Arriguccio leaps out of bed, grabs his weapons, and pursues Ruberto through the city streets. Ruberto escapes unharmed, and, because of the clamor in the middle

4 Ibid., 451.

of the night, the neighbors complain of Arriguccio's recklessness, banishing him back to his home without having avenged his honor. Sismonda has already prepared for her husband's impending wrath by arranging to switch places with her maidservant. She convinces her maid to lie in her place in the nuptial chamber and to suffer her husband's harsh beating upon his return. After Arriguccio metes out the cruel punishment against his "wife" in what is one of the most violent scenes of the hundred tales, he then proceeds to Sismonda's natal home to report to her family the awful sins she has committed against him. Sismonda again uses this opportunity to trade places with her maid so that upon Arriguccio's return with her brothers, she appears calm and collected, pretending to have been engaged in a long night of chores. As Arriguccio cannot reconcile Sismonda's unharmed condition with the brutal beating he has just described, Sismonda's family judges that he has fabricated the account of his wife's disloyalty in a bout of drunken insanity. In the end, Sismonda gets away with her perfidy and the story ends poorly for Arriguccio, publicly shamed and deemed incapable of disciplining his wife.

At the heart, or shall I say "hearth" of Boccaccio's tale, is concern for patriarchal control over women's movement through the practice of restricting them to the deep recesses of the home. That he returns to this theme throughout the novelle suggests that strict confinement for the purpose of safeguarding feminine chastity is a common practice amidst fifteenth-century Italian households. The window-balcony motif provided a tangible and symbolic element through which to consider the justness of confining women to a wholly private existence, removed from contact with life outside the household and denied even the sight of the public sphere. Boccaccio delineates these ambiguous and liminal realms as the source of both concern for women's freedom and the potential for liberation, showing his willingness to proffer this space as one worthy of more careful consideration.

This intertextual discourse concerned with the problem of moral domestic space continues beyond the literary realm; the

theme recurs as metaphor for deviancy in contemporary women's portraiture. Similar to Boccaccio's tale, the window motif in Sandro Botticelli's *Woman at a Window* symbolizes the breakdown of the prescribed notion that women should remain far removed from their household windows for the sake of their honor, reputation and chastity.



Sandro Botticelli: Woman at a Window (c. 1435-49)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Expounding upon the portrait conventions of his predecessors, Botticelli uses the window motif to render a curious domestic scene like those related in the *Decameron*. *Woman at a Window*, dated sometime in the 1470s, is painted from the point of view of an outsider looking in on a lady as she stands perched at a window. The lady, generally thought to be Smerelda Brandini, challenges the didactic principles that forbid women to confront the world through household windows. Contrary to the learned advice on proper feminine conduct, Brandini holds the shutter open with her

right hand while she boldly returns the gaze of her spectators who look at her from below. Her twinkling eyes, subdued smile, and the faint dimple that appears on her left cheek are subtle indications of her intellect and spirit, which she attempts to conceal through this stifled expression. Her thumb protrudes into the viewers' space, transgressing the physical barrier between her and the public. David Alan Brown, offering an explanation for Botticelli's highly animated sitter, an anomaly during a time when restrained profiles of women were common, affirms that "there does not seem to have been any change in status of women during this period . . . rather [Botticelli] may have wished to overcome the limitations of the static profile in an attempt to convey the physical and psychological presence of the sitter."⁵ While Brown's assertion explains Brandini's three-quarter pose and her active engagement with the audience, it does not reconcile Botticelli's decision to escape the spatial conventions of portraiture to show the sitter positioned at a household window. As a perceptive and culturally conscious artist who would have been aware of the stigma attached to windows as improper places for women, it was not arbitrary that Botticelli chose to include the window motif so centrally in this portrait. Such a radical departure from the portrait conventions advocated a similar breakdown of those contemporary social conditions that limited women's movement.

At the time that Botticelli painted *Woman at a Window*, earlier portrait artists had incorporated the window motif to different ends. The background landscape, as seen through painted windows in portraiture, most often appears in portrait pairs of noble couples, where the window provides an additional aesthetic element through which artists could display their skills in the art of landscape painting. I know of only one earlier individual portrait showing a woman poised in front of outdoor scenery, Pisanello's *Ginevra d'Este*, found at the Louvre. Here the floral and greenery have been identified as an embossed tapestry meant to emulate the Virgin's *hortus conclusus*. Tapestries depicting flora and fauna, like the *Camera dei Pavoni*

5 David Alan Brown, *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 172.

or “Peacock Room” seen in the well-preserved Davanzati palace, Florence, were common in fifteenth-century homes. This trend to bring the beauty of the outdoors indoors may, in part, result from the very little exposure women had to the outdoor, rural environment—hence their desire to have these scenes recreated where they would daily experience them.



Pisanello: Portrait of a Princess (c. 1435-49)
Louvre, Paris

Unlike either of these earlier portrait styles that favor the landscape aesthetic, the painted window in Botticelli's portrait is the agent through which we meet the sitter face to face. Because of the perspective, we occupy the landscape at which the lady gazes. The audience, the artist, and the patrons, make up her public for whom she is now eternally cast as spectacle. While she remains at the window frozen in time, the ever-changing public passes by to catch a glimpse of her, and just as the conduct manuals warned, one cannot control the number of peering eyes that look upon a lady who shows herself at her window.

While Brandini's outward gaze and curious expression are uncharacteristic of the time period, so too is the sitter's plain costume. Brandini's austere dress makes it difficult to argue that this portrait commemorates a public ceremony, as is the case argued for most portraits of patrician women in the Quattrocento. Traditionally, the celebratory occasion justifies the lady's appearance in public. Conversely, Botticelli's sitter is shown wearing very little ornamentation. Her garments are well suited for domestic duties, but not for posing for an expensive painting. Her loose-fitting white *camicia*, or chemise, is worn over her *gamurra*; her accessories consist of only a basic collar around her neck and her hair is concealed in a simple coif under a lightweight cap. Contrasted with contemporary female portraits of the time, such as Pollaiuolo's portraits of elaborately decorated ladies, Botticelli's lady stands out in stark contrast. Certainly, Botticelli had reasons other than Pollaiuolo's when he painted this austere portrait that closely resembles the sober Northern Dutch genre paintings. Perhaps Brandini's plain dress represents her adherence to strict sumptuary laws of the Quattrocento. Her unadorned attire conforms to the proper dress codes for women prescribed by the moralists, who advise men to keep their wives plainly dressed so that they will not feel tempted to venture to windows where they can be seen. While his reasons for such an austere portrait remain elusive, Botticelli's portrayal of Brandini shows a concern for sobriety and a great deal of restraint from material desire. In this regard Brandini is the paragon of the good wife, yet there is still the problem of her bold and defiant presentation at the window.

If we pay close attention to the background detail, we see that Botticelli's portrait captures a spontaneous, candid scene of daily life. The space that Brandini occupies is suggestive of a terrace or *loggia*, and in the background there is an opening that provides a glimpse of an interior space more safely removed from the dangers outside. Furthermore, the choice to leave the door open gives the impression that the woman has entered this place with haste, perhaps intending

to pass back through into the adjoining room momentarily. I imagine her presence here as a fleeting moment in which she absconded to this window to see and be seen. She may be dutiful in the sense that she is demurely dressed, but her station at the window, exchanging glances with those outside of her home, contradicts the instruction of contemporary conduct manuals.

Stripped of all the fineries of dress and wealth, Brandini stands in the window as a figure of individuality and independence, as a woman engaged in social exchange, however inappropriate it may have been for her to do so. She has not taken the time out of her day to be groomed to have her likeness painted as if she were a mannequin made to model family wealth. The absence of a husband, or any other relative for that matter, suggests another sort of intimate relationship, but her enigmatic facial expression leaves us with fewer clues upon which to decipher this relationship. For as many different spectators who stop to behold her at the window, Brandini responds with as many exchanges. It is this ambiguity that builds the narrative and adds depth to Botticelli's painting. Brandini has an agency that her contemporary female sitters lack. Because she opens the window, she controls when, where, and from what angle we see her. She is the active participant in this narrative scene where passersby exchange glances with this captivating and inaccessible lady. Unlike her contemporaries shown in profile, Brandini is aware of her audience, and as she remains poised at her window she invites spectators on her own terms of display and exchange. Fifteenth-century male patriarchs feared such power and agency in women, and their concerns found numerous outlets of expression in contemporary conduct manuals.

Windows reduce the physical and metaphorical barrier built up around fifteenth-century women, and when present in prescriptive literature and popular culture, the window motif flirts with the fine line of what was considered an acceptable boundary between women and the public. The prevalence of the window motif in fifteenth-century culture testifies to the social tensions attached to

these morally ambiguous spaces and to the problems these spaces posed for the discipline of women. The idea of the chastity belt, an instrument that has fascinated and mystified twenty-first-century society, is the product of extreme patriarchal fears of the loss of feminine chastity. Yet it is difficult to determine the actual use and effectiveness of chastity belts in the Quattrocento. Strict confinement of women, however, was a much more apparent and practical means of safeguarding chastity: virtual architectural chastity belts that required women to keep family honor and virtue intact.

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Venetian Chastity Belt (Supposedly 16th Century)

On Display in the Doge's Palace

The Education of the Son in *Paradise Regained*:

Milton's *Of Education* as a Guide

Alice Matthews

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"The Education of the Son in Paradise Regained: Milton's Of Education as a Guide" argues that the character of Christ provides a model for effective learning, which is outlined in Milton's treatise On Education. In the treatise, first published in 1644, some twenty- seven years before his brief epic, Milton explains the purpose for education as strengthening one's relationship with God, and the best method for acquiring it— gradually, progressing from the easy to the more difficult. In my essay, I will analyze each step in Christ's education, beginning with his boyhood and culminating in his temptation on the pinnacle of the temple. This analysis provides a way of understanding Christ's rejection of Greek learning in the brief epic as well as explaining the limitation on knowledge depicted in Paradise Lost, both of which have provoked controversy among Milton's readers and critics. The analysis also will suggest that the depiction of Christ's gradual learning, particularly as it relates to his need for knowledge, emphasizes the humanity of the character, thereby making him a more effective model student. Ironically, Christ's interactions with Satan serve to facilitate Christ's maturing learning, which is capable of those "acts of ripest judgment" (Of Education). The final temptation provides the culmination of Christ's education, a moment of recognition that links past with present and looks toward the future when he will save mankind. Christ as student is now prepared to be the Son as teacher, and, more importantly, the Christ as Savior.

In teaching *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, I find that one of the most troubling and controversial issues among students is that of knowledge, that is, forbidden knowledge. Perhaps because students are exhorted to learn far more than many of them are eager, or even willing, to learn, the idea that knowledge should have limits confuses them. Therefore, they are often appalled when they read

Raphael's warning to Adam in Book 8 of the epic, "Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,"¹ and later Satan's baiting Eve by equating knowledge with goodness and power, and ignorance with weakness and lowliness. And when they read Book 4 of the brief epic, they (like many readers) question Jesus's (and Milton's) thinking in regard to the rejection of Greek learning.

Several passages of *Paradise Lost* suggest that the primary purpose of learning is to glorify God and to obey him. Raphael's recounting of the war in heaven has the stated purpose of warning man about the power of Satan in order to increase man's resolve to obey God. Other examples show the importance of knowledge to honor or love God. One example, ironically enough, is uttered by Satan when in the form of a cherub he asks Uriel to direct him to God's new creation, so that he can praise God. In book 3, Uriel validates this purpose of learning about the "new happy Race of Men" by praising the cherub for his desire to "know/ The works of God, thereby to glorify / The great Work-Master."² A second instance occurs in Book 7 when Adam asks Raphael to tell about the creation of the world so that he can "magnify" God's works.³ Raphael honors this request, in contrast to his refusal to answer Adam's later question about the movement of heavenly bodies, a question that seems motivated by mere curiosity.

These and other passages in *Paradise Lost* focus on knowledge or learning as a means of strengthening the relationship between God and the beings he creates. Such passages provide some of the evidence that Irene Samuel says indicates a consistency in Milton's pattern of thinking about learning, a pattern confirmed by Jesus's speech on Greek learning in *Paradise Regained*. In her essay "Milton on Learning and Wisdom," Samuel notes the relevance of Milton's treatise *Of Education* to an understanding of Milton's view on learning. As Samuel observes, the treatise argues that "knowledge of God" is the ultimate purpose for learning.⁴

1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *John Milton: Complete Poetry and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), 167. All references to Milton's works are from this edition.

2 Ibid., 679, 694-96.

3 Ibid., 97.

4 Irene Samuel, "Milton on Learning and Wisdom." *PMLA* 64 (1949), 718.

In addition to stating the purpose for knowledge, *Of Education* describes the best method for acquiring it. In explaining how best to learn languages, philosophy, logic, science, and other disciplines, Milton stresses the importance of gradual learning, of progressing “leisurely” from the easy to more difficult, and the dangers of presenting new learners with “the most intellectual abstractions of logic. In short, in the essay, Milton asserts that effective learning must be a process.⁵

In *Paradise Regained* (1671), published twenty-seven years after *Of Education*, (1644) Milton then provides a model for effective learning, in the character of Jesus. Some critics have suggested that this character shares many qualities with Milton himself, particularly in the austerity of some of the Son’s responses to Satan. However, in one important respect, particularly in regard to my interest in Jesus as an example of effective learning, Milton exhibits an impatience foreign to the Son’s character. For example, in his sonnet “How Soon Hath Time,” Milton laments his failure to produce a “bud or blossom” by his twenty-third year whereas Jesus shows his resolve to share Job’s “Saintly patience” when Satan taunts him about his lack of achievement by age thirty-three: “Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe.”⁶ That patience is not just a kind of endurance of Satan’s temptations but an indication that Jesus is willing to learn what he needs to know by degrees. A key passage for the purpose of this study is the Son’s comment on coming to the wilderness:

And now by some strong motion I am led
Into this Wilderness, to what intent
I learn not yet; perhaps I need not know;
For what concerns my knowledge God reveals.⁷

This passage reveals two significant points that accord with Milton’s view of education. First, that learning should occur in

5 *Of Education*, 634.

6 *Paradise Regained*, 3.93; 91.

7 *Ibid.*, 1. 290-93.

stages, and second, that learning should be related to need; that is, it should have a practical purpose. Furthermore, that purpose should be either to honor God or to grow in godly virtue.

Jesus's understanding of the purpose of knowledge and method of achieving it provides a striking contrast to Eve's ignorance. When Satan tempts her, he promises that the fruit will *immediately* endow her with knowledge and that knowledge will make her "as Gods,"⁸ a purpose and method that contradict the principles outlined in *Of Education*: ". . . to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him"⁹

Jesus's incomplete knowledge at the beginning of the poem shows not only his willingness to submit to the process of learning but also his humanity, thereby making him a more effective model student. God himself tells Gabriel that he can "produce a man" and that he plans to "exercise [that man] in the Wilderness," where "he shall first lay down the rudiments/ Of his great warfare."¹⁰ The phrase "lay down" is, I think, deliberately ambiguous, accomplishing what Milton so often does: suggesting two different meanings that are both appropriate. Here, "lay down" could mean "put aside" and "set in place." Thus, the passage could mean that Jesus is *both* establishing what he needs to defeat Satan *and* divesting himself of the power that he had used against Satan in heaven. Both meanings indicate that Jesus is beginning a process, one that will show the efficacy of building on previous knowledge.

The process begins in Jesus's boyhood, when his mother tells him about his miraculous conception and his destiny to be "King of Israel." Hearing this, Jesus says he "straight . . . again revolv'd / The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ / Concerning the Messiah."¹¹ Although the poem provides only one other detail

8 *Paradise Lost*, 9.710.

9 *Of Education*, 631.

10 *Paradise Regained*, 1.150; 156-58.

11 *Ibid.*, 1. 254; 258-59.

about the Son's early learning, his visit to the Temple "to hear / The Teachers of [the] Law,"¹² the implication is that Jesus learns what he needs to know. His study leads him to realize his purpose, to redeem mankind through his death. But as he enters the wilderness, Jesus is pondering "How best the mighty work he might begin / Of Savior to mankind" and how to first "Publish his Godlike office."¹³ His baptism and God's pronouncement from heaven have revealed that the time has come for him to openly begin his mission. Thus far, the knowledge that Jesus has acquired seems to have been gained leisurely, as Milton's treatise on education advocates. For example, in prescribing the order for best learning Latin and Greek, Milton explains that novices should begin not by "compos[ing] themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment," but by reading "some short book" with useful substance, so as to learn "easily and delightfully" what might otherwise take seven or eight "miserable" years.¹⁴ Likewise Jesus describes his early learning of God's Law as "sweet," so that he "Made it [his] whole delight."¹⁵

By the time he enters the wilderness, Jesus has the foundation for more mature learning, which is capable of those "acts of ripest judgment." That mature learning is facilitated by the interaction with his tempter, who Arnold Stein says "serves the drama of knowledge."¹⁶ In the first temptation, to turn stones into bread, Jesus learns to recognize hypocrisy, "the only evil that walks / Invisible, except to God alone,"¹⁷ as Jesus tells Satan "I discern thee other than thou seem'st." Not only does he intuit Satan's lies, but he understands the greatest danger that Satan poses, "mixing somewhat true to vent more lies." At the end of this temptation, the Son's parting words to Satan reveal that Jesus understands God's sovereignty and is willing to submit to it: ". . . do as thou find'st / Permission from

12 Ibid., 1. 211-12.

13 Ibid., 1.186-88.

14 *Of Education*, 631.

15 *Paradise Regained*, 1.207-08.

16 Arnold Stein, *Heroic Knowledge* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), 210.

17 *Paradise Lost*, 3. 683-84.

above; thou canst not more.”¹⁸ The Son’s response reflects that “willing obedience,” which Milton’s treatise says educators should early instill in their charges.¹⁹

The next temptation, Satan’s presentation of the banquet, seems anticlimactic after Jesus has already demonstrated his temperance in the first scene. Arnold Stein suggests that the banquet temptation reveals less about the Son than about Satan, his “compulsiveness in evil.”²⁰ I believe the scene also reveals another stage in the Son’s education. As the first temptation teaches him to understand Satan’s nature, this temptation shows Jesus’s understanding of his own nature. When Satan argues that Jesus has the right to eat the lush “viands pure” because they are not “Fruits forbidden,” he answers the tempter by claiming the power to “Command a Table” in the wilderness and to “call swift flights of Angels” to attend him.²¹ The lushness of the banquet that Satan offers also contrasts with the “plain, healthful, and moderate” diet that Milton recommends in the treatise.²²

The Son’s learning in the next temptations becomes increasing complex, building on what he has already gleaned through his preliminary study and the temptations of temperance he has overcome. He is now ready for what Milton calls in *Of Education* the “acts of ripest judgment.” In his responses to the temptations of riches and glory, Jesus reveals his understanding of the essential paradoxes of his destiny—his nature as God and Man— and his understanding that “ambitious and mercenary” goals, which Milton decries as the result of a poor education, contradict Jesus’s purpose.²³ To Satan’s claim that to accomplish “great things,” he must “Get Riches first,” Jesus asserts that in poverty one can accomplish as much and perhaps more than with wealth. He furthermore exalts

18 *Paradise Regained*, 1.348; 433; 495-96.

19 *Of Education*, 633.

20 Stein, 58,

21 *Paradise Regained*, 2.369-70; 382, 385.

22 *Of Education*, 639.

23 *Ibid.*, 632.

“a wreath of thorns” over “a Crown, / Golden in show.”²⁴ The temptation of wealth quickly evolves into that of glory and power, to which the Son declares that there is more power in ruling oneself than in ruling nations and that to “lay down” a kingdom is “far more magnanimous than to assume.”²⁵ This response reflects the Son’s progress in learning how to behave “justly, skillfully, and magnanimously,” which “Of Education” argues is the outcome of a “complete and generous education.”²⁶ The Son goes on to explain that suffering and obedience are the best preparation for reigning. As for glory and Satan’s argument that because God requires glory, his Son should not reject it, Jesus argues that when men glorify God, God “advance[s] them “to glory.”²⁷ Throughout these more sophisticated temptations, the Son repeatedly contradicts Satan’s assumptions through paradoxical claims: weakness is more powerful than strength, poverty is a means to genuine wealth, governing self is a greater victory than governing nations, obedience and suffering provide one the authority to rule.

As in the temptation of the banquet, which appeals to the same need as did the temptations of the stones, but with visual and other sensory embellishments, Satan follows up on the temptation of power through ruling kingdoms by whisking Jesus to a mountain and presenting the catalog of kingdoms. After surveying the many kingdoms with their “Huge Cities” and high towers,²⁸ Satan narrows the focus to the Roman and Parthian empires, especially that of Rome, where the “brutish monster” Sejanus rules in the absence of the “Old” and “lascivious” emperor. By expelling this monster, Satan argues that Jesus can free his people from their “servile yoke.”²⁹ The Son’s various responses contain a recurring theme—awareness of the sinfulness of the world: first, the “heathenish crimes” and

24 *Paradise Regained*, 2. 426-27; 450-53; 458-59.

25 *Ibid.*, 2. 481-83.

26 *Of Education*, 632.

27 *Paradise Regained*, 3. 192-96; 143-44.

28 *Ibid.*, 3. 261.

29 *Ibid.*, 4.128; 91; 103.

idolatry³⁰ of Israel and then the “lust,” “vanity,” cruelty, greed, and degeneracy of all the nations.³¹ When Satan then proposes the terms for his gift of all the kingdoms, that the Son “fall down and worship” him as his “superior Lord,” Jesus for the first time calls Satan by name: “Get thee behind me; plain thou now appear’st / That Evil one, Satan for ever damn’d.”³² I believe this is a pivotal moment in the Son’s education. Here he demonstrates “the hatred of vice” that *Of Education* describes as the major component of a moral education,³³ as well as his understanding not only of the depth and scope of the world’s impurity but also his recognition of Satan as the source of that impurity.

This knowledge of the world’s sinfulness enables Jesus better to grasp the significance of his destiny. Because mankind is hopelessly corrupt, the Son’s redemption of man is critical. Therefore, at the end of his rebuke of that corruption, Jesus describes the antidote he will provide: a kingdom with no end that will be

... like a tree

Spreading and overshadowing all the Earth,

Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash

All Monarchies besides throughout the world.³⁴

At the end of this series of temptations, Satan turns to Greek learning as the likeliest means of seducing the Son. The Son’s denigration of that learning has, of course, startled many readers, especially those who expect Jesus’s values to accord with Milton’s himself. As Nicholas Von Maltzahn observes, Milton’s “careers as teacher, pamphleteer, civil servant, and poet were all founded in his passion for learning.”³⁵ Of course, many critics like Arnold

30 Ibid., 3. 416-19.

31 Ibid., 4. 137-44.

32 Ibid., 4. 166-67; 192-94.

33 *Of Education*, 635.

34 *Paradise Regained*, 4. 147-50.

35 Nicholas Von Maltzahn, “Milton’s Readers” in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 236.

Stein explain the apparent inconsistency as the Son's discriminating between learning and wisdom. Stein goes on to say that the Son's "defense of Hebrew poetry and prophecy is the defense of inspiration," that compared to works that man inspires, those inspired by God are far superior.³⁶ Indeed, Jesus describes learning as futile to the unwise, which he defines as those who are ignorant of God. There is a further explanation of the Son's rejection. Satan prefaces his offer of learning in this way: "Be famous then / By wisdom."³⁷ Returning to Milton's treatise on education reveals that this imperative from Satan is an oxymoron. If the purpose of learning is to know, honor, and obey God (as the treatise maintains), then one who seeks knowledge in order to achieve fame cannot be wise. The Son understands the fallacy when he says that the Greek philosophers, whose learning Satan offers, seek glory for themselves, not for God.³⁸ Jesus's insight into learning reflects a mind that has been so finely honed that he recognizes the most subtle of Satan's lies, lies that the second chapter of *Colossians* warns against: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men"³⁹

The final temptation, which occurs on the pinnacle of the temple, is remarkable in several respects. Georgia Christopher observes that when the Tempter says: "Now show thy progeny; if not to stand, / Cast thyself down," Jesus must, according to the categories of the natural world, either stand or fall. Yet anything he does will be obeying Satan."⁴⁰ When Jesus then stands, is he truly obeying the Tempter? In a literal sense he is, but as most readers know, in Milton the literal meaning is usually misleading. Here the most important point is that the Son *is* showing his "progeny," not as an act of obedience but as a revelation of his godhead, both to himself and to Satan. This is also the only temptation in which the

36 Stein, 101, 109-10.

37 *Paradise Regained*, 4.221.

38 *Ibid.*, 4. 315.

39 Quoted in Stein, 97.

40 Georgia Christopher, "Milton and the Reforming Spirit." In *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 200.

Son's response is ambiguous and elicits no rejoinder from Satan, who instead falls, "smitten with amazement."⁴¹ When Jesus quotes *Deuteronomy* 6, "Tempt not the Lord thy God," he is saying not to put God the Father to a frivolous test. But, as Northrop Frye argues, he also seems to be telling Satan to stop testing him, the Son,⁴² a meaning that implies he recognizes himself as Satan's old adversary in heaven. Although critics disagree about the significance of the Son's response, I agree with Frye that Satan for the first time also recognizes Jesus as his old adversary. Several hints lead me to this interpretation. One is Satan's reaction, initial amazement followed by his fall, during which he is "struck with dread and anguish."⁴³ Although his amazement could well be caused by Jesus's ability to stand on the pinnacle, the dread and anguish suggest that Satan is recalling the Son who pursued them with "ten thousand Thunders" and drove them "Thunder-struck . . . with terrors and with furies to the bounds / And Crystal wall of Heav'n."⁴⁴ I think it is also striking that Milton here uses two mythical similes, another unique feature of this temptation. Satan is first compared to Antaeus, whom Alcides or Hercules defeats with force, a parallel to the Son's first defeat of Satan in heaven. Then Satan is compared to the Theban Monster, whom Oedipus defeats with wisdom by solving the riddle about man, a parallel to the Son's defeat of Satan on earth.

This last temptation provides the culmination of the Son's learning, a moment that truly "repair(s) the ruins of our first parents,"⁴⁵ a moment of recognition that links past with present and looks toward the future, when the Son, the "heir of both worlds/ Queller of Satan"⁴⁶ will save mankind. The Son as student is now prepared to be the Son as teacher, and more importantly, the Christ as Savior.

41 *Paradise Regained*, 4. 462.

42 Northrop Frye, "The Typology of *Paradise Regained*," in *Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Arthur E. Barker. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 443.

43 *Paradise Regained*, 4.577.

44 *Paradise Lost*, 6. 836; 858-60.

45 *Of Education*, 631.

46 *Paradise Lost*, 6. 6333-34.

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John Milton at 21

Unknown Artist

Books

Review Essay

“Will in Overplus”

A Review of Shakespeare Biographies

Stephannie S. Gearhart

Bowling Green State University

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, ll.1-3

It seems to be a kind of Respect due to the Memory of
Excellent Men,
specially of those whom their Wit and Learning have
made Famous,
to deliver some Account of themselves, as well as their
Works, to Posterity.
For this Reason, how fond do we see some People of
discovering any little
Personal Story of the great Men of Antiquity, their
Families, the common
Accidents of their Lives, and even their Shape, Make
and Features have been
the Subject of critical Enquiries. How trifling soever
this Curiosity may seem
to be, it is certainly very Natural; and we are hardly
satisfy'd with an Account
of any remarkable Person, 'till we have heard him
describ'd even to the very
Cloaths he wears.

Nicholas Rowe, “Some Account of the Life,
&c. of Mr. William Shakespear” (1709),
[A1^r-A1^v]

Although it is more fiction than fact, Nicholas Rowe’s “Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear” accurately describes the desire of many biographers, particularly those interested in the Bard. Their longing for knowledge, for “discovering any little Personal Story of the great” playwright, might best be explained by

considering that, as George Steevens remarked in 1780, “all that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare is—that he was born in Stratford-upon-Avon,—married and had children there, — went to London, where he commenced actor [sic], and wrote poems and plays, —returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried” (qtd. in Ellis “Biography and Shakespeare” 297). Even though, as Jonathan Bate points out, more about Shakespeare has been uncovered since the eighteenth century, there remains an astonishing amount of information about him that we do not know. Documents confirm that the playwright died on 23 April 1616, but the date of his birth is less certain. His whereabouts between 1585–1592 are unknown, leading scholars to dub these Shakespeare’s ‘lost years.’ It is unclear what motivated the playwright to leave Stratford for London, how he felt about the family that remained behind, and whether or not he visited them often. Shakespeare’s opinions on women, his religious disposition, and his sexual inclination remain a mystery. No manuscripts in Shakespeare’s own hand exist,¹ and no diaries containing his first person voice have been recovered.² Why he bequeathed to his wife the couple’s “second best bed” is a secret the playwright has taken with him to his grave.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some scholars find the dearth of information about Shakespeare to be nothing short of problematic. David Ellis goes so far as to call the task of writing a Shakespeare biography “a waste of intellectual effort” (291). Underscoring his point by drawing a parallel modern readers will understand, Ellis explains, “[i]f finding out what Shakespeare was like happened to be a research programme in the laboratories of a drug company, it would have been closed down years ago” (312). Given that there are so few facts on which to rely, the number of Shakespeare biographies composed since the seventeenth century is sobering. Not even the more recent postmodern declaration that the Author is dead has dampened the ardor of contemporary biographers—there were, after all, nearly 200 Shakespeare biographies published in the twentieth century, and the twenty-first century has already proven itself worthy of keeping up.³ Ellis cynically concludes that this is the

1 There is debate over whether Shakespeare’s hand can be seen *Sir Thomas More*, a collaboratively written play that has survived in manuscript form. Even if, as some scholars have speculated, ‘Hand D’ is in fact Shakespeare’s, it remains the case that there are no extant manuscripts of any of the plays in the First Folio.

2 Shakespeare’s first-person voice is preserved only in documents that prescribe the speaker’s rhetoric and limit his ability for self-expression, i.e., dedicatory letters to his poems, records of a court hearing, and his will.

3 Jonathan Bate, “The Masked Man” in *The Boston Globe* 10 October 2004, 3rd edition.

case “because anything with Shakespeare on the front cover sells” (312). Competing with the lure of profit, however, is a widespread and profound desire to know one of the period’s “Excellent Men.” Though scholars will never be able to “describe [Shakespeare] even to the very Cloaths he wears,” they will likely continue to try, and this “Curiosity” may be, as Rowe proposes, “certainly very natural.”

Whether it is economics or nature (or both), biographies of the Bard continue to proliferate and this trend shows no sign of stopping. The tension between the longing to understand Shakespeare and the factual limitations facing the Shakespeare biographer have produced a diverse array of texts over the past three and a half centuries. With so many biographies of the playwright in print, readers may feel at sea, experiencing what the narrator of the Sonnets describes, albeit in a rather different context, as “Will in overplus” (Sonnet 135, l.2).

In response to this, I offer here a review of several—though by no means all—Shakespeare biographies. The essay is divided into two parts: Part I. Early Biographies of Shakespeare; Part II. Biographies of Shakespeare, Twentieth Century to the Present. Part I provides a brief history of Shakespeare biographies so that readers might better understand the difficulties the modern biographer faces. These early biographies reveal the origins of many of the myths about Shakespeare and demonstrate how past scholars laid the foundations upon which more recent writers have built their studies. Part II is divided into two sections: the first, a shorter section, briefly surveys twentieth century biographies ending with Samuel Schoenbaum’s work; the second, a longer section, evaluates biographies published between 1985 and 2009. Both Parts I and II address the trends in Shakespeare biographies, biographers’ methodological approaches and theoretical assumptions, and the ways in which writers rely on and react to biographers that came before them. As will become clear below, no matter which Shakespeare biographies readers elect to investigate on their own, having a healthy sense of skepticism and a knowledge of the history of Shakespeare biographies is imperative to understanding this “remarkable Person” and just how much we know about him.

Early Biographies of Shakespeare

Though Robert Greene referred to him in passing as an “upstart Crow” and Ben Jonson suggested in his dedicatory remarks to the First Folio that the “Soul of the Age” did not resemble the Droeshout engraving that accompanied the book, for more substantial

contemporary descriptions of William Shakespeare, it is necessary to turn to biographies of the playwright. Seventeenth century Shakespeare biographies were, admittedly, brief and embedded in longer works focused on other subjects. These compact descriptions of the playwright, however, had long-lasting effects and influenced biographers for centuries. Thomas Heywood, a contemporary of Shakespeare, contributed to such a book; however, much to the regret of scholars *The Lives of all the poets modern and foreign* has never been recovered. The missing text is especially lamentable to those who possess the “Curiosity” about which Rowe speaks because it is thought that Heywood, a playwright himself, might have provided a more accurate account of his colleague than did later biographers, none of whom interacted with Shakespeare directly. That so many legends about the playwright flourished in the years following his death is partly the result of later biographers’ distance from their subject. Had Heywood’s text survived, the “Shakespeare Mythos,” as E.K. Chambers would later call it, might have been, if not eliminated, at least curtailed.

Thomas Fuller’s *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662), a catalogue of many famous native figures, is thus the earliest surviving text containing a biographical sketch of Shakespeare. In his entry on the playwright Fuller reports that Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, died in 1616, and “was buried...[in] the town of his nativity” (590-1). These are points on which modern biographers agree, but beyond this, Fuller’s biography consists of his personal opinions about Shakespeare. The playwright, asserts Fuller, illustrated the maxim “*Poeta non fit sed nascitur* (one is not made but born a poet). Nature itself was all the arts which was used upon him” (590). Comparing Shakespeare to his nearest rival, Ben Jonson, Fuller unabashedly reveals which playwright he prefers:

Many were the wit-combats betwixt [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention (590-1).

Another of the playwright’s seventeenth century biographers, Rev. John Ward, speaks disparagingly of Jonson in his remarks on Shakespeare. A vicar from Stratford, Ward mentions Shakespeare in his personal diaries and introduces readers to the now famous

legend regarding the circumstances of the playwright's death. When Shakespeare was out one evening with fellow writers Michael Drayton and Ben Jonson, the men, Ward says, "had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespear [sic] died of a feavour there contracted" (183). In truth, the cause of the playwright's death remains a mystery, though Ward's story that Jonson and Drayton were responsible for his demise remained popular for years, finding its way, for instance, into Edward Bond's 1976 play *Bingo*. Echoing Fuller, Ward remarks that he has "heard that Mr. Shakespeare was a natural wit, without any art at all" (183). The playwright "had but two daughters," Ward claims, and received a such a large salary that "hee spent att the rate of 1,000*l.* a-year." To these remarks the biographer adds a proviso, "as I have heard" (183), which indicates Ward's reliance not on documentary evidence, but legend.

Ward's biography is short, and the diarist's interest in Shakespeare is little. His book quickly moves on to discuss topics ranging from theological and medical matters to gossip about historical and contemporary figures. Ward's section on the playwright ends with a reminder to himself "to peruse Shakespeare's plays and bee much versed in them, that I may not be ignorant in that matter. Whether Dr. Heylin does well, in reckoning up the dramattick poets which have been famous in England, to omit Shakespeare" (184). He also mentions the possibility of visiting "Mrs. Queeny," i.e., Shakespeare's daughter, Judith. Unfortunately, though, for Shakespeare biographers to follow Ward, the diarist apparently never got around to doing so before she died in 1662 at the age of seventy-seven.

The main source for John Aubrey's biography of Shakespeare, which can be found in his late seventeenth century text, *Brief Lives*, was a Mr. Beeston whose father had been involved in early modern theatrical life many years prior. Still, the biographer's account of Shakespeare is not entirely accurate. Another in a line of short biographies penned in the seventeenth century that produced and perpetuated legends about the playwright,⁴ *Brief Lives* reports that Shakespeare's father, John, was a butcher when in fact he was a

4 As Samuel Schoenbaum explains, there were other short biographical sketches of Shakespeare published in seventeenth-century texts: Edward Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), William Winstanley's *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (1678), Charles Giddon's *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets* (1689), Gerard Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets* (1691), Pope Blount's *Remarks on Poetry* (1694). Most of these treatments of Shakespeare owe much to Fuller and do not provide any additional significant insights. For more on these other biographies, see Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives* (1991), 83-5.

glover. Relying on the testimony of others, Aubrey sows the seeds for what later would blossom into Bardoltry with passages like this: "I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when [Shakespeare] was a boy he exercised his father's Trade, but when he kill'd a Calfe he would do it in a high style, and make a Speech" (334). Further, Aubrey describes Shakespeare as "a handsome, well-shap't man: very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smoothe wit." The biographer says that the dramatist was the author of some unflattering verses on usurer John Combes, and a schoolmaster before coming to London to pursue his career in drama. Appealing though these claims may be, they have little, if any, evidence to confirm their veracity (334-5).

It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that a lengthier account of Shakespeare's life was published in the context of a work devoted solely to the dramatist. Though it was not primarily a biography, Nicholas Rowe's 1709 six-volume edition of Shakespeare's plays was prefaced with a longer biographical sketch of the playwright than had previously been written. In the opening section of the multi-volume work Rowe justifies writing Shakespeare's biography by arguing that "the knowledge of an Author may sometimes conduce to the better understanding of his Book." Anticipating criticism, Rowe goes on to say that "tho' the Works of Mr. *Shakespear* [sic] may seem to many not to want a Comment, yet I fancy some little Account of the Man himself may not be thought improper to go along with them" (A1^v). Since Rowe believed that "The Character of the Man is best seen in his Writings," the biographer spends many pages discussing the merits of Shakespeare's texts, revealing as he does so his Restoration era aesthetic sensibilities. Looking at Shakespeare's work and life closely together, Rowe paved the way for later biographers.

Beyond Shakespeare's plays, the main source for Rowe's biographical knowledge of the dramatist was Thomas Betterton, a celebrated Restoration actor whose devotion to Shakespeare led him to Stratford to examine parish records and talk with locals. Betterton, however, was no scholar and so made many mistakes interpreting his materials. His errors along with Rowe's own affected the biographer's interpretation of Shakespeare's life. Furthermore, Rowe was not averse to repeating myths about Shakespeare and introducing readers to the now infamous deer-poaching story.

According to the biographer, Shakespeare's motivation for moving to London was a result of his being prosecuted for stealing

some of Sir Thomas Lucy of Cherlecot's deer. Shakespeare "in order to revenge that ill Usage [i.e., the prosecution] . . . made a Ballad upon [Sir Thomas]." That this ballad, as Rowe confesses, "be lost," does not deter the biographer, who goes on to say, "yet it [i.e., the ballad] is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the Prosecution against [Shakespeare] to that degree, that he was oblig'd to leave his Business and Family in *Warwickshire*, for some time, and shelter himself in *London*" (A3^r).

This tale is one that biographers would struggle with for years, some believing it, some doubting it, and others flirting with it as a possibility since there remains no existing evidence to explain why Shakespeare moved from the country to the city. In his biography Rowe also tells his readers that Shakespeare was responsible for launching Ben Jonson's career (A6^v-A7^r) and that he wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* because Queen Elizabeth "was so well pleas'd with that admirable Character of *Falstaff*, in the two Parts of *Henry* the Fourth, that she commanded him to continue it for one Play more, and to shew him in Love" (A4^v-A5^r). All of these myths, though not well supported by evidence, held the attention of readers well beyond Rowe's lifetime.

Near the end of the eighteenth century Edmond Malone made it his goal to dispute such legends by taking a decidedly more scholarly approach to the topic. Since the only substantial biography up to this point had been "Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespear," Malone's work is, unsurprisingly, pitted against Rowe's text. The biographer goes to great lengths to demonstrate why most of Rowe's claims are spurious. Writing copious commentary on his predecessor's "Life," which he deemed "meager and imperfect" (11), and relying upon diaries and legal documents, rather than common legends and hearsay, Malone was indefatigable in his pursuit of the truth about Shakespeare. When the biographer was preparing to write his book, Rev. James Davenport of Stratford kindly lent the writer the local Parish Register. After receiving it, Malone confessed in a letter to him, "I sat up till two o'clock, and almost blinded myself by poring over the books which you have so obligingly furnished me with" (qtd. in Martin 129). Indeed, Malone suffered physically for his work: he was warned against reading by dim light for fear of ruining his already worsening eyesight (Martin 125) and himself remarked to a companion that his research kept him from having much time to eat or sleep (Schoenbaum 122).

Though Malone's work was hurried to the publisher

before it could be completed to his satisfaction, his contribution to Shakespeare biographies is significant, to say the least. By arguing against the myth that Shakespeare was a deer-poaching youth who subsequently wrote scathing verses against the plaintiff, and instead depending upon documentary evidence, Malone, as Bate has said, changed the image of Shakespeare from “a man of the people, careless of authority” to “an impeccable bourgeois gentleman, busily accumulating property and respectability in London and Stratford” (*Genius*, 83). Malone was so intent on separating fact from fiction when it came to Shakespeare that he later sought to prove that “A Letter from Shakespeare to Anna Hatherrewaye” and other texts advanced by William Henry Ireland were forgeries. This work, which culminated in the publication of a 400-page document in 1796,⁵ and his biography of the playwright mark Malone as a formidable scholar. Perhaps rather unfortunately, however, Malone will be remembered by many for being the “imbecile”⁶ who was responsible for having the painted bust of Shakespeare in Trinity Church whitewashed after concluding, wrongly, that when it had been erected originally it was bare stone. Though Malone was wrong and the statue was later repainted, his influence on Shakespeare scholarship is undeniable.⁷

J. O. Halliwell-Phillips has been called “the greatest of the nineteenth-century biographers of Shakespeare in the exacting tradition of factual research which extends from Malone to Chambers” (Schoenbaum 290). Indeed, his publication record is impressive, if overwhelming, and his devotion to archival research is apparent in his 1848 biography of Shakespeare. In a significant portion of the book, Halliwell-Phillips discusses William Shakespeare’s father, John, in great detail; in the remainder of the biography the author presents readers with the life of the playwright, including the date he bought

5 *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments, Published Dec. 24, MDCCXCV and Attributed to Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, and Henry, Earl of Southampton: Illustrated by Fac-similes of the Genuine Hand-writing of That Nobleman, and of Her Majesty; A New Fac-simile of the Hand-writing of Shakespeare, Never before Exhibited; and Other Authentick Documents.*

6 Famed writer Victor Hugo had this to say about the biographer: “An imbecile, Malone, made commentaries on his plays, and, as a logical sequence, whitewashed his tomb” (qtd. in Schoenbaum, 130).

7 The Malone Society, founded in 1906, continues to be active today. E.K. Chambers, a significant contributor to the wealth of Shakespeare biographies published in the twentieth century, was one of the group’s founding members. See <<http://ies.sas.ac.uk/malone/index.htm>> for more on the Society.

New Place and details regarding other financial transactions.

Halliwell-Phillips' commitment to the historical record is commendable, to say the least. As Schoenbaum says, however, "[t]he records unearthed by Halliwell [-Phillips'] diligence are uniformly unspectacular" (293). After devoting much of his life to researching records associated with Shakespeare, the biographer made no earth-shattering proclamations about his subject. This prompted a contemporary reviewer to complain that there were only a paltry three new facts about Shakespeare in Halliwell-Phillips' voluminous book. Though meticulous in his study of historical records, Halliwell-Phillips lacked the ability to create a compelling narrative out of his materials; Schoenbaum describes his writing style as "spare, dry, [and] graceless" (291). Still, the antiquarian's devotion to Shakespeare, illustrated by his many and diverse publications on the Bard, mark Halliwell-Phillips as an important, if eccentric, figure in the history of Shakespeare scholarship.⁸

At the end of the nineteenth century, the newly established *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) published its first entry on William Shakespeare.⁹ Perhaps most notable about Sidney Lee's entry in the DNB is his shifting stance on the Sonnets. The volume including Lee's essay was published first in London in 1897 and later that year in New York. In the first edition of the DNB, Lee claimed that Shakespeare's Sonnets were biographical; they revealed "the experiences of [Shakespeare's] own heart" (qtd. in Schoenbaum 370). By the time the New York edition was published, however, Lee had changed his tune, claiming now the Sonnets were "to a large extent undertaken as literary exercises" (qtd. in Schoenbaum 371). Lee provides no explanation for this radical change in opinion, but his remarks are nonetheless significant, for many biographers who resist reading Shakespeare's texts as autobiographical are often seduced by the Sonnets because they appear to present Shakespeare's first-person voice.

Lee's entry in the DNB was lengthy, measuring almost one hundred columns, but the author had more to say on Shakespeare's biography, as his *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1897) makes apparent. Regarding the Sonnets, Lee again claimed that they should not "be regarded as a personal or autobiographical narrative" (qtd.

8 See Schoenbaum, 282-308 for a more detailed discussion of Halliwell-Phillips' contributions to Shakespearean scholarship and his eccentricities, including his penchant for larceny. For a detailed record of Halliwell-Phillips' contribution to Shakespeare scholarship, see Martin Spevak's *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips: A Classified Bibliography*.

9 Peter Holland has written the Shakespeare entry in the most recent DNB. See the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, v. 49 (2004), 939-76.

in Schoenbaum 376). Still, the biographer attempts to identify the characters in the Sonnets and in the dedication to the sequence. In a later edition of the *Life* (1905), however, he retracts some of these claims and adds additional information and analysis of the texts. Lee's biography includes extensive literary analysis, and thus straddles the line between biography and criticism. In the book there is, for instance, a chapter called "The Sonnets and Their Literary History," which places the sequence in the context of the Elizabethan sonnet, discusses the lack of "continuity" in the sequence, and judges "[t]heir literary value" (Lee 154-176). A *Life* also discusses the many quartos and folios of Shakespeare's work and editors of the *oeuvre* from the eighteenth century onward. Additionally, Lee considers Shakespeare's reputation in England, America, and in several other countries around the world. The book went through several editions before Lee's death in 1926 and remained an important biography for years, despite the author's tendency not "to make essential distinctions between fact and speculation" (Schoenbaum 379).

From the earliest descriptions of Shakespeare's life to Malone's dogged scholarship to Lee's shifting opinion on the Sonnets, early Shakespeare biographies introduce the central issues with which later biographers would struggle, from Shakespeare's whereabouts during his 'lost years' to the relationship between the playwright's life and his art. These texts, written between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, represent, to a certain degree, their authors' own unique proclivities. More broadly, however, the biographies might be said to reveal less about their authors or even about their subject than the periods in which they were written. If Shakespeare's life looks vastly different from the Restoration to the Victorian era, it is because as Jonathan Bate claims, "Shakespeare won't tell us who he is. Instead, he makes us—and our culture—reveal ourselves."

Biographies of Shakespeare, Twentieth Century to the Present

Early Twentieth-Century Biographies to Schoenbaum

In the early twentieth century an eccentric American couple, Charles and Hulda Wallace, decided to devote their lives to searching English archives for documents pertaining to Shakespeare. After examining hundreds of thousands of tattered, yellowing papers, their efforts finally paid off in what many deem as the most significant and the most recent discovery of information about Shakespeare. The

papers the Wallaces found show that the playwright testified in a trial involving Christopher Montjoy and his son-in-law, Stephen Belott, in 1612. Their finding is important because not only does it reveal that Shakespeare was a lodger in the Montjoy's house during the early seventeenth century, it also includes the playwright's first-person voice and his signature. Biographers would make much of this discovery, most notably Charles Nicholl, whose book, *The Lodger: His Life on Silver Street* (2007) I discuss below. Charles Wallace published this and other, less significant findings but constantly lived in fear that fellow scholars were attempting to sabotage his work. His eccentricities led him to experience bouts of megalomania and paranoia, and he eventually ended his career in Shakespeare studies to pursue his fortune in oil.

The early years of the twentieth century also witnessed the publication of Frank Harris' *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life-Story* (1909). Another unconventional figure, Harris was not trained as a scholar, but had an affection for Shakespeare that led him to memorize lengthy passages from the plays and to recite them to unsuspecting audiences in public places. Oscar Wilde, a friend of Harris', noted in a letter in 1899, "Frank Harris is upstairs thinking about Shakespeare at the top of his voice" (qtd. in Schoenbaum 482). Indeed, he was a loud man, not shy of making his opinions known, as can be seen in his biography of Shakespeare, the bulk of which explains how Shakespeare's biography can be understood by examining his plays. After having established this, Harris then demonstrates how the "known facts" about Shakespeare support the claims he made about the playwright in the previous pages.

The "tragic story" of the title includes a Shakespeare who had planned to marry a woman called Anne Whateley but was saddled with the already-pregnant Anne Hathaway instead. (Most scholars take the spelling 'Whateley' in the surviving documents to be a mistake for 'Hathaway' rather than proof that Shakespeare intended to marry a different woman.) According to Harris, the rest of Shakespeare's marriage was hell, as he was nagged constantly by his shrewish wife. As a result, Shakespeare fled to London where he had an affair with one of the Queen's waiting women only to be cheated out of her by a friend who was acting as a go-between for the couple. Harris' Shakespeare prematurely grows old and frail but is nursed to health by his loving daughter, Judith. His hatred toward his wife continued up to his death, the biographer claims, as is evidenced by the epitaph on his tomb which ensures that Anne

would not be buried near him.

It does not take much knowledge of Shakespeare's work to see how Harris could "prove" these points by looking to texts like *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Sonnets, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*, to name only a few. The biographer's circular logic and questionable methodology would be the target of many later critics, who tended to be more cautious about the relationship between Shakespeare's life and his work. Rather than his scholarship, Harris will likely be remembered for an outrageous remark he made in a café regarding the question of Shakespeare's sexuality. "Homosexuality? No, I know nothing of the joys of homosexuality. My friend Oscar can no doubt tell you about that," Harris declared loudly. "But I must say that if Shakespeare asked me, I would have to submit" (qtd. in Schoenbaum 481). Certainly, Harris' devotion to the Bard was apparent, if a bit off-course.

E.K. Chambers' work on Shakespeare, on the other hand, would enjoy a good reputation for many years following the author's death. Chambers was a civil servant who managed, astonishingly, to produce a vast body of scholarship during his lifetime. After publishing *The Mediaeval Stage* (1903, 2 vols.) and *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923, 3 vols.), Chambers wrote his two-volume biography of the playwright, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (1930). In it, he eschewed speculation in favor of certainty. Perhaps as the result of having to organize and synthesize information as a civil servant, Chambers was especially patient with biographical detail and concise with prose. Schoenbaum describes Chambers' approach to Shakespeare biography as "dispassionate, aloof from bardolatry, meticulous, totally informed" (516). Chambers does not speculate on Shakespeare's whereabouts during his "lost years," though he does offer up possible candidates for the Fair Youth of the Sonnets. Still, critics might see his overall skepticism as "border[ing] on insensitivity" and long for a more personal touch (Schoenbaum 519). Or, they might find his voluminous texts overwhelming and wish for something more compact. In any event, Chambers' contribution to Shakespeare biography is significant, to say the least, and future writers would rely on his work.

The importance of Samuel Schoenbaum's scholarship on Shakespeare's life cannot be overestimated. In 1970 he published *Shakespeare's Lives*, a book that chronicles the history of biographies of Shakespeare, to which many Shakespeare biographers and I are deeply indebted. This text, which discusses in considerable detail

the lives and convictions of many biographers, from Aubrey to the twentieth century, was reissued in 1991 with updates, though detractors are quick to note that the updating is minimal and spotty at best. Still, Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives* is an indispensable book to readers interested in the issues I discuss above.

Also known for his own biographies of Shakespeare, Schoenbaum published *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* in 1975, which was quickly followed by *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* in 1977 after a reviewer from *The Guardian* complained of the original book's size. *The Compact Documentary Life* was later reprinted in 1987 with some emendations and a good deal of trimming of the original.

Schoenbaum's book from the 1980s, though, "remains a documentary life." By this, the author means that his book "differs from most of the innumerable popular biographies of Shakespeare that augment the facts with speculation or imaginative reconstruction or interpretative criticism of the plays and poems" (x). *A Compact Documentary Life* begins with a one-paragraph summary of Shakespeare's biography which is, Schoenbaum admits, a "simple life story . . . [that] has been often told" (4). The critic, though, elects to tell it again, this time with documents "always in view, to chasten speculative elaboration or romantic indulgence" (4). In what follows, Schoenbaum aims to present the facts and to avoid engaging in issues related to Shakespeare's personal life. The biographer reports that he has "tried to deal with such matters dispassionately, and also with a fullness of detail not attempted in most biographies of Shakespeare" (x). Further, he does not offer a theory on the identity of the Dark Lady of the Sonnets and proudly announces that his goal in the biography is "distillation and synthesis rather than innovation" (x-xi). This biography and *Shakespeare's Lives*, thus, are good touchstones for readers facing the slew of Shakespeare biographies that followed Schoenbaum's work.

Late Twentieth-Century to Early Twenty-First Century Biographies

If a biographer is not accountable to the facts, he may as well be writing fiction.

Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean Scholar: A Literary Biography* (p.124)

Here's my work: does work discover—
What was rest from work—my life?
Did I live man's hater, lover?
Leave the world at peace, at strife?
Call earth ugliness or beauty?
See things there in large or small?
Use to pay its Lord my duty?
Use to own a lord at all?

Blank of such a record, truly,
Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
Yours to take or leave; as duly,
Mine remains the unproffered soul.

Robert Browning, "At the Mermaid" (ll.17-28)

In *The Shakespeare Wars*, Ron Rosenbaum suggests "one could trace the origin of the plethora of [Shakespeare] biographies to the moment in 1998 when Shakespeare became a contemporary celebrity, a movie star, in *Shakespeare in Love*" (xii). Indeed, in the last decade or so, biographies of the Bard have been produced at a breathtaking pace. Whether the 1998 film about the playwright was the catalyst for this outpouring of books is up for debate, but the fact is that readers looking for a recent biography of Shakespeare are swimming in a sea of choices. How, though, a reader might reasonably wonder, do scholars continue to write hefty tomes on the playwright when most are in agreement that so little is known about him? If, as Peter Martin suggests, a biographer does not provide readers with "the facts," he is essentially writing fiction, how does the author of a text on the life of Shakespeare manage to avoid producing a novel?

To answer these questions, it is useful to turn to David Ellis' description of the six methods contemporary scholars routinely employ when they compose Shakespeare biographies. In *That Man Shakespeare* (2005) Ellis discusses several rhetorical strategies, including the "argument from absence" approach, which involves biographers entertaining the idea that a statement is true simply because it cannot be proven false. So, for instance, in lieu of any evidence against Shakespeare being a closeted Catholic, many biographers propose that the probability is good that he was in fact a recusant.

The problems inherent in this approach are made clear by Ellis' comparison of it to an American courtroom TV drama where just before the judge shouts, 'Sustained!' the prosecutor makes a

suggestive statement to which the defense objects. The jury, though it is told to ignore this remark, has heard it and so it hangs there, a tempting possibility, coloring their interpretation of events. Not so much is at stake perhaps when talking about a biography of Shakespeare as compared to a defendant on trial for murder, but the parallel is a useful one nonetheless.

Another linguistic manipulation biographers tend to use is what Ellis aptly calls “weasel words.” These are terms like “perhaps,” “may,” “if,” “could have,” and “probably,” to name a few. Weasel words routinely show up in biographies, as Ellis admits, but the Shakespeare biographer is in a unique position, for without them he/she would be unable to write much more than a page or two. There is also the rhetorical question, which allows the biographer to hint at a possibility and leave the reader to draw the conclusion on his/her own. Much like the argument from absence, the rhetorical question makes the reader complicit in constructing a vision of Shakespeare that is not supported by documented evidence.

Sometimes biographers turn to the plays and/or the Sonnets either as filler material or as indications of Shakespeare’s feelings, thoughts, and convictions about a variety of topics. As Ellis explains, when factual information about Shakespeare is missing, biographers will often provide analysis of one or more of the plays or poems in order to round out their texts. The Sonnets are particularly tempting fodder for biographers since in them readers are presented with a first person narrator whereas in the plays many voices speak, which makes the claim that any one of them is Shakespeare’s own more difficult to sustain. This is not to say biographers do not attempt to interpret the plays through a biographical lens and *vice versa*; all of Shakespeare’s work, some biographers believe, provide a window to his soul.

A pitfall of relying on the works to discuss the life, however, is the uncertainty regarding the chronological order of the plays. In other words, if the plays are meant to correspond with certain moments in Shakespeare’s life, works like *The Tempest*, which was once thought to be Shakespeare’s final play but in fact is not, can hardly be said to be Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage, though it is an attractive fiction in which to believe. As Bate noted in 2004, “the problem for all Shakespeare biographers, then and now is how to relate the life to the work. [...] What we know about the life does not help us to understand the greatness of the work. At the same time, since plays are plays, in which feelings and opinions belong

to the characters and not the author, the works cannot be used as reliable evidence of the nature of the man" ("That Masked Man"). Ellis comes to a similar conclusion in "Biographical Uncertainty and Shakespeare," noting that "[h]uman behaviour in Shakespeare's plays is so rich and varied that they can support almost any hypothesis about his life, and there is a flexibility built into the method of using them which means that it can hardly ever fail" (202).

Because facts about the man are sparse, biographers often turn to talking about culture instead. Since we know more about Stratford-Upon-Avon, for example, than we do about the playwright who was born and died there, biographers sometimes pad their texts with digressions on the town. This is true of many other locations and historical events as well, and though being knowledgeable about the cultural moment in which Shakespeare lived is important, as Ellis warns, the trick is to make a useful and compelling link between the history and the man. This brings the critic to his final point: arguing from proximity. By juxtaposing Shakespeare and an event or place, biographers often imply that the two things are connected when there is often no evidence that they do (273-303). Keeping Ellis' list of strategies in mind when encountering Shakespeare biographies encourages readers to cultivate their critical faculties and to develop a healthy sense of skepticism, both of which are invaluable in the study of the playwright's life. The list also aids readers in situating recently published biographies not only in the broader context of Shakespeare biographies but also in relation to each other.

To return to that watershed moment in Shakespeare biographies mentioned by Rosenbaum, there is Park Honan's *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), which was published the same year *Shakespeare in Love* was released in cinemas. The book, however, is a much less romanticized version of the playwright's life compared to Madden's film. Ten years in the making, Honan's biography of Shakespeare was written only after, following the advice of a friend, the author first published biographies of other authors, i.e., Matthew Arnold, Jane Austin, and Robert Browning. Tracing Shakespeare's life from its beginnings to its end, this biography seeks "to show in an accurate narrative all that can be known of Shakespeare's life, at present, and to offer some account of his writing in relation to his life" (ix). In *Shakespeare: A Life*, the author strives to avoid "[i]maginative reconstructions and elaborate psychological theories . . . [that] strain credulity" (ix).

Honan achieves a degree of success on this score by

presenting conflicting views concerning the thornier issues in the field of Shakespeare biography. For example, regarding the issue of Shakespeare's "lost years," Honan explains that it is not certain that Shakespeare spent this time with the Hoghtons in Lancashire since the "Shakeshaft" mentioned in documents may or may not be an alternate spelling of the playwright's own name. However, Honan seems to favor the Lancashire theory, advanced by E. A. J. Honigmann among others, since he points to *3 Henry VI*, a play that contains descriptions of geography typical of the Midlands, as evidence that Shakespeare spent his youth in the area (62-3). This move is characteristic of the book in which the biographer routinely makes connections between life and art that are impossible to prove or, for that matter, to disprove. The relationship between, for instance, the previous tenants at New Place and the violent murders in Shakespeare's plays is less clear than Honan would have readers believe. He claims that Shakespeare's experience with brutal killings, such as the poisonings that occurred at the residence in Stratford before he purchased it, led him to include similar deaths in *Hamlet*. Honan also moves in the opposite direction, looking to the plays to "discover" more about the man. For instance, Honan believes that when Shakespeare left Stratford for London, "[h]is departure was likely to be trying for his family, to judge from the mockery of sentimental farewells in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*" (92).

Honan does not, however, speculate on the identities of the Young Man and the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, as some biographers do. His stance is that, while not strictly biographical, the poems allow readers insight into the author's indiscretions. Furthermore, Honan proposes that the publication date of the Sonnets was delayed because the poems' content might have offended Shakespeare's mother, Mary. Likely written in the 1590's, the sequence was not published until 1609, a few months after Mary's death. Honan's theory that once Mary died Shakespeare felt free to publish his poems follows from the presumption that "[t]he most tangled and contradictory of his relationships, one suspects, was always with his mother" (358). Honan locates the origins of this close and complex relationship in the devoted parent watching carefully over her infant during an outbreak of the plague. While it is documented that a plague swept through Stratford the year William Shakespeare was born, it is not clear how parents felt about their children, particularly given the high infant mortality rate when the plague was absent. Even if we concede to Honan's point, there is still the problem of

determining just how much of an early modern person's childhood would have been thought to have affected him in adulthood and to what degree a son's relationship with his mother would have colored his relationship to other women.

In order to make up for the paucity of the historical record, Honan elects to discuss early modern English culture more generally. His effort to create a context in which to place Shakespeare is a commendable one, and the reader will walk away from *Shakespeare: A Life* with an understanding of seventeenth century English culture. Honan confesses that Shakespeare's personality, "the implicit subject of every chapter, is . . . no more fully defined and categorized, finally, than any of his sonnets or plays" (xiii). In the end, however, Honan's Shakespeare is just a regular guy; like anyone else who lived in England in his era, he experienced the stench of the City and the threat of disease, though his everyday experiences inspired his art. *Shakespeare: A Life* makes the playwright accessible to "the general public" (ix), to whom Honan directs his book, but the playwright can only become "[o]ur William" (68) once the relationship between life and art is simplified and Freudian ideology occasionally is applied to the early modern subject. For, as much of Honan's book makes apparent, life in early modern England was significantly different from our own.

Though it may seem odd that Bill Bryson, who is not a Shakespeare scholar or a biographer but is better known for his humorous travel narratives, would be asked to write a Shakespeare biography, *Shakespeare: The World as Stage* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) benefits from this very fact. Bryson is quick to note that "this book was written not so much because the world needs another book on Shakespeare as because this series [i.e., Harper Collins' Eminent Lives] does." His goal is clearly stated at the outset of *Shakespeare*: "to see how much of Shakespeare we can know, really know, from the record. Which is one reason, of course," he adds, " [this book is] so slender" (21). Indeed, this slim volume sticks to the facts and explains the key debates over the unknowns without getting distracted by speculating on them itself. The author is careful to make it clear when biographical facts are known and when he is discussing scholars' speculations. For example, he explains that there is no consensus on whether Shakespeare secretly harbored Catholic sympathies or if he loved his wife. Perhaps it is because Bryson is not a Shakespeare scholar that he shies away from offering theories on the 'lost years' or Shakespeare's religion, sexuality, childhood or anything else. Whatever the reason, Bryson's

book is an excellent starting place for the reader new to Shakespeare biographies because of this.

Bryson accurately describes Shakespeare's early life as "little more than a series of occasional sightings" (44). The record is lacking, even in the most basic facts. As Bryson points out, for instance, even the date of Shakespeare's birth is speculation. All that is known for certain is that he was baptized on 26 April 1564; yet, many biographers confidently announce that Shakespeare was born on 23 April 1564, a reasonable assumption, perhaps, since early modern infants typically were baptized a few days after birth. Biographers' choice of dates is also influenced by the fact that Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616 and that 23 April is the Feast of St. George, patron saint of England. Thus, it is not difficult to see how writers could be seduced by the prospect of the birth and death of England's greatest playwright coinciding with the country's national holiday and by the tidy symmetry of this date.

Bryson provides a brief overview of the cultural moment in which Shakespeare grew up, from the dangers of plague and other harrowing diseases to religious tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism to a typical school day for a boy of Shakespeare's age and rank, in order to give readers unfamiliar with the period a sense of early modern English culture. The information Bryson presents is adequate for the kind of book he is writing; it does not overshadow the playwright and the few facts we know about him as many biographies do. And, though his early years are difficult to know much about since few records survive, as Bryson plainly puts it, Shakespeare's "lost years . . . are very lost indeed" (44).

About these "lost years," Bryson mentions many of the possibilities advanced by scholars over the years. Among them are the suggestions that Shakespeare was either a schoolmaster, a tourist in Italy, a soldier, a sailor, or a recusant Catholic hiding out in the North of England. Bryson carefully points out the problems with this final argument regarding Shakespeare's religious leanings, and goes on to note that regarding religion generally scholars have come to opposite conclusions about the playwright in the past. It is not difficult to argue that Shakespeare was or was not interested in religion, for as Bryson points out, "a devoted reader can find support for nearly any position he or she wishes in Shakespeare. (Or as Shakespeare himself put it: 'The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.')" (62). Wisely, the biographer steers clear of linking life and art like this, and it is one of the strengths of his book. He goes

on to discuss Shakespeare's experiences in the theatre, mentioning his contemporaries and explaining the conventions of early modern theatre-going. Near the end of the biography, as he has done in the rest of his book, Bryson does not speculate on Shakespeare's mental or emotional state at his death. Why he left the couple's second best bed to his wife, the biographer says, no one can be sure.

Bryson's commitment to presenting facts lasts until the final pages of his book where he takes a stand on Shakespeare. Or rather, on who is and who is not Shakespeare. In "Claimants," a chapter that discusses theories regarding the authorship question, Bryson dismisses as wrongheaded those who have advanced claims that Shakespeare was not the author of the plays in the First Folio. The biographer believes that neither Christopher Marlowe nor the Earl of Oxford (nor anyone else) wrote Shakespeare's plays. "[N]early all of the anti-Shakespeare sentiment—actually all of it, every bit—involves manipulative scholarship of sweeping misstatements of fact" (182), Bryson asserts. This is true, as most Shakespearean scholars would agree, though it is tempting to wonder if Bryson's statement might apply to other biographers less interested in conspiracy theory as well.

Stephen Greenblatt's contribution to Shakespeare biographies, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), stands in contrast to *Shakespeare: The World as Stage* due to its tendency to speculate on nearly everything in the playwright's life. The subtitle of Greenblatt's biography announces the scholar's aim, i.e., to explain to readers the forces that came together to produce the legendary playwright. This is no small task, of course, particularly given that there are very few established facts about the Bard's life on which we can depend with any degree of certainty. Greenblatt finds his way around this situation by opening his narrative with the phrase, "Let us imagine . . ." (23).

Even earlier in his prefatory remarks, the author tells his readers that "it is important to use our own imagination" when seeking to understand the relationship between Shakespeare's life and his art (14). Indeed, imagination is key to Greenblatt's book, but just how far this imagination should be extended in a biography remains debatable. Take, for example, the opening pages of the book which suggest that its readers "imagine that Shakespeare found himself from boyhood fascinated by language, obsessed with the magic of words" (23). Following on the heels of this,

Greenblatt's imagination morphs into certainty. He writes, "it is a very safe assumption that [this obsession] began early, perhaps from the first moment his mother whispered a nursery rhyme in his ear: 'Pillycock, pillycock, sate on a hill, / If he's not gone—he sits there still.'" Greenblatt then goes on to confirm that "This particular nursery rhyme was rattling around in his brain years later when he was writing *King Lear*" (23).

The movement from "imagine," to "a safe assumption," to "perhaps," to "was" is typical of Greenblatt's biography. Throughout the book, the author offers his readers tempting possibilities—for example, that there is something significant about the number of times Shakespeare includes the theme of a lost title or identity in his drama (84). He then pulls back from these suggestions slightly, typically by pointing out that there is no direct relationship between life and art, only to offer them up again as a possibility, or in the case of *King Lear* and the nursery rhyme, as a certainty. Though it is typical of New Historicism to imagine what could have happened, in *Will in the World* the founder of the movement routinely moves from speculation to certainty on matters which are far from certain. For example, in the hands of Greenblatt, humanist Roger Ascham's remarks on the nature of education become John and Mary Shakespeare's desires for their son (24). Or, when Greenblatt discovers a record of boy called Willis having seen a play with his father, he deftly shifts Willis to Will and suddenly it is the young Shakespeare who is seeing a play with his father (30).¹⁰

Another complaint readers may have is that late in the biography, Greenblatt relies heavily on his former scholarship. Some may dislike the repetition of material, specifically regarding the similarities between *Hamlet in Purgatory* and *Will in the World*. At least as notable, though, is the portrait readers get of Stephen Greenblatt in a text that is meant to tell the life story of William Shakespeare. In the preface to *Shakespeare's Lives*, Samuel Schoenbaum remarks on the difficulty of writing a biography of Shakespeare due to the tendency of the writer to see him/herself in the subject. "I quickly recognized the truth of the observation that biography tends toward oblique self-portraiture," writes Schoenbaum. "How much must this be so with respect to Shakespeare, where the sublimity of the subject ensures empathy and the impersonality of the life-record teases speculation!" (viii). Whether or not

10 On the topic of names, throughout the book Greenblatt refers to Shakespeare as 'Will,' an epithet readers who have had their own names shortened by strangers may find uncomfortably familiar.

Greenblatt has experienced the sublimity of Shakespeare, he has revealed himself in his narrative of the Bard's life. For example, in the context of a discussion about the death of Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, Greenblatt addresses religion, with an eye to the possibility Shakespeare harbored Catholic sympathies. Describing a broader theological debate stemming from the remnants of Catholic belief in a Protestant country and suggesting these are Shakespeare's own thoughts, Greenblatt writes,

What mattered was whether the dead could continue to speak to the living, at least for a short time, whether the living could help the dead, whether a reciprocal bond remained. When Shakespeare stood in the churchyard, watching the dirt fall on the body of his son, did he think that his relationship with Hamnet was gone without a trace? (315)

Later in the same chapter Greenblatt claims that writing *Hamlet* was Shakespeare's way of dealing with the death of his child and the impending death of his father. In playing the role of the Ghost – a suggestion made initially by Rowe in the eighteenth century and uncritically accepted by Greenblatt—Shakespeare “must have conjured up within himself the voice of his dead son, the voice of his dying father, and perhaps too his own voice, as it would sound when it came from the grave” (322). At these moments in the book it is difficult not to feel that Greenblatt is articulating his own, rather than Shakespeare's, desires. In the 1980's in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and *Shakespearean Negotiations* Greenblatt expressed an interest in voices of the deceased. He was disturbed, in one case, by a request to mouth the words ‘I want to die’ by a man who had a terminally ill son who can no longer speak (*RSF* 254-6). Later in his career, he confessed that he had a “desire to speak with the dead,” though when he tried to do so, he said, “all [he] could hear was [his] own voice.” But, the critic's voice, he asserted, has to reanimate others' voices: “my own voice,” wrote Greenblatt, “was the voice of the dead” (*SN* 1). Considering the intersection between the voices of the dead and his own voice—not to mention Greenblatt's tense relationship to his father, who seems not to have trusted his son to recite the *kaddish* for him when he died¹¹—may lead some readers to feel that this biography is as much, if not more, the story of Greenblatt's life as it is of Shakespeare's.

Though the feeling that Greenblatt has been writing his own autobiography in *Will in the World* may not be shared by all readers, many will wonder, as Lois Potter has, just how much imagination is

11 See *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 3-9.

permissible in a book that purports to be a biography.¹² Given the speculative nature of this book, this is a reasonable and necessary question to ask. What is the difference between a biography of Shakespeare like *Will in the World*, for instance, and Shakespeare scholar Grace Tiffany's *Will* (2005), which is marketed as a novel? The difficulty in judging how much imagination is acceptable in Shakespeare biographies comes when we consider the dearth of information available about Shakespeare alongside the vexed relationship between history and literature. In the 1970's Hayden White declared that history was more like literature than its practitioners cared to recognize. In "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," White draws a parallel between genres or modes of literature as delineated by literary critic Northrop Frye and the way in which an historian makes sense of his/her materials. As he says,

no given set of casually recorded historical events in themselves constitute a story; the most that they offer to the historian are story *elements*. The events are *made* into a story by . . . all of the techniques that we would expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play (281).

White defines "emplotment" as "the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot-structures, in precisely the way that Frye has suggested is the case with 'fictions' in general" (280). Given this conception of history, it is not strange that Greenblatt or any other biographer might take the meager facts of Shakespeare's life and emplot them in order to tell a (hi)story of the playwright's life.

Even if this is what Greenblatt does in *Will in the World*, there remains the issue of the intended audience for this biography to consider. Writing for the general public as he does in *Will in the World*, Greenblatt has a responsibility to his readers. The public typically expects an academic to limit him/herself to knowable data, and to describe rather than prescribe. "The authority which the common reader invests in academic specialists imposes on them... an obligation to signal very clearly their deviations from these norms. Otherwise," warns Ellis, "they are in danger of passing off one kind of intellectual product in the guise of another" ("Biographical Uncertainty" 200). This is what it seems to me Greenblatt does in *Will in the World*. The critic has made a career out of telling stories and making provocative connections between art and culture. What redeemed New Historicism in the past was not only its desire to

12 Lois Potter, "Having Our Will: Imagination in Recent Shakespeare Biographies" *Shakespeare Survey*, 58 (2005), 1-8.

reach outside the literary text but its ability to provide clear and compelling close readings of texts. The care with which Greenblatt handled his early work, however, seems to have been abandoned in *Will in the World* in favor of spinning a ripping yarn.

In order to avoid the pitfalls biographies typically experience—namely circularity, arbitrariness, and speculation—James Shapiro avoids the traditional cradle-to-grave biographical narrative. In “Toward a New Biography of Shakespeare,” he urges scholars instead to

begin writing partial or micro-biographies that focus intensely on specific years (or even shorter periods) of Shakespeare’s creative life. These studies would ignore Shakespeare’s early and retirement years and focus exclusively on the years that matter most, the quarter-century in which he wrote and acted. Because biographers are led by convention to take us from birth to death and beyond, these years are almost always given short shrift (“Toward” 11).

This is precisely the course Shapiro follows in *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005). Biographers who offer a comprehensive life of the playwright, Shapiro says, “tend to assume that what makes people who they are now, made people who they were then” (xiv-xv). This, though, is probably not the case as the scarcity of personal diaries and memoirs from the period suggests. “[A]s much as we might want Shakespeare to have been like us, he wasn’t” (xv). Shapiro calls comprehensive biographies “necessary fictions” that are interesting not so much for what they explain about Shakespeare but for “what they reveal about our fantasies of who we want Shakespeare to be” (xv). Furthermore, Shapiro finds that “the unpredictable and contingent nature of daily life [is] too often flattened out” in all-encompassing biographies, something he hopes to remedy in his biography (xvi).

In *A Year in the Life* Shapiro looks at Shakespeare’s achievements and the experience of early modern English people because the two issues that are so intimately tied one cannot be understood without the other. Shapiro is quick to note, however, that “the plays are not two-way mirrors” (xiv). Just because Shakespeare wrote about betrayal and indecision as he did in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, for example, does not mean that he necessarily experienced the same emotions as did the main characters in these plays. In choosing 1599, Shapiro is able to deal with an interesting year in the history England and a definitive moment in Shakespeare’s life. During

this year, the country prepared itself for an invasion by the Spanish, fought against uprisings in Ireland, and watched in trepidation as its elderly, childless Queen crawled toward death. Shakespeare, in this year, “went from being an exceptionally talented writer to one of the greatest who ever lived,” and Shapiro seeks in his book to figure out how this happened (xvii). While he does not take the same approach as does Greenblatt in trying to determine how Will became Will, Shapiro is interested in the cultural moment in which Shakespeare achieved, as he sees it, his greatness. What kinds of sermons might he have read? What kind of art might he have viewed? What did the playhouses and bookstalls that surrounded him have to say to Shakespeare? These are questions Shapiro probes in his biography in order to “convey a sense of how deeply Shakespeare’s work emerged from an engagement with his times” (xvii).

Shapiro begins his biography with a short Prologue that situates Shakespeare and his colleagues in the years leading up to the one in which Shapiro is interested. He discusses the dire circumstances facing the Chamberlain’s Men, whose lease on the Theatre ran out in 1598, leading them to dismantle the building, store it, and rebuild it shortly thereafter on the other side of the Thames. This new venue, the Globe, would play an important role in the rest of Shakespeare’s career and so it is fitting that Shapiro foregrounds his biography with this tale. As perhaps all biographers of Shakespeare must do, Shapiro speculates on many points; however, his speculations are the result of critical analysis and close scholarly attention to detail. Following in the footsteps of Malone, Shapiro’s devotion to documents from 1599 is evident in his explanation that in preparation for writing the biography he “read almost all of the books written in 1599 that Shakespeare might have owned or borrowed or come upon in London’s bookstalls” (xvii). This bookishness gives Shapiro’s biography scholarly weight, even if in the end the book is somewhat more about Elizabethan culture than it is about Shakespeare.

Though E. A. J. Honigmann’s *Shakespeare: The ‘Lost Years’* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985/1991) appeared on the scene before *Shakespeare in Love* and the other biographies discussed in this section, it is worth a brief mention as an example of another contemporary biography that takes a partial approach to telling the story of Shakespeare’s life. Rather than focusing on a single year as does Shapiro, Honigmann makes it his cause to take up the question of Shakespeare’s “lost years.” This period, which Honigmann extends from 1564 to 1592, is one about which little evidence of

Shakespeare's whereabouts remains, though writers commonly speculate about these years in their cradle-to-grave biographies. As the author describes it, his book is a "detective-story," whose subject is a "mystery . . . that experts have tried to solve for two hundred years" (vii). This biographer supports a proposal advanced originally by early twentieth century biographer Oliver Baker in 1937 and agreed upon later by E.K. Chambers.

Honigmann confirms the earlier biographers' suspicions that Shakespeare is the "Shakeshaft" referred to in documents pertaining to a wealthy Catholic family from Lancashire. Furthermore, he proposes that Shakespeare was a schoolmaster, as Aubrey had suggested in the seventeenth century, though at a younger age than had previously been thought. He argues that Shakespeare had an earlier start writing plays than has formerly been believed and that he remained Catholic in spite of governmental orders to the contrary. Although he says that the book is an "interim report" (vii) and notes that he does "not claim that all the suggestions in the book are equally probable" (127), Honigmann remains committed to his claims, painstakingly submitting details to support them. For example, he offers readers a timeline of the events he proposes occurred in Shakespeare's life, appendices, which include extracts from a number of wills, and genealogical tables delineating the Hoghtons, the Butlers, the Cottams, and the Salusburys, families that feature prominently in Honigmann's book.

Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger: His Life on Silver Street* (New York: Viking, 2007) also focuses on a narrowly defined period in the playwright's life. Here, the years in question are those Shakespeare spent lodging in the Montjoy's house. Living with the family c. 1602-5, the playwright became part of a household that contained tire-maker,¹³ Christopher Montjoy, Marie, his wife, Mary, the couple's daughter, and Stephen Bellot, their apprentice.¹⁴ The Montjoy years deserve attention because they are responsible for a document that contains Shakespeare's first person voice. This document is not, unfortunately, in the form of a diary kept during the playwright's stay on Silver Street; nothing of the kind has been uncovered by Nicholl or any other scholar. It is rather a deposition given during a trial involving the Montjoy family that Shakespeare's voice can be heard.

13 A 'tire-maker' is one who makes ornamental headdresses.

14 As Nicholl says, in his deposition in 1612 Shakespeare reports that he knew the Montjoy's for about ten years, but "[t]here may be some imprecision in the recollection....He may have moved in to the house in that year, or in 1603" (17).

Shakespeare was called to testify in court because Bellot had married Mary in 1604 but was complaining in 1612 that the dowry of L60 his father-in-law had promised him had not materialized. Bellot initially got cold feet about pairing up with the Montjoy's daughter and so Shakespeare, the family's lodger, was called in by Marie to "perswade" the young man to go ahead with the marriage (Nicholl 5). When asked in court years later about the marriage terms, Shakespeare confirms that he was involved in the negotiations but claims that he cannot recall anything about their details. He could not remember the sum that had been agreed upon for the dowry nor "what kinde of houshold stuffe" had been given to the newlyweds (Nicholl 5). Given that so much time had passed between the negotiations and Bellot's complaint, it is perhaps unsurprising that Shakespeare had no clear recollection of the situation. However, Nicholl also suggests a less generous interpretation is that in *not* remembering, Shakespeare "sides with the unforgiving father and against the spurned daughter" and the deposition thus "contains . . . [a] sour note of silence" (Nicholl 272). Nicholl favors this position and suggests that the playwright's signature on the deposition is an indication of his eagerness to leave the courtroom. Signing his name as 'Willm Shaks,' Nicholl says, "attests [to] his presence at that moment, but in his mind he is already leaving" (272).

Nicholl is not, though, primarily interested in the deposition discovered by the Wallaces in 1909; it is only "part of the story [he] want[s] to tell" (15). Rather, he sees the case as an entry point into studying the period Shakespeare spent on Silver Street with the Montjoy family. Though it has been a century since the Wallaces unearthed the documents pertaining to the case, no one has taken up the invitation to explore the details of Shakespeare's experience during these years until now. In his book, Nicholl examines records related to the site of the Montjoy's house in order to give his readers a sense of what Shakespeare's experience at this moment in his life might have been like. The writer uses the evidence he has studied in order to provide as much detail as possible about the house and the world around it that might have influenced Shakespeare to write plays like *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Timon of Athens*, and *King Lear* during this period.

For Nicholl, though, the relationship between life experience and the playwright's drama is complicated. "Biography and literature do not fit together like Lego bricks," he writes, "but they are not totally divorced either" (34). He seeks to "draw links" between the

work and the art, but he does so cautiously. Nicholl says he “would not call Stephen Bellot a ‘model’ for Bertram, Count Roussillon” nor would he “suggest that Shakespeare was ‘inspired’ by the small dramas of the Mountjoy household.” “But,” he adds, “the analogies are there” (35) and it would be foolish to ignore them completely. Nicholl makes an admirable effort not to discount the influence of everyday life on the art, an approach that would create “a bloodless text,” as he puts it. At the same time, he does his best not to privilege daily life as the sole factor influencing Shakespeare’s plays.

In her book, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001), Katherine Duncan-Jones does not so much focus on such a narrow scope of time as do Shapiro, Honigmann, and Nicholl, but like them, she rejects the cradle-to-grave approach. *Ungentle Shakespeare*, as Duncan-Jones announces, is “thematic,” composed of scenes from the life of Shakespeare, as the book’s subtitle suggests, and is thus more fragmentary than traditional biographies. Aiming to “bring Shakespeare down from the lofty isolation to which he has been customarily elevated, and to show him as a man among men, a writer among writers” (x), Duncan-Jones discusses Shakespeare’s contemporaries and his culture in her biography of the playwright.

She also provocatively argues that Shakespeare was not “nice,” i.e., “liberal, unprejudiced, unselfish” (x) by considering formerly “taboo” topics such as class, sex, and money in relation to Shakespeare. *Ungentle Shakespeare*, for instance, argues that Shakespeare was a stingy man, who hoarded grain during a poor harvest period. He did not join in the fight against William Combe, who was enclosing lands in Stratford and ruining the lives of many townspeople, and, upon his death, the playwright left a mere L10 to the poor. He was preoccupied with class-climbing, something Duncan-Jones claims his contemporary Ben Jonson was not. When it comes to Shakespeare’s sexuality, Duncan-Jones discusses homoeroticism as it relates to the Sonnets. In talking about his heterosexual activity, the biographer makes much of an anecdote jotted down by a law student, John Manningham, in 1601:

Upon a time when Burbage played Richard the Third there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of ‘Richard the Third’. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbage came. Then message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.

(qtd. in Duncan-Jones 131)

Duncan-Jones takes this story to be a reliable indicator of, among other things, the fact that Shakespeare had little “respect either for women or for female intelligence.” She turns to the Sonnets, noting that the William the Conqueror episode and the poems share the same attitude. The “Dark Lady” sonnets (i.e., 127-152) reveal that the speaker, much like Shakespeare in the tale above, is a man “compulsively requiring sexual release—being almost what would now be called a ‘sex addict’—without any demand for reciprocal tenderness or companionship” (131). Duncan-Jones admits to the possibility that “Manningham’s story sounds in some ways too good to be true,” but pushes on the point that this tale is an accurate representation of Shakespeare because the story’s “basic components conform remarkably well to the poetic analysis of the lustful ‘Will’ of sonnets 127-52” (132). *Ungentle Shakespeare* also condemns the playwright by focusing on his relationship to the despicable George Wilkins, who was perpetually drunk and made a habit of beating females, even, in one case, a pregnant woman.

As Duncan-Jones presents it, the relationship between Shakespeare’s life and his work is one we can see now because of our knowledge about the playwright. Those in his own period could not comprehend, for instance, that *Henry V* contains many references to Shakespeare’s own desires for higher rank. Duncan-Jones says that her subject’s own feelings “were extremely well veiled” (110) in his plays, but that they “can readily be teased out” by readers who “take [Shakespeare’s] life records as a starting point” (112-3). Identifying with the creator of the plays by decoding their meanings, Duncan-Jones carves out a dignified niche for herself and her fellow biographers.

After having revealed Shakespeare’s flaws, Duncan-Jones argues that the playwright did not enjoy a quiet retirement in the countryside, as many have previously imagined. Instead, Shakespeare was an irascible miserly older man who fell out with friends and family and whose will has a “sour and angry tone” (263). He was possibly syphilitic, probably drunk, and certainly angry on his deathbed, according to Duncan-Jones, who makes much of the names Shakespeare crossed out and omitted in his final testament. Overall, *Ungentle Shakespeare* pulls no punches; it is polemic and speculative. Though some readers may be attracted to these features, others may find them off-putting and see the biography as more similar to its predecessors than it purports to be.

The two main difficulties biographers of Shakespeare face, as must have become apparent by now, is (1) that we know very little about the playwright's life, and (2) that the relationship between Shakespeare's life and his art is a vexed one. The problems are obviously related, and when the first is eschewed by using the life to explain the art or *vice versa*, as often happens, the circularity can become dizzying. Neither the plays nor the life is a reliable lens through which to read the other. This is why, as Jonathan Bate has said, "we will never get inside Shakespeare the man" ("The Masked Man"). If this is the case, how does a scholar, like Bate, manage to write not one but *two* biographies of Shakespeare? Rather than adapting Russell Fraser's approach of focusing one biography on the early years and the other on the later years,¹⁵ Bate has different goals in each of his books, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) and *The Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare* (New York: Random House, 2009).

In *The Genius of Shakespeare* Bate has written a hybrid text that is not solely biography or literary criticism. Biography, as he notes, is typically concerned with the life story of a person whereas the literary critic focuses on the artist's career. Bate, on the other hand, argues "that neither Shakespeare's life nor his career can account for his genius" (viii). Thus, Bate is concerned not only, or even primarily, with the man who lived from 1564 to 1616, but with the "body of words, characters, ideas, and stage images" associated with the playwright and his work that have influenced many generations since his death.

In the early part of *Genius*, Bate provides a biographical sketch of Shakespeare, balancing between George Steevens' remarks that next to nothing is known about the playwright and the fact that since the late eighteenth century scholars have discovered "over fifty documents relating to Shakespeare, his family, and his acting company in the London Public Record Office alone" (4). Still, Bate admits that the surviving documents present a Shakespeare who "invested his income shrewdly and was mildly litigious" (4), and, it should be added, documents found since the Wallaces' discovery concern Shakespeare's culture more broadly, not the man himself. In any event, the extant papers tell us neither about the playwright's character nor about the relationship between his personality and his

15 Russell Fraser's *Young Shakespeare* (Columbia: Columbia UP, 1988) was his first biography of Shakespeare. His *Shakespeare: The Later Years* (Columbia: Columbia UP, 1992) followed shortly after. More recently, *Shakespeare: A Life in Art* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), a single book containing both biographies, was published.

art. Bate is forthcoming in the opening chapter about the speculation that surrounds the biography of Shakespeare. He warns against the habit of reading too much into texts like Shakespeare's will and his plays, for neither provide satisfactory answers to Shakespeare's character. In a brief thirty pages Bate gives readers an "Anecdotal Life" of Shakespeare, explaining that "[a]s a dramatist, he never speaks in his own voice, he makes and remakes, turns and returns, himself. He does not tell us about his life; for this we have to rely on the anecdotes of others" (32).

The following chapters in the first part of *Genius* deal with the Sonnets and autobiography, the question of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, Shakespeare's relationship to Christopher Marlowe, and Shakespeare's use of his source material. Each of these topics might be said to be on the borderline between biographical and literary criticism, though a brief mention of Bate's stance on each of these issues is relevant to readers interested in Shakespeare's life, for these are the issues on which biographers routinely disagree. Bate finds the "genius" of the Sonnets in "their power to generate [different] readings" (43). By this he means that, like the plays, the Sonnets are not transparent but rather push their readers in different directions, sometimes toward a biographical reading and sometimes away from it. Bate himself began his work on the poems "with a determination to adhere to an agnostic position on the question of their autobiographical elements." However, he confesses, "I have been unable to hold fast to my unbelief." He says that the poems "have wrought their magic on" him, pushing the skeptical scholar to believe in their autobiographical nature. His conversion experience is proof, Bate says, that the Sonnets' "genius is still at work" (58).

Regarding the authorship controversy, Bate explains why others, namely the Earl of Oxford and Sir Francis Bacon, were championed as possible authors of the plays over two hundred years after Shakespeare's death, though as most scholars do, Bate does not subscribe to these conspiracy theories. In chapter four of *Genius*, he argues that "Shakespeare . . . only became Shakespeare because of the death of Marlowe. And he remained haunted by that death" (105). Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare's work is notable, says Bate. Tweaking Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence, the biographer proposes that Shakespeare's relationship to Marlowe was one of "sibling rivalry" (106), and, he argues, the death of Marlowe in 1593 opened up a space for Shakespeare to fill. In the final chapter of the first half of the book, Bate examines Shakespeare's use of his sources and discusses how, despite what critics like Leo

Tolstoy have written, the playwright's genius is in his reworking of sources. Shakespeare did not, in other words, rip off other writers; rather, he adapted their texts with an unrivaled skill.

The second portion of *Genius* is devoted to the "effects" of Shakespeare. In this part of the book, Bate aims "to rescue some of Shakespeare's past admirers from the enormous condescension of current academic criticism" (191). Rather than dismissing Shakespeare as a figure belonging to the Establishment, Bate considers how anti-Establishment and non-native English peoples have interacted with him. He believes that Shakespeare "matters more than any other writer there has ever been" because his influence has extended to even the far corners of the world (221). Bate goes on to discuss how Shakespeare's characters have become iconic—take, for instance, the sight of a young man dressed in black holding a skull. In the final chapter, Bate considers the thorny issue of the notion of genius and Shakespeare from Thomas Bowdler onward.

As a kind of corrective to *Genius*, Bate's most recent book, *Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare*, strives to keep "Shakespeare's uniqueness . . . in balance with his typicality" (xvii). He attempts to reconcile, in other words, Ben Jonson's claim that Shakespeare was "not of an age" and that he was the "Soul of the age" by presenting readers with "an intellectual biography of the man in the context of the mind-set into which he was born and out of which his works were created" (xvii). The organization of the book pulls in two directions as it is composed of chapters whose titles suggest that this is a cradle-to-grave biography but whose content proves otherwise. Taking a cue from Jaques in *As You Like It*, Bate names his chapters after the seven ages of man, i.e., Infant, Schoolboy, Lover, Soldier, Justice, Pantaloon, and Oblivion. These chapters, though they concern the topics that their titles suggest, do not limit themselves to a single period in Shakespeare's life. The opening chapter, for instance, discusses the year of Shakespeare's birth but moves forward to discuss the events of 1607-8. *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's last plays, is discussed in the following chapter entitled "The Schoolboy," as is the experience of young men attending grammar school in Stratford in the late sixteenth century. Bate organizes his biography this way in order "to escape the deadening march of chronological sequence that is biography's besetting vice" (xviii). So intent on achieving this goal, the biographer opens Chapter 1 with the word "Exit."

Bate makes it apparent that the plays and the culture in

which they were written are intimately linked. Like in *The Winter's Tale*, which combines comic and tragic elements, for example, so too did "birth and death [go] cheek by jowl" (3). Shakespeare's world was one in which plants were taken seriously for medicinal and emotional associations, as *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* illustrate. Although Bate warns against any simplistic connection between the life and the art, noting that "[a]n accurate triangulation of the life, the work, and the world, must be . . . subtle" (xix), by occasionally being silent on the issue Bate suggests a great deal.

Take, for example, Bate's remarks in Chapter 5 about Shakespeare's schoolmasters, from whom he would have learned Latin. Bate says that Thomas Jenkins, one of Shakespeare's teachers, was "like Hugh Evans the schoolmaster in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, who gives a Latin lesson to a clever but cheeky boy named William" (71-2). After quoting the relevant bit of the play, Bate goes on to say that "[t]his is how Shakespeare learned his Latin" (73). Though he never quite claims that Shakespeare was transcribing his own childhood experience in his drama, the temptation to conclude that this is so is too strong for readers, many of whom will undoubtedly have made the connection themselves. Regarding the Sonnets, however, Bate is more forthcoming and careful in dealing with the relationship between life and art. He announces that attempting to determine the identity of the elusive "W.H." of the dedication "is a fool's game." Instead, he argues, scholars should consider the Sonnets in the context of their historical moment. As he does this, Bate concludes that the poems directed toward the "lovely boy" may be less an indication of their author's homosexual desires as they were meant "to explore the perplexities of love and service in what might be described as a newly *bisexualized* court" (219, emphasis in original).

In *Soul of the Age* Bate argues against a number of myths, including that Shakespeare may have spent his 'lost years' as a schoolmaster, a lawyer, or a deer-poacher. Instead, he reports, documents suggest that these years are not so 'lost' as most other scholars have argued. By tracing his relationship to a court case that appeared in London in the late 1580's, Bate explains that the playwright was in the City at the time when the theatre was beginning to flourish.¹⁶ Perhaps, the biographer suggests, this is what enticed Shakespeare to remain in London rather than to return to the small town from which he came. Bate makes sure to disprove the myth

16 Bate is not the first to point to this case. Schoenbaum mentions it in *William Shakespeare: A Compact Life*, though he does not find it as significant a point as does Bate.

that Shakespeare's *Tempest* was his farewell to the stage and that his final years were spent quietly in the country. He points out instead that Shakespeare continued to work and meet in London with his colleagues as late as 1614.

Laying out the terms on which we should judge a biography of Shakespeare in *The Boston Globe*, Bate asserted that "The best biography would . . . be one that set him in his broad cultural context, moving deftly between the dry documentary evidence and the vibrant intellectual, social, and political life of the age" ("The Masked Man"). This is precisely what Bate does in *Soul of the Age*, though one shortcoming of the book might be said to be Bate's reliance the assumption James Shapiro resists in his biography that what we believe makes people what they are today made people what they were in the early modern period. "The influence of our early childhood stays with us all our lives and becomes peculiarly vivid when we see the prospect of grandchildren," Bate says when explaining the logic behind the organization of his book (xviii). This may not bother some readers who believe that human experience has remained more or less the same over time. For those more skeptical readers, it is helpful to note that this move on the part of Bate (and other scholars too) might best be explained as a reaction against those theoretical schools that sought to remove the human from their analysis, most notably New Historicism, which tended to see the work of art not as the creation of a unique individual but the result of influential cultural forces.

Some recent biographies, like Bate's *Genius*, are less interested in telling the story of the life of the unique playwright than his unique afterlife. With its emphasis on this topic, Peter Holland's entry on Shakespeare in the 2004 DNB suggests that an interest in Shakespeare's afterlife is, if not eclipsing biography, at least giving it a run for its money. Stanley Wells' *For All Time* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) engages in this trend: less than half of the book is about Shakespeare's life. The remaining pages are devoted to discussing how generations that followed him have responded to the playwright.

The biographical portion of the book, which includes the material in Chapters One and Two, includes less speculation than many biographers are wont to provide. Wells does, though, suggest that while the playwright's father, John, may have been a "crypto-Catholic," he engaged actively in a society that required him to conform to Protestant standards. He had his children baptized in the

Anglican church and buried according to its rites; he assumed public office, something not possible for Catholics. John Shakespeare stopped attending church not because his Catholic sympathies got the best of him, asserts Wells, but rather because he was suffering financially. William Shakespeare, Wells concludes, was not raised in a Catholic household and did not thus harbor Catholic sympathies.

This theory leads Wells to ignore the notion that Shakespeare spent his “lost years” in a Catholic household. Instead, the critic remains neutral on these years and notes the tendency toward autobiography on the part of Shakespeare biographers: he points out that Shakespeare has been imagined to have been a lawyer’s clerk, a soldier, or a navy man by a lawyer (Malone), a soldier (Duff Cooper), and a navy man (Lieutenant-Commander A. F. Falconer), respectively (26). Wells’ most unique speculation is that Shakespeare was “our first great literary commuter” (37). That is, Shakespeare did not, according to the biographer, spend his creative years exclusively in London. Rather, he frequently returned to his hometown to write because although there is little known about New Place, Wells imagines “that it contained a comfortable, book-lined study situated in the quietest part of the house to which Shakespeare retreated from London at every possible opportunity, and which members of the household approached at their peril when the master was at work” (38). Moments like these in Wells’ book provoke even the mildly skeptical reader to recall Daisy’s remark in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*: “Wouldn’t it be pretty to think so?”

Wells does not, though, speculate on the identities of the Fair Youth or the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. When pushed, however, he does conclude that the Sonnets are biographical:

[I]f I were required to jump over the fence rather than sit on it, I should have to come out with the view that many of the Sonnets, including—indeed, especially—those that seem most revelatory of sexual infatuation and self disgust, are private poems, personal and almost confessional in nature I think this partly because, considered as a fictional sequence designed to chart the stage of a series of relationships, the Sonnets are a failure. No clear narrative emerges (87-8).

The third chapter of Wells’ biography, which he says is “the core of the book,” focuses on the act writing for the early modern theatre. It deals with the physical ordeal of putting quill to parchment, the editing and publishing process, the lack of stage directions in the plays, collaborative authorship, missing plays, and Shakespeare’s “sources.” This chapter is a bridge between the two parts of the

book; the sections to follow focus on Shakespeare's afterlife, from the Restoration to the twentieth century. These chapters delve into many topics, including how Shakespeare came to be thought of as the greatest writer of his generation, the many famous actors who have assumed roles in Shakespeare's plays, and how the playwright has been received worldwide. In between these chapters, Wells includes many gorgeous illustrations of early modern artifacts and contemporary productions.

The book casts its net wide and is aimed, as Wells says, at "the common reader." It is true that *For All Time* is meant for those who know little about the period—take, for example, Wells explanation that "[t]he portability of the fountain or ballpoint pen was not available to [Shakespeare]" (101) and his often chatty tone—yet, this does not mean that Wells' book is a neutral presentation of the "facts" about Shakespeare's life. Just like any biographer does, Wells speculates. The biographical portion, though, is kept to a minimum in the book which primarily offers readers an overview of a less elusive part of the playwright's life, his afterlife.

Conclusion

The sea, all water, yet receives rain still
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou being rich in Will add to thy Will
One of mine, to make thy large Will more.

Sonnet 135, ll.9-12

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them.

Hamlet 3.1.61-2

At the annual luncheon of the 2009 Shakespeare Association of America conference, outgoing President Coppelia Kahn spoke on the question of Shakespeare's appearance. This was an especially relevant topic because earlier that year a portrait believed to be a likeness of Shakespeare was unveiled after undergoing many rounds of scientific testing in order to confirm its "validity." Kahn's point, after reviewing many other portraits advanced over the years as being accurate representations of the Bard, was that we will probably never know just what Shakespeare looked like, and even if we did, as Duncan says in *Macbeth*, "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (1.4.11-12). Even looking this genius in the eyes, in other words, would not change the way we think about his texts, Kahn argued

“Yet, it cannot be denied that the desire to know Shakespeare continues, as is evident by the excitement that surrounded the Cobb portrait and the many biographies of the playwright that continue to be written. The request of the narrator of Sonnet 135, who toys with several meanings of the word ‘will’, including the Christian name of the author of the poem, might also be that of would-be biographers of Shakespeare. The hope that, like the sea continues to accept rain, the over-saturated market will find room for more biographies of ‘Will’ is the desire of many writers. In his Shakespeare biography Anthony Burgess, of *A Clockwork Orange* fame, goes so far as to “claim...the right of every Shakespeare-lover who has ever lived to paint his own portrait of the man (11).”

But, as Robert Browning’s “At the Mermaid” suggests, Burgess’ opinion is not universally shared. In the poem, a slightly inebriated Shakespeare asks his friends rhetorically,

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,
There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best[...]? (ll.33-6)

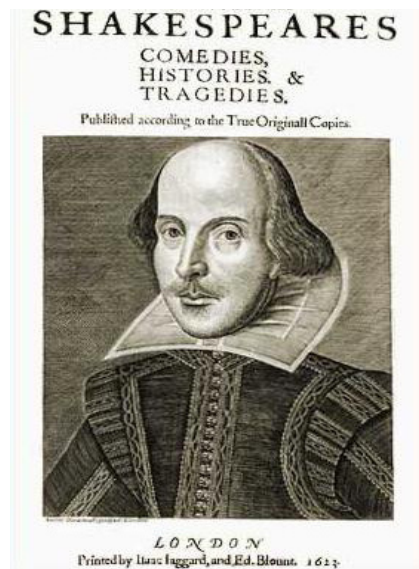
Browning’s “portrait” of Shakespeare is fictional, of course, but this characterization of him goads us to ask ourselves just how willing the dead are to speak to us.

Though we cannot know how Shakespeare would have responded to the plethora of biographies of him, the depiction of a man who presents his art rather than his heart to the public is a provocative one. David Ellis believes that since “the real answer to almost all the important questions which can be asked about Shakespeare’s life is ‘Don’t know,’” scholars should move on to other, more fruitful projects. “[F]rank acceptance of ignorance is the first step to useful knowledge, and biographical uncertainty a powerful reason for keeping quiet,” he concludes (“Biographical Uncertainty” 207). This might be sound advice, but, much like the Ghost in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare continues to entice scholars even as he simultaneously eludes them. Like the many questions provoked Hamlet’s dead father—“What are ‘the secrets of [his] prison-house’ (1.5.14)?” Is he telling his son the truth? Why can’t Gertrude see him though Horatio and others can?—scholars are left with many unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) questions about Shakespeare. This does not stop them searching for answers and contemplating, Hamlet-like, the nature of their subject’s being, however. As the melancholy Dane mourns his lost parent, scholars seek for their literary father in the dust of libraries and museums.

They duel with each other over his reputation, and continue to produce more “words, words, words” about him.

As Ron Rosenbaum has noted, "Shakespearean biographers at their best are like the great old jazz musicians who can spin dizzying riffs out of a few notes of an old standard. But at their worst," he cautions, "Shakespearean biographers are like cardsharps, piling suspect suppositions upon shaky conjectures into rickety houses of cards" (xi-xii). Thus, the reader of a Shakespeare biography must be cognizant of what is at stake in each attempt to tell the story of the Bard's life. He/She must consider which myths are being perpetuated and which are being debunked. How strong is the evidence to support the claims the biography is making about Shakespeare? How much imagination is being used? How much should be used? Ultimately, readers must ask themselves whether they enjoy Shakespearean jazz and if they possess a capacious enough will to accept any more Will. If the answers to these questions are "no," then the rest will be, as Ellis hopes, silence.

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Texts and Teaching

Books Recommended for Courses

Using John Wilders to Teach Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy

Edmund M. Taft

Marshall University

John Wilders. *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1978. 154 pp.

"O thoughts of men accurst!
Past and to come seems best; things present, worst."

(2 *Henry* 4.1.3.107-108)¹

It has become commonplace to observe that great works of literature can sink when they are first published, only to re-emerge later when conditions of reception change. Less noted, however, is the fact that fine literary criticism can suffer the same fate. Perhaps the best example of this latter phenomenon is the publication of Harold Goddard's *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, which seemed in 1951 to be an unscholarly treatise by an unqualified writer and was thus either ignored or treated with thinly veiled contempt.² When the whirligig of time changed in the early 1980s, however, Goddard finally got his due, and today nearly everyone recognizes that he made significant contributions to Shakespeare studies.

Another critical work that badly needs to be resurrected and appreciated is John Wilders' *The Lost Garden*, which had the misfortune to be published at the end of one scholarly movement in Shakespeare and the start of several new ones. Intoxicated by Derrida, de Man, Foucault, the rebirth of modern feminist criticism, and

1 All quotations of Shakespeare's plays are taken from David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 6th ed. (New York: Longman, 2008).

2 As late as 1981, a famous Harvard Shakespearean—who will remain unnamed—once told our graduate class the following: "Harold Goddard's book contains absolutely nothing of value—nothing!"

by hints of New Historicism already in the air, critics in the late 70s and early 80s had little time to consider what Wilders had to say, though the few contemporary reviews that I have been able to find praised Wilders' style and his obvious love for Shakespeare.³ A thorough-going humanist, Wilders seemed to belong to an earlier age that had run out of steam and had nothing new to add.

In fact, Wilders has a lot to add, especially in his discussions of Shakespeare's *Henriad*, and his little book is as suggestive as it is illuminating. In brief, Wilders argues that the myth of the Fall informs much of Shakespeare's work (especially the histories) just as it does Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Specifically, Wilders observes that the collective memory of a lost Eden animates the characters and accounts for many of their actions in the histories. Wilders puts it this way:

[The] discrepancy between an ideal past and a painful present, between the hopeful intentions of Shakespeare's heroes and their temporary, fragile achievements, is, I believe, a way of portraying in social and political terms the theological idea of a "fallen humanity." The myth of the fall and the doctrines derived from it are an attempt to account for the imperfections of the secular world, for the way in which actual experience falls short of experience as we imagine, ideally, it could be (10).

Particularly important is Wilders' formulation of a "painful" or "diminished" present, which becomes an important motive force for change in the political world. Unsatisfied with conditions in the present, subjects of the emerging nation-state look back longingly to a "better time" and a "better king," nowhere more obviously than in *Richard II*, where, as Wilders' points out, the memories of Edward III and the Black Prince increasingly dominate the minds of York and others as Richard's short reign unfolds. After assigning the first three acts of *Richard II* and the first three chapters of Wilders' short book, I usually begin undergraduate and graduate classes in Shakespeare by turning to the Duke of York's reaction to Richard's theft of Gaunt's lands and wealth:

3 A particularly thoughtful review of Wilders' book was written by Richard Proudfoot, "Frustrations Without End," *TLS* 8 Aug. 1980: 901. Proudfoot applauded Wilders' critique of E. M. W. Tillyard's oversimplified view of the histories and concluded that Wilders' study "deserves the attention of all serious students of Shakespeare" (901).

I am the last of noble Edward's sons,
Of whom thy father, Prince of Wales, was first.
In war was never lion raged more fierce,
In peace was never gentle lamb more mild,
Than was that young and princely gentleman.
His face thou hast, for even so looked he,
Accomplished with the number of they hours;
But when he frowned, it was against the French
And not against his friends. His noble hand
Did win what he did spend, and spent not that
Which his triumphant father's hand had won.
His hands were guilty of no kindred blood,
But bloody with the enemies of his kin.
O Richard! York is too far gone with grief,
Or else he never would compare between.
(2.1.171-185)

The class understands immediately that York is frustrated because Richard has disinherited Bolingbroke, the last in a series of actions by the king that include having Woodstock murdered and choosing to fight an unpopular war. Characteristically, Richard is blind to what York is saying—"Why uncle, what's the matter?" (2.1.286)—and the young king is blind as well to the implications of York's tirade. Richard's faults aside, what man could ever live up to the memory of the Black Prince that York evokes? Who could wage war without raising money somehow? What king or prince never chastised his own subjects? What prince never used his father's wealth or never engaged in political intrigue of some kind? York's recital of the virtues of the Black Prince sets a seemingly impossible standard for any real king to meet, and a more politically sensitive and adroit king would sense this, but not the self-absorbed Richard. A more politically-minded king might also sense that failing to meet the ideals of his subjects—even imagined ones—could lead to trouble, especially if someone else seemed to meet their standards better: enter, Henry Bolingbroke.

At this point, I suggest that maybe the real issue is not what Richard does but how he does it. I flip ahead to *Henry V* and give a brief synopsis of the opening scenes of the latter play, emphasizing the implicit parallelism that Shakespeare uses to contrast Richard and Henry. Henry has three conspirators killed, but he so arranges things that they condemn themselves and ask for their own death (!)

Henry too goes to war, but he picks a popular war that the people want to fight. And the king also finances his expedition at the expense of his subjects, but the Archbishop does his dirty work for him by “donating” to the impending war effort in return for killing a bill that would have significantly improved the common good. The class soon realizes that a “successful” king must be aware of how he goes about attaining his objectives, weighing time “even to the utmost grain.”

Wilders’ interpretation of the original Fall and its consequences also helps us better understand Shakespeare’s histories. He explains that when Satan tempts Eve, her choice is a relatively simple one between good—following God’s Will—and evil—following her own. But Adam’s temptation is inherently ambivalent because, from his point of view, whatever he does will be partly wrong. How can he choose God and forsake Eve? How can he choose Eve and forsake God? Like Adam’s choice, Bolingbroke’s decision to ascend the throne leads to a seeming “fall,” yet, as Wilders argues,

It cannot be said that the alternative open to Bolingbroke would have been wholly right. To have forfeited his patrimony and left the government of the country in the hands of an incompetent, unpopular ruler would not have been desirable either. In his situation either decision would have been partially wrong (109).

To rephrase Wilders’ point, which is better? A lineal, incompetent king or a competent king lacking linearity? York chooses the latter and his son Aumerle the former, symbolizing the breakup of both the family and the state in *Richard II*, but would it have been better to let Richard go on his merry way? What would he have done next? Predicaments like this one crop up time after time in the histories. Bolingbroke’s son faces a similar dilemma when he chooses to carry out his plan “to redeem the time,” for it requires avoiding his father in the present and separating himself from Sir John Falstaff in the future. Or consider the council scene (1.2) in *Henry V*: Which is better? To go to war against the French or to risk unrest and possible rebellion at home?

Sometimes the implications of Wilders’ approach extend far beyond the scope of his own analysis. For example, discussing the

opening of *Henry IV, Part 1*, Wilders observes,

The play has scarcely begun before there is a clash of wills between the King and Hotspur which takes the form of an argument about the true character and conduct of Mortimer. To Henry, Mortimer is a traitor who has betrayed his troops to the enemy; to Hotspur, Mortimer is a loyal subject who has proven his faithfulness in violent conduct against Glendower (86).

In effect, each man calls the other a liar. Barely hidden here is the theme of historical uncertainty that Shakespeare found in parts of Holinshed and made into a major aspect of the histories. F. J. Levy observed long ago that the chroniclers' habit of including contradictory facts and accounts was "a conscious critical act" (169), one that Shakespeare could not have overlooked. Moreover, Shakespeare's friend, fellow artist, and author of *The Civil Wars*, Samuel Daniel, extends the insight of Holinshed and other Tudor historians in his prose apology for censoring Richard II:

Pardon us, Antiquity, if we miscensure your actions, which are ever (as those of men) according to the vogue and sway of the times, and have only their upholding by the opinion of the present: We deale with you but as posterity will with us (which ever thinkes itself the wiser) that will judge likewise of our errors according to the cast of their imaginations (quoted In Levy 277).⁴

In other words, original motivations are likely to be lost or clouded by the dark backward and abysm of time, and, to make things even more complicated, interpretations of the past always are colored by the conditions of the interpreter in the present ("the cast of their imaginations"). Shakespeare seems to share Daniel's sophisticated view of history, and so, in the exchange between Henry and Hotspur to which Wilders alludes, Henry portrays Mortimer as a traitor (because the king knows that Richard named him next in line to the throne?), and Hotspur describes Mortimer as a modern-day epic hero because, after all, Mortimer is Hostpur's relative. Both men interpret the past according to their own needs and desires in the present.

Historical uncertainty—properly, historical revisionism—is

4 The original source is Samuel Daniel, *The Collection of the History of England* (London, 1634): 119. A philosophical artist with wide interests and high seriousness, Daniel is much undervalued these days.

present in *Richard II* (What are the real facts concerning Gloucester's murder? Is Richard's unkinging in 4.1 a usurpation or a necessary resignation?), but this central motif really comes into its own in *Part 1*. How accurate is Hotspur's account of his meeting with the "popinjay"? Glendower's boasts about his birth and special magical talents? Henry's account of his own rise to the throne? And on and on. A central question to ask the class is whether Shakespeare gives us some kind of "roadmap" so that the audience becomes aware of the ways in which the characters use/abuse the past. Often, I give the students a hint: "Charles Dickens." When their puzzled faces indicate that this hint is not enough, I add, "Because Dickens used humor to drive home many of his major points." Usually, a light goes on after that, and one member of the class blurts out, "Is it Falstaff's story about the Gadshill robbery?" Yes, indeed it is.

We then read the delightful robbery scene (2.2) silently, followed by taking parts and acting out a good deal of 2.4. (lines 112 through 277). These two scenes present a series of events in the past recalled and retold in the present, and the reporter is, of course, Sir John, who presents the robbery as an epic event in which he shines forth as one of the last real heroes in this decayed age, while, in contrast, Hal and Poins are revealed as cowards! We have seen what actually happened, of course, as has Hal, who proceeds to tell the real truth and thus corner poor Falstaff. But as Sir John's ruddy face emerges from behind the shield that he uses to hide his embarrassment at being caught in a pack of lies, Falstaff begins to smile, for the old rogue has found a way out of his dilemma.⁵ Falstaff now claims that he knew all along that it was the Prince who robbed him, and that he did not fight back because of place, degree, and form: "Why, hear you, my masters, was it for me to kill the heir apparent?" (2.4.265-66). In short, historical revisionism knows no bounds. The past can always be revised yet again to meet the needs of the speaker in the present!

In effect, the Myth of the Golden Age is a special case—

⁵ This delightful bit of stage business, a long-standing stage tradition in acting this scene, can be found in Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare's Histories: Plays for the Stage* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1964): 61-62.

albeit an important one—of the more general tendency of fallen man to revise history, consciously or unconsciously, for his own purposes. Once students grasp this dynamic of the history plays, it is time to spend an entire period on the most important speech in the second tetralogy, Hal’s famous (or infamous) soliloquy, “I know you all”:

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyoked humor of your idleness.
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base, contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted he may be more wondered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men’s hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o’er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I’ll so offend to make offense a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will/
(*I H4.1.2.188-211*)

By the time we get to this soliloquy, we have finished reading Wilders, and I have talked about the importance of historical revisionism on several occasions. I break the class into groups of two or three, and assign one question from the list below to each group:

1. Summarize in one or two sentences the essence of Hal’s “plan.”
2. How is Hal using the principle of contrast to bring about the change he desires?
3. Is Hal’s plan based on perception? Explain.
4. Might there be some unintended (or hidden) consequences? What are they?
5. Does Hal’s plan depend on manipulation? Is it Machiavel-
lian?

6. Can Hal's plan be justified? How?
7. In what way is Hal's plan an "antidote" or a neutralization of the Golden Age mentality that informs Shakespeare's histories?
8. What perception does Hal hope to create in his subjects' minds? How might this perception strengthen his own "linearity?"

The questions go from easy to hard, and undergraduates usually have little trouble with 1-5, though the instructor needs to stress that the contrast Hal wants to establish involves his "seeming" self vs. his real self, that is, what people thought he was as opposed to what he reveals himself to be. There is no real change, only a seeming change, as question 3 suggests. Students usually provide good answers to question 4, with many concerned that "the foul and ugly mists" the prince alludes to are Falstaff and the gang, and they also wonder if the Eastcheap crowd will seem worse than they really are if Hal's plan succeeds. I add that there also is the problem of timing: when will be the right time to effect Hal's change? Until things in England get really bad? Until Henry dies and Hal becomes king?

Question 6 usually elicits at least two good responses. Some students take Hal's side and point out that he is not really doing anything wrong – the Gadshill robbery was just a prank – so Hal is simply letting the populace mislead themselves. That's their problem, not his. This is a clever response, but I usually reply that many think that consciously misleading others is a kind of lying. Other students take a different tack and note that historical revisionism is practiced by almost everyone in *Part I*, so Hal is just using "the way of the world" to achieve a more stable reign – a good thing. Others, however, are not convinced and stand by their answer to question 5: in their minds, Hal is a manipulator and a Machiavellian. The two hardest questions are 7 and 8, but occasionally both undergraduate and graduate students get one or both right. Hal's plan is specifically designed to reverse the golden age mentality that John Wilders stresses. Hal wants to create a false, seemingly bad personal past

that is suddenly replaced with a heightened present in which the prince seems infinitely better and more able than his subjects anticipated. Thus, it is the present moment, not an imagined past or future, that seems closer to the ideal. Students uniformly respond to this insight by greatly admiring Hal's intellect and political acumen, but then comes the last question: what, exactly, is the perception that Hal wants to create? Sometimes I give a hint by reminding the class that Shakespeare's time was a highly religious age. Then one or more students exclaim something to this effect: "Oh, my God! Hal will create the perception that a miracle has happened!" And then it dawns on someone that such a perception would be very helpful for a king whose linearity is in question. We end this discussion, which takes an entire 75-minute period, by going back to the issue of the ethics and morality of Hal's plan. Some students maintain their admiration for it; others decry it, and I end the period by asking if there is any other way out of Hal's dilemma besides his plan. No one can think of an alternative that would really work.

Henry IV, Part 2 is distinguished from *Part 1* in that things have gotten worse in England, and the mood of country is grim. In fact, lack of hope for the future is the defining aspect of *Part 2*, as the opening scenes illustrate. By the time the class reads the last half of the play, I collect the first short paper assigned in the course, assigned about a week earlier (2-4 pages for undergraduates, 4-6 for graduate students):

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

1. *Henry IV, Part 2* is a play full of definitions, the longest and most detailed of which is Bardolph's comic definition of accommodation_(3.2.77-80). Give a better definition of this word than Bardolph does, using the *OED* and evidence in 3.2 as a starting point. How is this word related to the Archbishop Scroop's rebellion and his desire to remake English politics? Is there a scene in *Part 2* that illustrates true accommodation at work?

2. Everyone praises the Tavern scene in *Part 1*, but what about *Part 2*? What do we learn about Falstaff and his world in this scene? Are there aspects of Sir John that escape the notice of the likes of the Lord Chief Justice? What are they?
3. The two great scenes in *Part 2* are “The Crown Scene” (4.5) and “The Rejection Scene” (5.5), and both are designed around the concept of historical revisionism. Explicate one of these two scenes, using what you have learned from John Wilders and me about historical revisionism as one of your main critical tools.

I leave it to interested readers to investigate questions 1 and 2, and will focus instead on question 3.

Students read the story of Hal’s “theft” of Henry’s crown in a variety of ways. Some believe that Hal just makes a mistake in thinking his father is dead; others believe that Hal is a hypocrite. Still others read the scene as proof that Hal lusts after the crown. Without doubt, something strange is going on in this scene because Hal’s report of what he said by Henry’s bedside differs greatly from what the audience actually heard him say earlier. The prince’s report uses very different phrasing than the original, and, perhaps more important, the content is different. The prince reports that he immediately thought Henry was dead and only then spoke to the crown. The opposite is true. The prince also reports that he saw the crown as a murderer and an enemy. In reality, he saw it as a symbol of royal duty and a cause of care. What is Hal hiding? The central clue is what is on the prince’s mind when he first enters, which is the perfidy at Gaultree forest (4.5.9-13). John’s verbal legerdemain in tricking the Archbishop demonstrates a cynicism so deep that it proves that hope for the future is now gone for Henry’s followers. They are simply clinging to power any way they can. That means that it is time for Hal to ascend the throne. He simply cannot wait any longer. But Henry hangs on and on, stubbornly refusing to die. By taking the crown, Hal will hasten—perhaps even cause—Henry’s death, and so that is what the prince does—not because he hates

his father or lusts after power, but because he puts his promise to “redeem the time” ahead of love for his father. Hal cannot say this, of course, when he returns to explain himself, but he can use his verbal skills to convince his father he will continue Henry IV’s legacy. So that is what he does.

Even though “The Rejection Scene” has been endlessly discussed, Wilders’ critical approach allows us to add an important element to the long-standing scholarly discussion of this scene. Ever since the “recovery of the age,” most critics maintain that Falstaff is mainly to blame for what happens. Sir John, after all, ruins Henry’s parade, treating the most holy of ceremonies, the crowning of a new monarch, as if Hal/Henry V were strolling with some buddies on a public street. Moreover, Falstaff seems to believe that “the laws of England are at my commandment” (5.3.138-39)! Henry has to reject him harshly because Falstaff’s “bad timing” demands it. This argument is true, but like Henry’s harsh and hurtful words to Falstaff, it is only half the truth. Think back to the first time that we met Hal and Sir John in *IH4.1.3*.

Their banter and teasing all focus around Falstaff’s repeated phrase, “When thou art king,” which occurs four times in the first 138 lines of the scene. Falstaff’s vision of a thieves’ paradise when Hal becomes king is, of course, a parody of the myth of the golden age: whereas others dream of recapturing a lost ideal, Falstaff dreams of bringing back an imagined, lawless past when thieves were in charge (!) It is impossible for Hal not to know this, for he knows all about his subjects’ yearning to bring back an imagined “ideal” past. He designs his entire soliloquy at the end of 1.3 as a kind of antidote to this kind of thinking, as we saw a few pages ago. So Hal knows that Falstaff is driven by a vision of an “ideal” future just as “every man” is, and the former prince, now the new king, also knows that Sir John, like every man, will expect it as soon as Hal becomes king (“When thou art king”). Henry also recognizes that Falstaff has no respect for ceremony. So let’s put two and two together: it’s obvious that Sir John will try to embrace the new king as soon as he can, and

it's also obvious, now that Henry is almost always surrounded by others, that Falstaff will do so in a public way and with no concern at all for "place, degree, and form." Perhaps Hal/Henry V does not know the precise time or place that this awkward and embarrassing public scene will occur, but he knows that it will happen, and it will happen almost immediately once he becomes king. In effect, Henry V has been manipulating his old friend from the start so that this scene, or something very like it, would happen. After all, he needs it to bring about his "change" in a way that is as public as possible. People have to see it to make the new king's plan work.

It might be objected that I have left out the important fact that Hal is always saying "good-bye" to Falstaff in one way or another. The fat knight just doesn't get the hint. Again, this critical commonplace is true, but only half true. In *Part I* Hal also lies to save Sir John from the sheriff and tells Sir John that he can take the credit for killing Hotspur. In *Part Two*, the prince says a curt goodnight to Sir John, but only after violating the king's orders that he and Falstaff be separated. In fact, Hal sends mixed signals to Falstaff. Besides, the hints that Hal gives don't matter (except, perhaps, to assuage Hal's conscience) because the part of our minds that yearns for an ideal past recreated in the future is not under our conscious control and not part of the way we normally think about ourselves. It is much like a primal instinct – as Hal knows perfectly well.

Henry V is the most challenging of the histories to interpret and to teach. Yet for all its brilliance, the central question is simple: what to make of Henry? Is he "the mirror of all Christian kings" or a Machiavellian manipulator? Once again, Wilders can help us better understand this central critical question. Shakespeare gives the audience a choice. They can view the play through the lens of the Chorus, or they can notice that the Chorus misleads them time after time and decide to see through the Chorus and carefully pay attention to the words and actions of the play proper. In effect, the Chorus is the average, patriotic Englishman of 1599 looking back and "remembering" the greatest and most successful king in English

history, much as York “remembered” the Black Prince in *Richard II*. That is why the words of the chorus are so stirring (“O, for a muse of fire!”) and so often misleading when he introduces us to events about to happen on stage.

As for Henry, the best example of how he leads England is to be found in the council scene (1.2), during which he and his country decide to go to war against France. Interestingly, there are two different ways to react to this scene, and everything depends on context. First, let’s interpret it in isolation, hermetically sealed, so to speak. Henry brings together his council to consider the legitimacy of his claim to the French throne, and he calls on the spiritual head of the church to guide him. He admits from the start that he needs to be resolved of certain doubts about his claim, and he warns the Archbishop that he must expound on this issue justly and religiously. He listens carefully to the long exposition of the Salic law, only to return to the basic question, “May I with right and justice make this claim?” (1.2.96), thus making public the confusion of everyone who has tried to follow the Archbishop’s long, tortured explanation. When Canterbury, Ely, Exeter, and Westmoreland all exhort the king to go to war, Henry still is not convinced, and he brings up the Scots and how they may take advantage of an absent English army. Then Canterbury employs “the fable of the bees” to convince the king that all will be well. Only then is Henry “resolved.”

Viewed this way, Henry has gone by the book. He has acted exactly like “the mirror of all Christian kings” and nothing can be said against him (except that careful listeners might think Canterbury’s justification incomprehensible, and learned members of the audience know that the Archbishop has used Erasmus’s bee analogy misleadingly: the point of the fable is to show why a good king should stay at home and govern his people justly).

When we supply some context, however, the scene transforms itself before our eyes. Ely and Canterbury are, of course, crooks who want to save their lands and wealth. But the point to re-

member is how we got to where we are: that is, why has the question of war come up at all? We remember that John raises the possibility of war right after Falstaff's rejection, as if turning away Falstaff is a necessary precursor to war, and indeed it is. For the rejection convinces the populace that a miracle has sent them a young, reformed king the likes of which England has not seen since the days of the Black Prince and his father, Edward III. So what follows? It follows that Henry must emulate these two great leaders and regain England's lost glory by attaining "the world's best garden," France. Indeed, if possible, he must outdo the Black Prince and his father, for that would make the present moment the most glorious of all. It is impossible for Henry not to know what he has done so far and what he must still do. So there is war fever already throughout England, and throughout Henry's council as well, the members of which all wait impatiently for the banner of war to be unfurled. But Henry makes them wait even longer – a lot longer -- as he confesses to doubts, listens to the interminable exposition of the Salic Law, and sits quietly, not tipping his hand, until, suddenly, he hears Canterbury's urgent plea:

Look back into your mighty ancestors;
Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandshires's tomb,
From whence you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,
And your great uncle's, Edward the Black prince. . . .
(1.2.102-105)

In quick succession, Ely, Exeter, and Westmoreland follow suit, all evoking the need to redo or surpass the martial feats of the past. Still, Henry demurs and brings up the Scottish problem, to which the Archbishop responds with the long-winded fable of the bees. Only then is Henry's mind made up. In actuality, Henry has copied Richard here, continually frustrating his subjects' hopes (hopes engineered by Henry, of course) until they cannot stand it any longer, and like York, they automatically bring up the memory of the Black Prince. Then Henry frustrates them even a bit longer, just to insure that they are white-hot for war. To conclude, Henry has manipulated his council like puppets, but he has done so in a way that allows him to act the part of a perfect Christian king. He has

fused Machiavelli and “the mirror of all Christian kings” into one and has thus become the master manipulator of time.

What, then, do we make of this performance? My students are usually stunned and silent once we have gone through the scene carefully, and after a while, they often say they don’t know what to think about Henry. I tell them they may be in good company, and turn to the night before the battle and the passionate confrontation between the disguised king and the common soldier Williams.⁶

In truth, Williams and the king mainly argue past each other. Williams’ point is not just about a subject’s responsibility for his own soul, but about the human cost of war, both direct and indirect, and about a king’s responsibility for those costs on the final day if his cause is not just and honorable. The king notes that every subject is responsible for his own soul, but doesn’t answer the rest of Williams’ argument because he can’t. His quarrel is not just or honorable. Yet this dramatic debate is really anti-climatic in the sense that nothing is finally resolved. Shakespeare just leaves it hanging in the air for us to think about. Perhaps this is so because the question of how God will judge Henry is above our pay grade, even above Shakespeare’s. Will God judge Henry by special rules because of the unique position and awesome responsibility he holds? Or will God judge Henry as he judges any other person? Who but God Himself knows the answer to this question? At this point, the mid-term is coming up, and, among other things, I tell my students to be sure to know the basic concepts in John Wilders’ *The Lost Garden*, and how to apply them.

6 Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991): 146-47, suggests that Williams is none other than Shakespeare disguised. That would give extra weight to Williams’ views, but I would suggest that if Williams stands for William Shakespeare (Williams=William s.=William s.=William Shakespeare?), it is not exactly the 35-year-old playwright but a younger version of himself, before the future playwright spent ten years writing history plays and thinking about the relationship between politics and history.

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Teaching the Black Death

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John Alberth, ed. *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. 200 pages. \$14.95.

Elizabeth A. LeFebvre, ed. *The Black Death. Problems in European Civilization*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 206 pages. \$37.99.

The Black Death is a topic that rarely fails to pique students' interest or fire their imaginations. "Plague Day" in my Western Civilization survey is among the most energetic sessions of each semester, and students in my course on medieval Europe respond enthusiastically to my primary source-driven role-playing game, "Survivor: Black Death." Instructors offering undergraduate courses currently have a range of useful and provocative potential texts on the Black Death from which to choose. Most, like Samuel Kline Cohn's revisionist *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Renaissance Europe* (Arnold, 2002) and Colin Platt's *King Death: The Black Death and Its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (University of Toronto Press, 1996), are secondary sources. Among the less plentiful primary source collections available is the excellent sourcebook, *The Black Death*, translated and edited by Rosemary Horrox (Manchester University Press, 1994). More unconventional in approach is the book by noted historian of medieval England John Hatcher. His *The Black Death: A Personal History* (Da Capo, 2008) constructs a plague narrative for Walsham le Willows (Suffolk) combining historical methodologies and source analysis with elements of fiction.

During the spring 2007 and spring 2009 semesters, I responded to student enthusiasm for the study of the plague by selecting the Black Death as the topic of my sections of Writing and Research in History, an undergraduate seminar and graduation requirement for all History and History-Teacher Education majors on campus. The course requires majors to demonstrate the acquisition of a set of skills including the ability to read and think critically, to conduct research through the use of primary and secondary sources, to understand the concept of historiography, to write clearly and appropriately for an academic audience, and to follow a style guide used by professional historians for citations and formatting. I considered all of the texts listed in the previous paragraph and many others during the process of book selection for my Black Death seminar but ultimately decided my selections would be driven by two main requirements: I wanted accessible sources, both primary and secondary, suitable for students without much in the way of background information on the subject (a few students in the seminar were veterans of my course on medieval Europe, but the vast majority were not), and I needed relatively short texts that could be completed by the two-thirds mark of a sixteen-week semester, allowing students sufficient time to work on individual research due at the close of the semester.

With those considerations in mind, I chose *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350*, edited by John Aberth, and *The Black Death*, edited by Elizabeth Leffeldt, as my course texts. In this review I will discuss the contents, organization, and features of those books, student responses to the texts, and assignments generated by both books to test students' analytic and writing skills throughout the semester.

Leffeldt's collection is part of the venerable "Problems in European Civilization" series, formerly published by D. C. Heath and Houghton Mifflin and now distributed by Cengage. As series editor Merry Wiesner notes in her preface to student readers, the books in the series "take one particular event or development in European history and present you with the analyses of several historians" on the subject (xviii). Leffeldt's volume on the Black Death includes twenty selections, the earliest published in 1931 and the most recent published in 2003. The pieces, averaging approximately eight pages in length, are organized into five broad topical categories emphasizing both the short-term and long-term impact of the fourteenth-century pandemic: "Europe Before the Plague,"

“Medicine and Epidemiology,” “Religious and Cultural Responses to the Plague,” “Structures of Order,” and “The Socio-Economic Impact of the Plague.” As one would expect from an installment from a series entitled “Problems in European Civilization,” these selections are almost exclusively European in terms of geographic coverage. Many of the readings focus on England (six) and Italy (three), while others discuss the plague’s impact in the Holy Roman Empire and in Catalonia; additional selections have a wider European focus. While a piece from Michael Dols’s *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton University Press, 1977) is also included, its primary function is comparative, and the experience of the plague in the Byzantine Empire is mentioned only in passing.

The twenty pieces included in the collection have been excerpted from articles, book chapters in edited collections, and full-length studies, most of which were originally published in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Those familiar with late medieval studies in general and Black Death scholarship in particular will recognize the names of many authors listed in the Table of Contents, including Richard Kieckhefer, David Nirenberg, Christopher Dyer, Mavis Mate, and Harry Miskimin. Taken together, the selections help to contextualize the plague within the political, social, economic, and cultural structures of the late medieval period as well as to acquaint readers with major historiographical issues and debates. The readings in Part I, for example, include important contributions to the scholarly debate concerning the role of the Black Death as a turning point in European history. Selections from David Herlihy, Edward Miller and John Hatcher, and William Chester Jordan problematize the notion that fourteenth-century Europeans were inevitably trapped in a Malthusian crisis from which they could not escape and to which they could not respond with decisive and sometimes creative action. As a whole Lehfelddt’s book offered my students an excellent opportunity to gain familiarity with key trends in scholarship they were likely to encounter during the course of their own research later in the semester.

Because I wanted students to begin with an examination of secondary sources and an introduction to historiography, I utilized Lehfelddt’s text before Aberth’s. There is much to recommend Lehfelddt’s collection as an undergraduate textbook. The book’s features include a general introduction to both the Black Death and the remainder of the text, a brief chronology, a map indicating the

European spread of the Black Death between 1347 and 1350, and a short but useful bibliographic essay (three pages in length) entitled “Suggestions for Further Reading.” Each of the five sections begins with a preparatory essay, which provides an overview of that section’s topic, discusses primary sources, contemporary interpretations, seminal modern publications, and research methodologies, and identifies key points of historiographical debate. This information gives students the necessary background to tackle the selections that make up the bulk of each of the book’s five parts. Particularly important for a research seminar, these essays impress upon students the idea that history is a process involving evidence, interpretation, and argument. Some students tend to think history is “finished,” neat and compact and folded within the pages of books; Lehfeltdt’s commentaries make clear the error of that notion by treating history as an ever-evolving conversation.¹ Lehfeltdt also introduces each reading with a paragraph highlighting key concepts and arguments. My students found this feature particularly helpful, especially early in the semester when their knowledge of the literature on the plague was limited and later when they struggled with dense or quantitative presentations of evidence. The selection introductions served as a key with which they could decode the piece and then test the strategies they employed to identify authors’ arguments.

The book also presented a few challenges. The selections in Lehfeltdt’s collection have been stripped of their citations, a practice that reduces length and increases readability but also sometimes makes it difficult for students to think about evidentiary support or to identify additional materials for consultation. Since one of the chief concerns of my course students selected paper topics as a result of interest initially generated by Lehfeltdt’s readings and then utilized the fuller versions of the excerpted material in their research, at which point they were able to see the missing citations. A second difficulty, again a product of this type of publication, involved getting students to think about the original works from which the selections were excerpted and to remember that they were often longer and frequently more complex in terms of evidence and arguments. As students turned a critical eye on Laura Smoller’s, “Plague and the Investigation of the Apocalypse” (84-99), for example, several commented on what they felt was an over-reliance on Heinrich of

1 The second time I taught the course, I began the semester with John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions, no.16 (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000). Arnold also drives home the point that history is about arguments, and the additional reading helped students approach the selections in Lehfeltdt with a more analytic eye.

Herford's chronicle, complaining that Smoller's evidence was too narrow for her conclusions. The comments led to a useful discussion about evidence and arguments as well as allowed me to remind students to consider that the selections in the edited volume comprised only a portion of the original pieces.

I used Lehfeltdt's book a number of different ways. The individual excerpts were short enough that they could be read, written about, and discussed in a fifty-minute class, and on several occasions, I tested student comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills by having students read a selection in class and then generate a brief written response, some of which I later graded and others of which they traded with a classmate for peer response. Class discussions of the readings were often particularly dynamic on those days, as the material was fresh in the students' minds. Other reading assignments generated more formal essays. The first paper was a three-page analysis of Edward Miller and John Hatcher's "Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change, 1086-1348" (19-30). I required students to evaluate the selection according to several general principles for successful historical writing: good essays are sharply focused on a limited topic; they have a clearly stated argument; they are constructed with the use of carefully acknowledged evidence; they include an author's original, dispassionate thoughts; and they are written clearly, with careful consideration of the intended audience.²

In addition to having students comment on individual selections, I required students to author historiographical analyses of the readings in two of the book's five sections. Students struggled with the first five-page essay, on Part III, "Religious and Cultural Responses to the Plague." While most of them could identify points of confluence and dissonance in the five selections (discussing plague images, apocalyptic writings, the flagellants, Jewish persecution, and Islamic writings), they struggled to construct an assessment of the pieces as a unit. Rather than emphasizing the fact that all five selections were linked by their investigation of fourteenth-century coping mechanisms, for example, most essays devoted a simple descriptive paragraph to each reading. The students dealt much more effectively with the second historiographical essay on Part V, "The

2 These principles come from Richard Marius and Melvin E. Page, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 9-28. While Marius and Page clearly intend for students to apply those rules to their own writing, I found it useful to have students evaluate the texts they read with respect to those guidelines so that they could see the principles in action.

Socio-Economic Impact of Plague.” The majority of them were able to identify a key question at the heart of all five of the selections: Did people’s socio-economic positions improve or decline in the face of the plague? Instead of creating a summary of each selection, students organized their essays around certain interpretations (the plague contributed to a general decline in socio-economic conditions; the plague allowed greater opportunities for social mobility and economic prosperity; some people profited from the plague while the socio-economic status of others remained the same or even declined) and then group the readings accordingly.

Once students demonstrated competence with secondary source analysis, we transitioned to Aberth’s *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350*. The text is part of the Bedford Series in History and Culture, designed (in the words of the editors of the series) “so that readers can study the past as historians do.”³ Unlike other publications in the Bedford series, Aberth’s volume lacks a lengthy introductory essay; the primary sources comprise the overwhelming majority of the text.⁴ A brief seven-page introduction addresses the Black Death as an historical and historically significant event and discusses the study of medieval sources before moving to forty-six primary source selections, both documentary and visual. Aberth’s geographic coverage is unusual in a primary source collection on the Black Death and underscores the pandemic nature of the disease: in addition to numerous sources from western and central Europe, Aberth includes two selections from Byzantine authors and six from Islamic writers who lived in Granada, Syria, and Egypt.⁵ The sources, most of which are four pages or fewer in length, are organized into seven broad topical categories: “Geographical Origins,” “Symptoms and Transmission,” “Medical Responses,” “So-

3 The series editors are Lynn Hunt, David W. Blight, Bonnie G. Smith, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Ernest R. May.

4 I have used a handful of books from the Bedford Series in History and Culture in other courses, all of which include longer essays by the volume’s editor. See Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. David Harris Sacks (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s 1999), for example, with its useful seventy-seven-page introduction. The other volumes I have used, however, contain a single long text supplemented by a small number of additional primary sources, rather than include the range of materials Aberth uses in *The Black Death*.

5 Compare this, for example, to Horrox’s *The Black Death*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). Horrox notes in her preface that she “made no attempt to document the movement of the plague across Asia and the Middle and Near East” (xii). Her collection does include an impressive 125 selections, and was in fact used by nearly all of the students in my course in their research papers.

cietal and Economic Impact,” and “Religious Mentalities,” “The Psyche of Hysteria” (subdivided into sections on “The Flagellants” and “Jewish Pogroms”), and “The Artistic Response” (subdivided into sections on “The Dance of Death” and “Transi Tombs”).

Aberth’s book contains a number of features designed to increase its accessibility to student readers and to promote its use as a tool for student research. The book has a number of illustrations, including a map charting the spread of the Black Death from Asia into Europe and Africa, a chronology of the Black Death, 1347-1363, questions for consideration at the conclusion of the text, and a seven-page selected bibliography, organized by the headings used to group the primary sources. Aberth introduces each of the groups and subgroups with commentary on the sources contained in the section, pointing to common and divergent themes and interpretations. Each selection is also preceded by a brief paragraph of context, providing pertinent biographical information for individual authors or information about the historical origin of corporately-authored pieces by such bodies as the Córtes of Castile or the City Council of Siena. I ask students to consider purpose, argument, presuppositions, epistemology, and relation to other texts when analyzing primary sources, and this prefatory material helped students accomplish that task.⁶

Students responded favorably to Aberth’s book, although I did have to overcome their initial resistance to reading primary materials from the fourteenth century. Several, perhaps rather predictably, complained that the language was “strange” and difficult to understand; they groaned over the occasionally old-fashioned phrasing used in some of the translations (the opening to the *Agnola di Tura*’s chronicle serves as a case in point: “The mortality, which was a thing horrible and cruel, began in Siena in the month of May [1348]. I do not know from where came this cruelty or these pitiless ways, which were painful to see and stupefied everyone,” 81). Still, the liveliness of class discussions on the primary sources attested to their interest in and comprehension of the readings. Part 1, “Geographical Origins,” and Part 2, “Symptoms and Transmission,” serve as useful starting points for more than just obvious chronological reasons. The selections from Nicephorus Gregoras, Abū Hafs ‘Umar Ibn al-Wardī, Giovanni Villani, Louis Sanctus, Michele da Piazza, Giovanni Boccaccio, and John VI Kantakouzenos are relatively easy for readers to compare and contrast. Students eagerly hunted down and

6 This analytic model is drawn from Patrick Rael, “How to Read a Primary Source,” <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/primaries.htm>, accessed 21 February 2007.

tabulated mentions of buboes, black blisters, fevers, bloody sputum, and the like to identify similarities and differences in contemporary accounts of the plague's physical symptoms. Even students who had previously expressed their dislike of primary sources could not help but be captivated by the tale, famously related by Boccaccio's Decameron, of two pigs rooting through the clothes of a recently-deceased plague victim, only to fall dead themselves shortly thereafter (32) and by Agnolo di Tura's stark declaration in the section on social and economic impact that he "buried five of my sons with my own hands" (81).

Reading assignments in Aberth's text shaped class sessions for several weeks and served as the basis for formal and informal writing. As with the pieces in Lehfeldt's book, the sources in Aberth's volume were short enough to be read, written on, and discussed within a single class period, and we spent several sessions working our way through individual selections as a class or in small groups, practicing analytic and writing skills. Several students who had been making considerable progress in the quality of their writing suddenly began to struggle to write about primary sources smoothly and effectively, so I assigned several mini-essays of one paragraph or one page devoted to primary source analysis. The culmination of these assignments was a primary source essay, five to six pages in length, requiring students to analyze all eight sources in Part 4 of the text, "Societal and Economic Impact." The topic was one with which the students had some measure of familiarity (having already written an historiographical essay on the subject based on secondary source selections from Lehfeldt's book). The primary source selections in Aberth's text range from chronicles to regulations and conclude with a list of offenders of the Statute of Laborers in Wiltshire from 1352. From these materials students were able to identify common themes (the plague dissolved traditional social bonds; population losses offered opportunities but also brought about despair and greed; socio-economic change was resisted, but often unsuccessfully, by elites) and offer broader conclusions about the plague's impact on the social order.

The research papers submitted at the end of each semester served as a testament to the value of the course texts edited by Lehfeldt and Aberth, and student course evaluations reviewed the two books favorably each semester they were assigned. Both collections helped acquaint the students with seminal literature and sources on

the Black Death and allowed me to create assignments requiring students to practice key critical thinking and writing skills. The two books work exceedingly well together; they cover many of the same topics and under similar headings, a happy circumstance that allowed my students to apply what they had learned in one book to the materials in the other. Perhaps equally as important, each book worked to sustain student interest in the subject of the Black Death throughout the semester. Selecting a topic for an undergraduate research seminar as challenging to modern students as the Black Death can be a risky enterprise. Lehfeldt's *The Black Death* and Aberth's *The Black Death: The Great Mortality* were instrumental in helping to create a satisfying and successful experience for both the students and the professor.

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The Black Death: Illumination from the Toggenberg Bible (1411)

