

Quidditas

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



King Lear: Scene on the Heath (Act III, Scene iv)

The Library Shakespeare

Illustrated by Sir John Gilbert, George Cruikshank, and R. Dudley
(London: William Mackenzie, 1873-1875)

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Genesis and the Chemical Philosophy

True Christian Science in the
Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

by

Michael T. Walton

The creation story in Genesis is a crucial datum in Western thought. From late antiquity to the early modern era, scripture was understood to contain sufficient knowledge about all subjects, from morality to the secrets of nature, making the creation story in Genesis a crucial source for ideas about natural processes and matter.

Genesis and the Chemical Philosophy concentrates on the rise, maturation, and decline of the Genesis-inspired chemical philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The chemical philosophy was a spiritualized approach to nature developed by Paracelsus and others, who undertook a Christian reformulation of chemistry for the purpose of producing useful results. Paracelsus and his heirs believed that observation and laboratory work, if undertaken by true Christians, would reveal God in nature.



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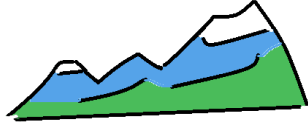
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Rocky Mountain Medieval & Renaissance Association

We invite proposals for our **45th** Annual Conference:

**Shifting Figurations: Consciousness
& Perception
in the Medieval and
Early Modern Centuries**

Denver, Colorado 11 - 13 April 2013

SpringHill Suites Denver

Downtown at Metro State

How did consciousness in earlier periods differ from modern perception? We might apply various theories to re-examine the figurations of consciousness in the Medieval and Early Modern periods: Owen Barfield's theories of evolutionary consciousness, Kenneth Burke's Dramatism, Norbert Elias's Figural Sociology, the Grid/Group Anthropology of Mary Douglas, new research trends in Scholasticism, the current conversations relating performativity to the social production of meaning, and the general milieu of post-post-modern thought in our post-theory era. The goal is to map the cultural contours of consciousness itself and describe significant transformations of consciousness in the Medieval and Early Modern periods. We welcome approaches from all fields -- literature, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, art, music, philosophy, religion, linguistics, the sciences, and so on.

As always, all proposals related to Medieval & Renaissance studies are very welcome. The theme is not required.

Though focused in the Intermountain region of western North America, the RMMRA has members from many areas of the US, Canada, and other parts of the globe. We welcome the world to join us in our beautiful region to explore our common interests in the cultures of the Medieval & Renaissance periods. Come join us in Denver for our 45th Annual Conference!

Proposals for individual papers and for panels should include the following information:

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Please email one file as an attachment in Word, Rich Text, or PDF by 31 December 2012 to

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▼ NOTABLE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS ▼

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in Boethius’s *The Consolation of
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University Honors College
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“Hildegard of Bingen and the
Living Light”

Linn Maxwell

Friday (4/12)
at 7:30 PM

King Center Recital Hall
Co-sponsored by MSU-Denver
Music Department

Quidditas

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 quillies, 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*

Associate Editor: Jennifer McNabb, *Western Illinois University*

Articles appearing in *Quidditas* are indexed in *MLA Bibliography*, *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, and *EBSCOhost*.

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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ALLEN D. BRECK
AWARD WINNER

2012

Lesley Skousen

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. A Professor of History at the University of Denver, he also served for 20 years as department chair. As Professor Emeritus he was named 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, and 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, Professor Breck also 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.

Marking the Woman a Sinner:

Testimony and Legal Fiction in Renaissance England

Lesley Skousen

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Throughout Medieval England, ordained clergy could avoid secular punishment for felony by claiming a privilege known as benefit of clergy. During the Reformation, this privilege was repurposed by the ministers of Henry VIII and offered as a lay benefit. The plea of clergy left women ineligible, as they could not be priests and were rarely convicted in the same numbers as men. Even when accused of crimes, women could rely on legal fictions and evasive testimonies to escape conviction. Then in 1624 and 1691, Parliament redesigned benefit of clergy to include women, first for slight theft and then on equal footing as men. The apparent benevolence of the grant was misleading. Following its implementation, women were convicted in higher numbers. The effect of employing mercy was to draw women within royal jurisdiction. The brand they received marked them as both sinner and subject within England.

The tradition of English common law often is designed with the family unit at its core.¹ Heads of households control children, wives, sisters, and servants. Because of this assumed focus of many laws, the relationship between women and the law in early modern England endures complications. Much has been written on this subject, from the variations in female defense testimony to the variations in expectations afforded to women of sole or covered status.²

1 For a recent background on this subject, see Randall Martin, *Women, Murder, and Equity in Early Modern England*. Routledge: New York, 2008, especially pp. 11-40, and the recent *Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women Writing*, Cambridge UP: 2009, especially the article "Women in the Courts" by Frances E Dolan, 140-52.

2 Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, eds *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*. Chapel Hill Press, North Carolina and London: 1994; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. Routledge Publishing, London and New York: 1993; and Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England*. Cambridge UP: 1998.

Marginalized groups often do not fit neatly into a singular code of law. The needs and special status of “othered” groups does not make them powerless against a legal structure, but the unique social positions of various groups pose a challenge to the central authority of government. To investigate these complex relationships with the law, the methods used by early modern women in order to evade punishment and the tactics employed by a responding government can reveal the unique position of women in early modern England. The language of conviction and the performance of defense can illuminate the intersection of women, crime, and legal fiction. The period of focus is the immediate aftermath of the English Reformation, that religious and political movement that fundamentally altered social institutions and allowed for the centralization of government within England. Such enormous institutional changes affected women in real terms, often captured by women’s writing.³ The language of laws contributed to changing ideas of womanhood, while trials recorded the specific conditions and explanations for criminal events. By analyzing the language in both legislation and litigation, we may better understand the relationship between English women and the law.

My research explores the rise and fall of a diplomatic immunity called “benefit of clergy” that enabled certain people to enjoy a level of immunity from the full punishments of the criminal justice system. Its origins served as a form of diplomatic immunity protecting priests during the turbulent medieval struggles between church and state. During the course of the Reformation, this ecclesiastical privilege was appropriated by the King. In the decades following the Break with Rome, it was slowly applied to particular groups of English laypeople. The post-Reformation version of the immunity embarked upon a project of increasing the power of the courts by

3 Kimberly Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge UP: 2008. Melissa Franklin-Harkrider reveals this turbulent change in her case study *Women Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008.

tying forgiveness to nationalism and subjecthood.⁴ At the center of debate during these legislative changes was the question of who was a “subject” and who could claim the immunity: who was English enough?

In answering this question, marginalized groups come into sharper focus. Laws struggled to maintain homogeneity while addressing the needs of minority groups, religious dissidents, sexual deviants, beggars, immigrants, criminals, and women. The relationship between this law and its special application to women was one that focused on an exertion of power over individuals who held an ambiguous position in society: not quite responsible for their actions, but not innocent, either. Subject or subjected? By tracing the options of female defendants before and after they were allowed to claim benefit of clergy, we may understand better the methods employed by the state to create a more uniform trial experience. Women were not allowed this mercy out of concern for their lives, as the law pretended, but as a way to mark these women as sinners, literally by branding them, and to draw them more fully into royal jurisdiction. The rhetoric of mercy set women up for future convictions and harsher punishments.

Benefit of clergy had protected ordained men from secular punishment in royal courts for centuries. The idea was to protect the rank-and-file clergy from the tension during power struggles between Church and State.⁵ Essentially, any ordained person was considered exempt from the secular courts, even if they were guilty beyond reasonable doubt. While this preserved the lives of God’s “anointed,” it also served to prevent mass persecution for unpopu-

4 Alan Maccoll, “The Construction of England as a Protestant ‘British’ Nation in the sixteenth Century” in *Renaissance Studies* 18:4, Winter 2004, 582 to 608; see also Anthony Fletcher, “The first century of English Protestantism and the Growth of National Identity” and DM Loades, “The Origins of English Protestant Nationalism” both in Stuart Mews, editor, *Religion and National Identity: Studies in Church History* (1982).

5 Leona Gabel *Benefit of Clergy in England in the Later Middle Ages*. Northampton, MA: Smith College: 1929.

lar ecclesiastical policy.⁶ As the English Reformation dawned, one might imagine that this ecclesiastical privilege would have been abolished along with all the other clerical abuses. However, during the 1530s, a series of political pamphlets began to use benefit of clergy and its history as one of the justifications for the bold changes associated with the Reformation. Christopher St German wrote two pamphlets recasting the history of clergy as evidence of the rights of a king to throw off the papal yoke.⁷ Anonymous writers supported this line while expanding the ideology of a special English state.⁸ Jasper Fyllol criticized the clergy for pretending to be above an average Englishman and argued that benefit of clergy ought to be a right to all Englishmen.⁹ The line of thinking proposed by such pamphlets added value to the tradition of granting clergy to literate defendants and facilitated its new role as a secular rather than ecclesiastical privilege.¹⁰

In addition to justifying radical actions through Parliament, benefit of clergy could also enhance the reputation of the King, whose grants of mercy formed a balance between power and loyalty

6 J. S. Cockburn, *Introduction: Calendar of Assize Records, Home Circuit Indictments Elizabeth I and James I*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, pp 117-121.

7 Christopher St German, *Prouyng by the King's Lawes* (1535) and *Diuision Betwene the Spirituality and the Temporality* (1532).

8 Anonymous, *A Treatise Prouyng by the Kynge's lawes that the bishops of Rome, had neuer right to any supremitie within this realme* (1534), Anonymous, *A treatise wherin Christe and his teachings, are compared with the pope and his doings* (1534), Anonymous, *Oration of True Obedience*, Thomas Berthelet: 1535 and Alexander Alesius, "Of dyuers powers that the clergie hath by the law of god The. ii. Chapit" *A Treatise Concerning General Councille, the Bishop's Council, and the Clergy* (1538).

9 Jasper Fyllol *The Enormities of the Clergy* (1534) and *Agaynst the Possessions of the Clergy* (1533); for authorship, see Richard Rex, "Jasper Fyllol and the Enormities of the Clergy" *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 31, No. 4 (Winter, 2000), 1043-1062.

10 See John Baker's article, "Benefit of Clergy in England and its Secularization 1450-1550" in Mario Ascheri, ed *"Ins Wasser geworfen und Ozeane durchquert": Festschrift für Knut Wolfgang Nörr*. Berlin: 2003, 27-37. For a longer more focused explanation, see Lesley Skousen, *Redefining benefit of clergy during the English reformation: Royal Prerogative, Mercy, and the State*. MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison: 2008..

among the populace.¹¹ The secularized benefit was offered to a select collection of laity: specifically, the literate and wealthy.¹² Upon proving their literacy, such defendants would forgo execution and receive a small branding mark on the brawn of the left thumb for the first offense. The judgment of how successfully a person completed the literacy test often relied more on the reputation of the defendant and the threat of the crime; judicial discretion could judge more or less harshly depending on how well the community would benefit from applying mercy to that case. Accordingly, variation was commonplace. In fact, the focus on literacy led to a booming trade among thieves and jailors, assisting defendants with their letters or rote memorization as they waited for trial.¹³

Women could not claim benefit of clergy. As they could not be priests, allowing them a priestly privilege—even one that had been distorted and secularized—appeared foolish nonsense. According to the law, female convicts were to be executed for felonies regardless of their literate abilities. Yet denying women this privilege did not mean that their options were limited. A study of the trial

11 Krista Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State*. Cambridge University Press: 2003. Helen Lacey, *The Royal Pardon: Access to Mercy in fourteenth Century England*. York Medieval Press: 2009.

12 Education was important since tradition dictated that a successful claim was tied to the demonstration of literacy, assuming originally that the educated clerks would hold that special skill. The Reformation coincided with a rise in literacy among laypeople, however; see David Cressy for discussion on rates and complications, “Literacy in Seventeenth-Century England: More Evidence” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 8, No. 1 (Summer, 1977), 141-150. Finally, in a law under Edward VI, peers were granted the right to claim benefit of clergy regardless of literate ability. See 1 Edward VI, c 12 and confirmed by 4/5 Philip and Mary c 4. Following the benefit’s repeal in 1827, Victoria’s Parliament had to confirm in 1841 that indeed, Peers of the Realm could no longer claim clergy for their crimes. 4&5 Victoria, c 22.

13 In fact, Sir John Bennet was charged with taking bribes and teaching illiterate criminals how to read while they awaited trials. He wrote about the morality of his experiences from house arrest. Sir John Bennet, *The psalme of mercy, or, A meditation vpon the 51. psalme by a true penitent. Imprinted by Felix Kyngston, and are to be sold by Robert Milbourne, at the great south-doore of Pauls*. London: 1625. See as well Sheila Doyle, “Bennet, Sir John (1552/3–1627),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2106>, (Accessed 21 Oct 2012).

records at the beginning of the seventeenth century shows a wealth of options for women who stood accused of a crime in the King's Courts.¹⁴

Perhaps the most important of these options was the feminine claim of "benefit of belly." This privilege allowed pregnant women a brief reprieve in light of their condition. If a woman stood on the verge of conviction, she could claim her pregnancy and a jury of twelve matrons would then examine her body to ensure she was indeed pregnant.¹⁵ The jury of matrons could declare the woman to be "quick with child," after which the justice would allow her to go home and give birth. And so, benefit of clergy and benefit of belly allowed mercy in light of a felony conviction. However, as Krista Kesselring has pointed out, the privileges were not comparable.¹⁶ Claimants of clergy were released at the conclusion of their legal ordeal; claimants of belly went home with their sentence merely postponed until they had given birth. Once their children were born, such women had to wait for the King's officials to collect them for punishment and execution.

In the trial records, we encounter a number of variations on a case by case basis. An example of this variation can be found in women who claimed belly successfully despite being well beyond child-bearing age. Frances Dolan conveys the example of a post-menopausal elderly woman, Anne Bodenham, who was allowed benefit of belly at a shocking seventy years of age.¹⁷ She was allowed to go home to "give birth" but the Justice never had her re-

14 For this paper, I am drawing information primarily from JS Cockburn's transcription of the Assize Records, cited above, and the Old Bailey pamphlets housed at the British Library and catalogued at OldBaileyOnline: The Proceedings of the Old Bailey (<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/> Version 7.0 Accessed 6 October 2012).

15 T. R. Forbes, "A Jury of Matrons" in *Medical History*, 32 No 1 (January, 1988), 23–4.

16 Kesselring, "Appendix II: Benefit of Belly" *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State*, 212–214.

17 Frances E Dolan, "Reading, Writing, and Other Crimes" in Valerie Traub and Lindsay Kaplan, eds. *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Cambridge UP, 142–166.

arrested. Her proven literacy might have contributed to this odd case of declaring an older woman pregnant. After all, had she been a man, she would have qualified for benefit of clergy and received mercy at the Court. This is mere speculation, however. Ultimately such cases of elderly “pregnancies” were atypical.¹⁸ The importance of variation and secondary exemptions shows the complex role of performance and legal fiction in the early modern court room. The pregnancy of a post-menopausal woman was one of many alternative fictions a woman (or man) might adopt in the absence of benefit of clergy.

Statistical evaluation of the trial records suggest that women were notoriously difficult to convict in the secular courts. An analysis of the Assize trial records from 1559 to 1680 reveal a number of curious forms of legal fiction contributing to an unnaturally low conviction rate for female defendants, particularly in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Women accused of being a part of thieving gangs were often declared innocent as their male counterparts were convicted. Consider the 1596 case of Margaret Ellis, charged with burgling a house with her husband Peter. The evidence stood against them both, but only Peter was convicted and allowed his clergy, while Margaret was found not guilty.¹⁹ Her release was not atypical when women were arrested alongside men for clergyable crimes. Women were often found “*ignoramus*” or “unknown” when a male partner in crime received benefit of clergy. Of cases where there is a mixed-gender group of defendants, the woman is declared not guilty or *ignoramus* 53% of the time.²⁰ We find eight such cases in the final fifteen years of Elizabeth’s reign, and even more under the Stuarts.

18 James Coldham, “On Pleading the Belly: A History of the Jury of Matrons” in *Criminal Justice History*. 6 (1985), 1-64, especially 19-20, 32..

19 Assize Records, Elizabethan Kent, Case No 2374 p. 391

20 This statistic comes from an analysis of JS Cockburn’s multi-volume Assize records, from Elizabeth to Charles II (1559-1685), where I simply counted the number of cases with multiple defendants where the female defendant was allowed free even though her accomplices were executed or convicted and allowed clergy.

Most striking of all was the invention of strangers to take the blame of crimes committed by women. Peppered throughout the Assize trial records are the cases of women who seem on the verge of certain conviction for murder, as parades of witnesses weave a tale of certain guilt—only to have the jury come back with a verdict of “Not guilty.” Their reason for their verdict: “John Death did it.” Other names include William Stranger, John Lellowe, John ap Love, John of Noke, or many other curious names of almost certainly fictional criminals.²¹ Even God took the blame of some female murderers. Consider the example of Anne Lamb, who struck her husband on the head after he beat her. Committing murder of a natural superior was petty treason, but the jury found Anne not guilty due to divine visitation.²² In other words, during the throes of argument, God had come down to occupy her husband’s body. The sheer overwhelming power of the Lord in the soul of Peter Lamb had led him to expire; the blow Anne delivered was coincidental to his death, not causal. Such a striking case of legal fiction was not unique. Similar judgments blamed the presence of God for the crime throughout the Assizes, from a case in 1596 to multiple cases in 1628 and then scattered consistently throughout the 1630s.²³ Presumably, jurors struggled with the task of sentencing a woman to death for acting in self-defense or overwhelming misery.

In 1621, Parliament proposed a bill to change the options of women who stood trial specifically for theft.²⁴ The 1621 Parliament ended abruptly over international concerns, but the bill was

21 A few examples of this include: Hertfordshire under Elizabeth, No 999, p. 160 and No 101, p. 18; in the Essex Assizes under James I, Nos 484, 485, 490, pp. 76-77; Kent under Charles I, No 926, pp. 192-193. Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, HMSO: 1977-1993.

22 Kent Charles I, Case No 926, pp. 192-193..

23 For examples, see the cases out of Kent, pp. 369, 926, 1038, 1437, 1944 and 1954. JS Cockburn, *Calendar of the Assizes: Kent*. HMSO: London, 1997.

24 21 James c 6.

signed into law by 1624.²⁵ The Act itself claimed that “Whereas by the Lawes of this Realme the Benefitt of Clergie is not allowed to Women convicted of Felonie, by reason whereof, many Women doe suffer Death for small Causes.”²⁶ Stating shock at the number of women dying from this gender inequality, the law granted benefit of clergy to women for a small number of theft-related crimes. Scores of lives could be saved if only they could claim benefit of clergy in small cases. Yet an analysis of the trials during this same period shows that women were not in fact suffering death in large numbers. Women were, on the contrary, very difficult to convict and punish according to the fullest extent of the law.²⁷ If they were convicted at all, the value of goods stolen was often undervalued. Sympathetic jurors found them innocent more often than guilty. In fact, an analysis of the trial records shows that as soon as this law passed, courts then began convicting them in droves.²⁸ In feigning mercy, the law worked to secure convictions for women.

The sessions of trial immediately following the publication of this act reveals women claiming clergy, probably under the advice of the presiding Justice. See the cases of Mary Lesford, Mary Jordan and Elizabeth Jordan, and Joan Thomas, Margaret Thompson, and Mary Leigh in the 1625 session of the Kent Assizes: the first meeting for which women could claim their clergy. The speed from new Act to trial use in the age before defense lawyers suggests that these women received advice from the Court. Before and after the bill’s passage, women were put to trial and allowed to go home. The difference was that before 1625, women tended to go home “not guilty,” whereas after 1625 they went home a “criminous clerk”,

25 Robert Zaller, *The Parliament of 1621: A Study in Constitutional Conflict*. University of California Press: 1971.

26 Quoting the preamble of 21 James c 6 “An act concerning Women convicted of small felonies” in *The Statutes of the Realm*, Vol IV, p. 1216.

27 Deborah Oxley, “Representing Convict Women” Duffield, Ian; Bradley, James (ed.), *Representing Convicts: New Perspectives on Convict Forced Labour Migration*, London: Leicester University Press: 1995, 88-105 and Shani D’Cruze with Louise A. Jackson, *Women Crime and Justice in England since 1660*. Palgrave MacMillan: 2010.

28 Cockburn, ed. *The Calendar of Assizes: Kent*, pp. 10-11, 19.

with a brand on their thumbs as a mark of their criminality. Future jurors would see that mark. A second offense would not be treated as the mistake of a delicate woman in need of sympathy, but as a series of crimes by a hardened criminal who must be executed in order to preserve the social order of the kingdom.

The ultimate goal of granting women an escape from first-offense punishment was not to offer them new options to build a defense. Instead, benefit of clergy was employed as a way to draw women into royal jurisdiction. The law effectively exchanged one fictional explanation for another: rather than blame a nonexistent highway man “John of Death” or even God’s presence for women’s crimes, they would be called “priests” and allowed to go home convicted “clerks.”²⁹ Rather than waive accusations of crimes, juries began convicting them under clergy to the detriment of female lives. Marked a sinner in the eyes of society through the brand on their thumbs, second offenders were then executed as lifelong criminals rather than repeatedly forgiven for the weakness of their sex.

The scope of the 1624 Act was slight, allowing clergy only for minor thefts of goods valued under 10 shillings. It had little effect on larger crimes like burglary, infanticide, or murder. Women did not receive the full claims of benefit of clergy equal to men until 1691.³⁰ The timing of this later law coincided with a crime wave in London. When such shop-lifters stole goods beyond ten shillings, conviction became difficult once again.³¹ The Act specifically sought “to bring other [criminals] to punishment” indicating clearly the desire for increased convictions.³² Through the offer of exemptions and second chances, the law could more effectively bring

29 The classic article on clergy claiming the benefit is F. W. Maitland “Henry II and the Criminous Clerks” in *The English Historical Review*, 7, No. 26 (Apr., 1892), 224-34.

30 3 William & Mary c 9.

31 J. M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror*. Oxford UP: 2001, 313-362.

32 Quoting the title of 3 William & Mary c 9, *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol VI, pp 311-312.

women to punishment for their subsequent crimes. Between 1663 and 1689, only five women were executed for property crimes.³³ For most women, each appearance at court was taken as her first offense, and each jury gave her the first-offense benefit of the doubt. In 1691, Parliament granted women the ability to plead clergy for all cases where a man might have it. Now female criminals began leaving a legal trail of criminal behavior that facilitated a conviction for subsequent offenses. The “frail and childlike” female shop-lifter now could be seen as a hardened criminal with no respect for law and order.

Directly following this development, courts witnessed what I have called a “feminization of benefit of clergy.” The 1690s was either a period of high criminal activity or increased law enforcement. The records reveal an increase in convictions across the board. In particular, there is a measurable spike in female convictions. While most societies see a gendered division of convicts hovering around 20% female, the 1690s witnessed a rise in female criminality, with 52% of convicts being women.³⁴ Most of these female convicts pled their clergy and escaped death as they might have in previous years. But with their pleas of clergy, they returned home having felt the pain of burning flesh as their thumbs were branded in court.

We can see the sudden increase in female convictions in the wonderfully preserved pamphlets telling the “True Proceedings” of the Old Bailey Court in London. Between 1674 to about 1720, publications of the sordid details of crimes, testimonies, and convictions became very popular among Londoners.³⁵ Each pamphlet concluded with a break-down of the penalties of each session. For instance, in 1683, nine convicts were sent to execution, four were sentenced

33 Beattie, 303.

34 Beattie demonstrates the feminization of clergy in statistical charts in *Policing and Punishment*, 17, 65.

35 Old Bailey Online (<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Proceedings.jsp>, Version 7.0. (Accessed 6 October 2012). Wherever possible, I have endeavored to use the manuscript version found at the British Library.

to whipping, and fourteen men and two women were “burned in the hand”—granted clergy—for various forms of theft.³⁶ Prior to the 1691 law granting women full clergy, the overwhelming majority of claims for the benefit were for men. Ten years later, we see that 28 women and only 18 men were allowed clergy.³⁷ Two years after that, in 1695, Justices granted clergy to fourteen women but only nine men.³⁸ In 1697, seventeen women and just three men claimed clergy.³⁹ The trend persists and women take over the majority of clergy convictions.

For approximately twelve years, benefit of clergy was dominated by women who might have gone free through other loopholes had the 1691 law not been passed to offer them this new “benefit” that actually served to strengthen the case against them. The increase in female convictions was enabled through the Act that feigned an

36 Anon. *The True Proceedings of the Sessions begun at the Old Bayly on Thursday the 24th of May 1683 Giving an Account of the Several Tryals viz for murders felonies etc with the Condemnation of those Convicted*. London, Printed by George Croom, in Thames Street over against Baynard’s Castle, 1683, 4. The British Library Cup Collection, 21.g.32/34.

37 First pamphlet was Anon, *The Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace and Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery of Newgate, held for the City of London and County of Middlesex at Justice-Hall in the Old-Baily on Wednesday and Thursday being the 15th and 16th Days of January, 1690*. London, Printed for Langley Curtis at Sir Edmonbury Godfrey’s Head near Fleet Bridge: 1690. BL 112.f.46.19. The second two pamphlets were as follows: Anon, *The Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace and Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery of Newgate, held for the City of London and County of Middlesex at Justice-Hall in the Old-Baily on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Days of December 1693*. London, Printed for Richard Baldwin at the Oxford-Armes in Warwick-Lane, 1693. BL 1480.d.21.6. Third pamphlet was Anon *Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace and Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery of Newgate, held for the City of London and County of Middlesex at Justice-Hall in the Old-Baily on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday being the 12st, 22nd, and 23rd Days of February, 1693/4*. London, Printed for Richard Baldwin at the Oxford-Armes in Warwick-Lane, 1693/4 BL 1480.d.21.7.

38 “Punishment Summary: 20 February 1695” *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, Accessed 6 October 2012).

39 Anon, *Proceedings on the King’s Commission of the Peace and Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery of Newgate, held for the City of London and County of Middlesex at Justice-Hall in the Old-Baily on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, being the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Days of December 1697*. London, Printed by JD for Andrew Bell at the Cross-eyes and Bible in Cornhill, and Sold by R Bldwin at the Oxford-Armes in Warwick-Lane, 1697. BL, 1480.d.21.8/

interest in preserving the lives of such delicate women. The Act embraced the legal fiction of generosity, benevolence, and mercy to clinch a conviction that otherwise was difficult to procure.

Benefit of clergy used the rhetoric of mercy to build the illusion of a benevolent King. With men, who were often convicted more easily than women, the effect of this mercy served as a reminder of the King's generosity. The brand on the skin became an advertisement for royal benevolence. We might say the same about women who were branded, once they received the right to plead benefit of clergy. But in the case of women, the use of legal fiction was more significant. Here, the ability to declare them guilty without automatically sentencing those women to death meant that jurors could rest easy with their decision. Accordingly, women were subject to large rates of conviction after receiving benefit of clergy. The story of offering women equal access to legal defense and loopholes is not one of a system concerned with equality and second chances. Rather, the process drew women within the system to mark her as both "sinner" and subject to the King's power.

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The Signifying Power of *Pearl*

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The spiritual language, Ovidian love stories, and use of liturgical time in Pearl all invite allegorical interpretations of the poem. While there is clearly a literal, elegiac sense to the poem, there are also allegorical meanings. This makes perfect sense in light of the tradition of four-fold scriptural and literary interpretation in the Middle Ages, which the Pearl-Poet clearly used to understand biblical parables and compose his poetic masterpiece. The poet's use of metaphoric language, memory of the legends of Orpheus and Eurydice and Pygmalion and Galatea, and astute interweaving of parables from the church liturgy alongside invocations of the Lenten and Paschal liturgical seasons within his dream vision all invite readers into a deeper understanding of the signifying power of Pearl.

There is a growing consensus in *Pearl* scholarship that the early literary criticism of the poem, debating whether it is elegiac or allegorical, really presented readers with a false generic dichotomy. The poem need not be limited to one genre or interpretation when it clearly invites multiple understandings. Various scholars have argued that the Pearl-Poet deliberately crafted a poem that could be interpreted literally, allegorically, morally or anagogically as scripture was in the Middle Ages.¹ Taking this reading a step further, it seems that, in terms of its genre, *Pearl* is a dream vision that operates at four levels of meaning and in four corresponding genres: the literal sense makes it an elegy; the allegorical meaning, an allegory; the moral purpose, a consolation; and the anagogical unveiling, a revelation.² In this essay, I wish to particularly examine the allegorical

1 For one articulation of this view, see Lawrence Clopper, "*Pearl* and the Consolation of Scripture," *Viator* 25 (1992), 231-246.

2 For literal interpretations, see Jane Beal, "The Pearl-Maiden's Two Lovers," *Studies in Philology* 100 (2003), 1-21, John Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), and Lynn Staley Johnson, "Pearl and the Contingencies of Love and Piety," in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. David Aers (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 83-112. For allegorical readings, see Jane Chance, "Allegory and Structure in *Pearl*: The Four Senses of the *Ars praedicandi* and Fourteenth-Century Homiletic Poetry," in *Text and Matter: New Critical Perspectives of the Pearl-Poet*, ed. Robert J. Blanch, Miriam Youngerman Miller, and Julian N. Wasserman (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing, 1991), 31-59, Sister Madeleva, *Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness* (New York, NY: D. Appleton, 1925), D.W. Robertson, "The Pearl as Symbol," *Modern Language Notes* 65 (1950), 44-61, and W.H. Schofield,

senses of *Pearl*, which have been neglected in recent scholarship.

Specifically, the language of *Pearl*, which so often has a double sense, invites allegorical interpretation. The Pearl-Poet's memory of two classical myths, that of Orpheus and Eurydice (implied) and that of Pygmalion and Galatea (overt), invoke not only the Virgilian and Ovidian sources but the tradition of allegorical interpretation associated with them. For the strategies used in scriptural interpretation were also used to "moralize" these classical myths and relate them to Christian faith in the Pearl-Poet's day. Furthermore, the poem invokes the larger spiritual (*sic* allegorical) universe because it is structured in relation to liturgical time.

Liturgical readings, with their typological pairing of Old and New Testament texts, were selected to honor seasons and feasts throughout the year that recurred cyclically and highlighted not simply a literal, chronological unfolding of earthly history but also a spiritual, eternal unfolding of heavenly reality.³ In *Pearl*, these two ways of understanding time intersect when heaven and earth meet in a dream: the Dreamer falls asleep in a garden in August remembering the loss of his beloved Pearl-Maiden, and then in his vision, sees a vision of her in Paradise before witnessing a Paschal vision of the New Jerusalem complete with the bleeding Lamb in procession, and finally awakens once more with the image of the Eucharistic bread and wine from the Mass in mind. The poem's triptych structure, with the central drama (the journey toward the resurrection hope of Easter) set in one time and the two "outside panels" (both set in Ordinary Time) framing it, corresponds to one of the major ways medieval interpreters of scripture sought represent in art eter-

"Symbolism, Allegory, and Autobiography in *The Pearl*," PMLA 24 (1909), 585-675. Ian Bishop's *The Pearl in its Setting* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968) is usually considered an allegorical reading of the poem. Note that Bishop also sees *Pearl* as a *consolatio*, but W.A. Davenport sees it as a *contra-consolatio* in "Desolation, not Consolation: *Pearl* 19-22," *Review of English Studies* (1974), 421-23; both views are a kind of examination of the moral sense. For interpretation of the poem as revelation, see Cynthia Kraman, "Body and Soul: *Pearl* and Apocalyptic Literature," in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, eds. Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riaño (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 355-362 and Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003).

3 The liturgical seasons of the Church were and are, of course, Advent, Christmas/Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time.

nal truths unfolding for time-bound human beings. Understanding the liturgical contexts of *Pearl*—seasons, two important dates, and the lessons read during the Mass on those dates—can broaden our understanding of the potential allegorical significance of the Pearl-Maiden herself. Before examining the allegorical use of spiritual language, Ovidian love stories, and liturgical time in the poem, this study will consider the larger world of medieval allegorical tradition that provides the context for the Pearl-Poet’s creativity.

The World of Medieval Allegory

During the Middle Ages, commentators often interpreted the Bible either literally or allegorically. The Bible itself provided the impetus for allegorical reading in the epistle to the Galatians, in which the apostle Paul considered Hagar and Sarah to represent two covenants, with Hagar corresponding conceptually to slavery and the Mosaic law given at Mount Sinai (which Paul further equates with 1st century Jerusalem) while Sarah stands for freedom and life through the Spirit in the heavenly Jerusalem.⁴ Following Paul’s exegetical example, medieval biblical commentators began to interpret the whole Bible in allegorical terms. While there was a general distinction between the literal (historical) and the allegorical (spiritual) senses of scripture, the understanding of allegory gradually developed to include the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses.⁵ A saying developed to explain the four senses of scripture: *littera gesta docet, quod credas allegoria, moralia quod agas, quo tendas anagogia* (“the literal teaches deeds, the allegorical what you should believe, the moral what you should do, and the anagogical where you are going.”) Thus the allegorical sense could include or be distinguished from the moral and anagogical senses.

The typological understanding of scripture developed as another form of allegorical interpretation in which specific places,

⁴ See Galatians 4:21-31.

⁵ See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, Vol. I, tr. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) and Vol. II, trans. E.M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) and Vol. III, trans. E.M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

persons, and events (“types”) in the Old Testament were linked to specific people, places, and events in the New Testament that somehow corresponded to or fulfilled their antecedents (“antitypes”). In John’s gospel, Jesus himself makes this kind of connection when he foretells his own crucifixion by saying:

Et sicut Moses exaltavit serpentem in deserto, ita exaltari oportet
Filius hominis ut omnis qui credit in ipso non pereat sed habeat
vitam aeternam. (John 3:14)

[“For just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so
must the Son of Man be lifted up in order that all who believe
in him may not perish but have eternal life.”]⁶

From this origin, typological exegesis proliferated; the apotheosis of medieval typology is, perhaps, the 1400s block-book known as *Biblia pauperum* with its elaborate triptych-structured pages featuring forty scenes from the life of Christ in the center with two side panels depicting corresponding events from the Hebrew Bible.⁷

In universities and monasteries, educated medieval readers familiar with the tradition of allegorical and typological exegesis of the Bible began to apply their interpretive skills not only to the scriptures but to classical literature as well. While, as Charles Singleton first pointed out years ago writing about Dante’s *Convivio*, the “allegory of the theologians” commenting on the Bible was recognized for its correspondence to divine truth, the “allegory of the poets” commenting on Greco-Roman mythology was typically regarded as delightful fiction.⁸ In practice, the process of discovering Christian allegorical possibilities in classical literature essentially redeemed Greco-Roman mythology for medieval readers, making it possible

6 The verse here is quoted and translated from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* (Stuttgart, 1969, rpt. 1994). See also Matthew 12:40, in which Jesus compares his death and burial to the three days Jonah spent in the belly of the whale, and 1 Corinthians 15:45, in which Paul compares Adam and Christ, the new Adam.

7 For Paul’s typological view of Adam and Christ, see 1 Corinthians 15:45; for an edition of the *Biblia pauperum*, see Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz, eds., *The Bible of the Poor: A Facsimile and Edition of BL Blockbook C.9 d.2* (Dusquesne UP, 1990).

8 Charles Singleton, “Appendix: Two Kinds of Allegory,” in *Commedia: Dante Studies I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965) and further discussed in *Commedia: Elements of Structure* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).

to integrate it into the university curricula and intellectual culture of the late Middle Ages.⁹ This can be seen in three examples: Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Guillaume de Lorris' *Romance of the Rose*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, each of which develops an allegorical sense from an elegiac moment, richly integrates classical and Christian love stories, and, in Dante's case, specifically uses liturgical time to shape the narrative of his journey through the spiritual realms of hell, purgatory and heaven.

For Boethius, the elegiac moment occurs with his loss of freedom for he most likely wrote the *Consolation of Philosophy* either while in exile under house arrest or in prison awaiting execution. His dialogue represents himself speaking to Philosophy, who is personified as a woman, an allegorical figure. Boethius was a devout Christian, but the Christianity he expresses in the *Consolation* is limited, and instead he integrates a great deal of classical knowledge (including the love story of Orpheus and Eurydice) in order to make his point that there is a God and everything is secondary to that divine providence.¹⁰ For Lorris, the elegiac moment is bound to his experience of *fin amour*, which may be unrequited but is certainly unfulfilled.¹¹ This inspires him to write a complete and elaborate allegory about the Lover pursuing the Rose, who proves unattainable because of multiple allegorical obstacles and despite multiple allegorical helpers. The medieval French text is dense with allusion to both classical and Christian material. For Dante, the elegiac moment is the death of his beloved Beatrice.¹² Throughout his *Divine Comedy*, he interweaves classical and Christian stories as he encounters countless souls on his journey through the other world. Famously, his journey takes place during Holy Week of the year 1300, so that

9 See Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433-1177* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994.)

10 Boethius' retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice legend occurs in Book III, Meter 12 of his *Consolation of Philosophy*.

11 This contrasts with Jean de Meun's later, lengthy addition to the *Romance of the Rose*, which includes the rape of the rose near the end of the poem.

12 Dante's grief over Beatrice is made very clear in his *Vita Nuova*, a prelude to the *Divine Comedy*.

like Christ and medieval Christians celebrating in memorial, he goes through hell during Good Friday, Purgatory during Holy Saturday, and heaven during Resurrection Sunday.

Many scholars have drawn comparisons between the *Pearl* and all three of these great works.¹³ Though it cannot be proved that the Pearl-Poet knew these works or their authors directly, nevertheless he was an educated medieval Christian in a cultural milieu that would empower him to use the same strategies as Boethius, Lorriss, and Dante: to experience a literal, elegiac moment of loss as an opportunity for meditation that would lead him to compose in an allegorical manner, to interweave classical and Christian knowledge to make a moral point, and to set the narrative of his journey in the context of a liturgical (that is, spiritual and cyclical rather than calendric and chronological) time-frame. As this study shows, the Pearl-Poet carefully crafted his poem using each of these strategies, and he begins with language that can be dually interpreted on a literal and allegorical level – using this as an invitation to the readers who can then ponder his Christian use of classical love stories as well as of liturgical time.

The Spiritual Language of Pearl

As readers of *Pearl* have recognized for decades, the poem is one that defies a strictly literal interpretation. It does possess a literal sense, which is certainly the foundation and inspiration of *Pearl*. But *Pearl* is no prose memoir in which a man patiently remembers his grief over the death of his beloved. It is far more complicated than that. The Pearl-Poet invites allegorical interpretation of his poem by purposefully ambiguating the literal or historical sense, by direct allusion and paraphrasing of biblical matter that has an allegorical or

13 For a brief overview, see Marie Borroff's comments on "The Literary Background" in her introduction to her translation of the poem in *The Gawain Poet: Complete Works* (New York, W.W. Norton, 2011), 118-119. For more specific detail, see Michael Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry* (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1987), 151-68; Herbert Pilch, "The Middle English *Pearl*: Its Relation to the *Roman de la Rose*," trans. Heide Hyprath in *The Middle English 'Pearl': Critical Essays*, ed. John Conley (University of Notre Dame, 1970), 163-84; Warren Ginsberg, "Place and Dialectic in *Pearl* and Dante's *Paradiso*," *ELH* 55:4 (Winter, 1988), 731-753.

spiritual meaning, and by word-play and double-entendre.

Consider just two of the most obvious examples from the beginning of the poem. First, the lost pearl is clearly not just a literal pearl that was fished out of an oyster, but rather a rich symbol, the vehicle of a metaphor with more than one tenor. Second, the landscape of the dreamer's vision—with sands of orient pearls, cliffs of crystal, and trees of blue and silver—is clearly not meant to recall any specific earthly geography but is instead an allegorical landscape with closest connections to the mysteries of the east, to India and to Paradise. The poet is constantly at play with his pearl and his increasingly fabulous geography. He refuses to reduce either his central symbol, the pearl, or his exquisitely bejeweled landscape to one tenor, to one literal or historical sense. This is part of the power of his poetry, one of the strategies for inviting readers to understand his poem allegorically.

A second invitation is evident in his allusions and paraphrases of biblical material that have an allegorical or spiritual sense. Again, the two most obvious examples from the poem include the Pearl-Maiden's re-telling of the Parable of the Vineyard and the dreamer's vision of the New Jerusalem.¹⁴ Readers familiar with the biblical sources of these passages know that the penny in question in the parable represents salvation, and the New Jerusalem, from John's Apocalypse, is a picture of God's heavenly kingdom.¹⁵ The penny and Jerusalem, though they have a literal sense and historical incarnation, simultaneously have a spiritual meaning. In *Pearl*, they act as "vehicles" of the metaphor, the allegory, with a "tenor" hidden precisely so it can be revealed. These biblical precedents and their re-tellings in *Pearl* act as a second invitation to the reader to search

14 On the representation of the New Jerusalem in *Pearl*, see Rosalind Field, "The Heavenly Jerusalem in *Pearl*," *Modern Language Review* 81 (1986), 7-17, Sarah Stanbury, "The Body and the City in *Pearl*," *Representations* 47 (1994), 271-85, and Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003).

15 For the parable of the vineyard, see Matthew 20:1-16. For the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, see Revelation 21: 9-27, 22:1-5.

for the allegorical meaning of the poem.

A third invitation is issued repeatedly throughout the poem in the form of word-play and double-entendre. It is interesting, for example, to consider how the reality of what the dreamer is seeing in his vision is undermined by the Pearl-Maiden when she says:

Pou says þou trawez me in this dene

Bycawse þou may with eʒen me se;

Another, þou says in þys countré

Pyself schal won with me ry3t here;

Þe þrydde, to passe þys water fre:

Pat may no joyful jueler (ll.295-300, my emphases).¹⁶

When the Pearl-Maiden says, “You say that you believe me to be here in this valley / Because you see me with your eyes,” her statement implies that the dreamer’s vision of the Pearl-Maiden does not correspond to her real presence.¹⁷ This idea is further intensified in the poet’s description of the Pearl-Maiden as one type of *figura*, a figure representing not what is seen, but something that is unseen.

When the dreamer first sees the Pearl-Maiden, after his spirit has sprung from the garden spot into the space of his dream, he studies her face:

The more I frayste hyr fayre face,

Her *fygure* fyn quen I had fonte,

16 All quotations from the Middle English *Pearl* are taken from *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, eds. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1978). Translations are my own.

17 I use the phrase “real presence” as an allusion to Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. In medieval Catholic theology, Christ is really present in the sacrifice of the Eucharist upon the altar by a priest. Yet here, the Pearl-Maiden implies she is not really present in that way nor is she really present corporally. Everything is being shown to the Dreamer in a way he can understand *figuratively* (the vehicle) but not as it really is *spiritually* (the tenor) because he can’t grasp spiritual reality with his five senses—no time-bound, earth-bound person can—even in a dream. The Pearl-Maiden’s presence in the dream is perhaps “more real” than the things of earth—but still not as fully real as she is in heaven. Thus we see the ineffable reality of heaven comes down to the Dreamer in his vision but his experience of it is still only partial, an intimation of what will be, which fills his heart with longing and anticipation.

Suche gladande glory con to me glace

As lyttel byfore þerto watz wonte (ll. 169-72).

Here, the dreamer studies the Pearl-Maiden's face and "figure," and her figure seems at first to correspond literally to her body. In fact, the Middle English Dictionary glosses the word "fygure" as "appearance" or "representation." But the Middle English "fygure" is a loanword from the Latin, *figura*, that appears to include its original denotation. Meditation on the medieval understanding of the Latin *figura* suggests a broader range of possible meaning.

Erich Auerbach has written meaningfully about *figura* in his seminal work, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*:

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within a stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but the spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and fulfillment are real historical events, which would have either happened in the incarnation of the Word or will happen in the second coming.¹⁸

Hence medieval theological understandings of relationships between the Old Testament and the New Testament – wherein, for example, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is related to the Cross, the first Adam is related to the second Adam, that is Christ; and Eve is related to Mary and so on – become the basis for typological interpretation not only of scripture, but of the classical mythology and history that medieval readers inherited. In *Pearl*, and other medieval literature, figural interpretation also became a mode of generating poetry and meaning within that poetry. Within the framework of the poem, the Pearl-Maiden herself can be seen as a figure that corresponds allegorically to something else.

18 Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, tr. Ralph Manheim (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984), 53. See discussion in J. Allan Mitchell, "The Middle English *Pearl*: Figuring the Unfigurable," *The Chaucer Review* 35:1 (2000), 86-109.

Of course, the Pearl-Maiden might not be only a strictly allegorical figure, but an anagogical one – possessed, in fact and by the poet’s intention, of a future sense. As Henri de Lubac writes, definitions of allegory by Quintilian and St. Ambrose were both popular in the Middle Ages: Quintilian said allegory “points to something in words but something else in sense” while Ambrose asserted “there is allegory when one thing is being done, another is being figured.”¹⁹ In Christian allegory, that “something else,” as Quintilian named it, often concerns what is to come, especially the person of Jesus. Thus allegorical figures are *futura mysteria*.²⁰ At the simple level of comparison, just as a woman in the Proverbs represents wisdom, and a lady in Boethius’ *Consolatio* represents philosophy, and Beatrice in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* represents Christ, divine love, and blessedness, so the Pearl-Maiden represents some essential quality of the divine being revealed in this poem. What might that be?

The dreamer considers the Pearl-Maiden as a figure a second time in the poem, after her lengthy homily on the Parable of the Vineyard.

O maskelez perle in perlez pure,
 Pat berez, quoþ I, þe perle of prys,
 Quo formed þe þy fayre *fygure*? (ll. 745-47, my emphasis)

This question is followed by allusions to Pygmalion, who shaped Galatea from ivory and then fell in love with her, as well as to Aristotle. It appears that the dreamer has been gazing at the Pearl-Maiden’s body while she has been preaching to him about his soul. And it may be literally true that the dreamer’s gaze is focused on the Pearl-Maiden’s embodied person. But typologically and allegorically, there are deeper implications.

The question, “Who formed thy fair figure?,” deserves consideration. It is an invitation to interpret the Pearl-Maiden as an

19 Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 2: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. E.M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 89-90.

20 de Lubac, 94.

allegorical figure. The question prompts multiple answers. On one level, in the world of medieval England, it is certainly the poet who formed this figure of the Pearl-Maiden for consideration. On another level, however, in the world imagined in the poem and according to the world-view of the poet's anticipated audience, it is clearly God, the "Fasor"—the Creator—who made her. How might the poet in England, or the God in the poem, intend this figure to be understood? The meaning is hidden, as allegorical meaning often is, at a deeper, allusive level: in the Pearl-Poet's memory of the love stories of Orpheus and Eurydice and Pygmalion and Galatea that undergird the poem called *Pearl*.

The Memory of Ovidian Love Stories in *Pearl*

The Bible was not the only medieval text interpreted at four levels of meaning in the Middle Ages. Secular literature and legends, particularly the Greco-Roman classics, were also searched by medieval readers to discover both a literal and allegorical sense. In this period, Christian allegorical commentaries on classical stories began to circulate among the learned, and, as is the case with Boethius, Lorris, Dante, and the Pearl-Poet, began to be used not only to interpret Latin texts but also to compose poetry.

This is particularly true of the Orpheus legend. As Sarah Stanbury has noted, "Like Orpheus, a bereaved lover who sings stories of lovers, the *Pearl* narrator comes to his garden to mourn the death of a girl, and there attempts to resolve his loss through repeated encounters with her transformed body."²¹ Yet the connections between the Orpheus legend and *Pearl* go beyond the elegiac connections of mourning, a man's meditation on a woman's body,

21 Sarah Stanbury, "Feminist Masterplots: The Gaze on the Body of the *Pearl*'s Dead Girl," in eadem and Linda Lomperis, ed., *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 99. Note that Christopher Tolkien made comparison inevitable when he published his father J.R.R. Tolkien's modernized English versions of *Pearl* and *Sir Orfeo* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Sir Orfeo* (New York, NY: Random House, 1979). J.R.R. Tolkien wrote in the essay prefacing his translation of *Pearl* that if the Dreamer had not been consoled at the poem's end, "he would have awakened by the mound again, not in the gentle and serene resignation of the last stanza, but still as he is first seen, *looking only backwards*, his mind filled with the horror of decay ..." (19, emphasis added). This phrase may suggest that Orpheus' backward glance was in Tolkien's mind when he wrote this essay. That the Dreamer is consoled shows how his Christian faith redeems his Orphic journey.

and the feminist masterplots that Stanbury analyzes from the viewpoint of modern psychoanalytic and cinematic theory; they concern the fundamental literary context of allegorical interpretation in the medieval period. Understanding this requires readers to remember the story of Orpheus and learn about medieval allegorical interpretations of it in order to see the relation to *Pearl*.

Orpheus was born in Thrace, the son of a muse, and he had the gift of music. When he played the lyre, all of nature responded by listening, as if captivated by a spell. Animals that were usually enemies, like predatory lions who seized upon lambs for prey, would make peace with one another at the sound of Orpheus' lyre. It so happened that this Orpheus fell in love and sought to marry his beloved Eurydice. On the day of their wedding, however, she stepped on an adder that bit her ankle, and from the poison of the snake-bite, she died. Orpheus, grieving from this loss, went nearly mad. He went throughout the world until he found an entrance into Hades. He descended to the underworld, and there, playing his lyre, he made his way—a living being—into the realms of the dead. He won an audience with Hades himself and his queen, Persephone, whose hearts were somehow softened by his music. They agreed to give Eurydice back to Orpheus on the condition that he not look back at her until both of them had emerged from hell. But at a certain point, Orpheus did look back, and lost his love a second time.

Thereafter, Orpheus did not love women, but boys, and wandered the world unhappy. Some legends say he was one of the Argonauts who sailed with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece; others say that he had a son, Museaus, who was gifted as he was. But Orpheus' life ended when Maenads, ecstatic worshippers of Bacchus, tore his body apart in one of their fits of religious madness. The head of Orpheus drifted in the Mediterranean until it came to Lesbos, where it was enshrined. But the soul of Orpheus descended into Hades and was reunited with Eurydice in Elyseum.

This, at least, is the legend as Ovid recollects it in the *Metamorphoses* (X.1-111 and XI.1-84).²² Virgil also recalls the story in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. The Virgilian tale is slightly different, however, as it includes the shepherd Aristaeus, a man who is rapaciously chasing Eurydice on the day of her wedding. It is because of Aristaeus that she runs, treads on the snake, and is consequently bit and poisoned to death. The motivations for Orpheus' backward glance are different in Ovid and Virgil as well. In Ovid, Orpheus looks back because of his love for Eurydice and his concern that she may stumble. In contrast, in Virgil, the *incautum amantem* ("incautious lover") Orpheus looks back because a sudden madness (*dementia*) seizes him.²³ Furthermore, in Ovid, Eurydice's response to Orpheus is a barely audible farewell, given with the suggestion that she knows he loves her. In Virgil, Eurydice verbally chastises Orpheus for his moral failure before her spirit returns to Hades. These differences reflect Ovid's emphasis on passionate love and Virgil's on Stoic morality.

A third version of the Orpheus story can be found in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. In it, Boethius presents the first allegorical reading of the story. Commenting on Orpheus' backward glance toward Eurydice, he writes:

Nam qui Tartareum in specus
Victus lumina flexerit,
Quidquid praecipuum trahit
Perdit dum videt inferos.
[The conquered one who has turned
the light of his eyes toward the cave of Tartarus
loses the precious things he brought forth
when he sees the things below.]²⁴

22 For a facing-page edition of the Latin and translation into English, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library Vol. II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916, rpt. 1939) or for a fine English translation, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, IL: Indiana UP, 1955, rpt. 1983).

23 Virgil, *Georgics*, translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library Vol. 63 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), 252.

24 Boethius, *Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library Vol. 74 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973). The translation

The Ovidian, Virgilian, and Boethian versions of the Orpheus story were transmitted to medieval readers as school texts that were read, paraphrased, and commented upon in Latin. They were also translated into the vernacular languages of western Europe. The significant body of commentary on the Orpheus story has been considered by John Block Friedman in his book, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*.²⁵ It is clear, for instance, that allegorical commentary on Orpheus divided into two basic schools. The first, in the field of morality, viewed Orpheus as an allegorical figure of “reason” and Eurydice as a figure of “sensuality.”

This reading begins with Remigius of Auxerre (ca. 904) in his commentary on Boethius and is evident in the late-thirteenth or early fourteenth century French commentary *Ovide moralisee*.²⁶ The other, in the field of music or rhetoric, viewed Orpheus as a representative of the “best voice” and Eurydice as that of “profound judgment.” This reading also originates with Remigius of Auxerre in his commentary on the *De Nuptiis* of Martianus Capella and is evident in Dante’s *Convivio*.²⁷ By the eleventh century, as C. Stephen Jaeger has shown, the authors of the “The Marriage of Mercury and Philology,” “Quid suum virtutis,” and the Liège Songs were all using the Orpheus story as an allegory for the individual’s educational progress: “Orphic poetry has a civilizing mission like that of rhetoric as the educator of warriors and temperer of royal judgment ... Orpheus and Eurydice becomes a defining myth for the mission of the educated man.”²⁸ This theme that Jaeger identifies in the commentaries adds a third dimension to understanding the treatment of Orpheus in the commentaries and thus in *Pearl*.

given here is my own.

25 John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2000). See also a collection of essays on the subject, *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio Philosophiae*, eds. Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (Leiden: Brill, 1997) and Gerard O’Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

26 Friedman, 98 and 124.

27 Friedman, 87-88.

28 C. Stephen Jaeger, “Orpheus in the Eleventh Century,” *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 27 (1992), 148.

While many medieval Christian commentaries on the legend of Orpheus echo the stoicism of Virgil or the moralizing of Boethius, some pay particular attention to the Ovidian emphasis on love between Orpheus and Eurydice in the *Metamorphoses*. Because of the wide-spread Christian belief in the miracle of resurrection, translations, paraphrases, and commentaries on the Orpheus story began to imagine that Orpheus' love had the power to bring Eurydice back from the dead. In Middle English vernacular literature, the notable example is, of course, the romance *Sir Orfeo*.²⁹ In these retellings, Eurydice no longer languishes in hell but is instead set free from the bonds of death (or, in the case of *Sir Orfeo*, the nether-world of the King of Faery) and then restored to her husband. This new ending to the legend seems to have been made possible because of allegorical interpretations of the story that viewed Orpheus as a type of Christ and Eurydice a type of the human soul.³⁰

Perhaps the most apt allegorical interpretation of Orpheus in this vein, insofar as it relates to *Pearl*, comes from Pierre Bersuire in the fourteenth century:

Dic allegorice quod Orpheus, filius solius, est Christus, filius dei patris, qui a principio Euridicem .i. animam humanam per caritatem & amorem duxit ipsamque per specialem prerogativam a principio sibi coniunxit. Verumtamen serpens, diabolus, ipsam novam nuptam .i. de novo creatam, dum flores colligeret .i. de pomo vetito appeteret, per temptationem momordit, & per peccatum occidit, & finaliter ad infernum transmisit. Quod videns Orpheus Christus in infernum personaliter voluit descendere & sic uxorem suam .i. humanam naturam rehabuit, ipsamque de regno tenebrarum ereptam ad superos secum duxit, dicens illud Canticorum .ii. "Surge, propera amica mea & veni."

29 Henryson's fifteenth-century Scottish version of the Orpheus and Eurydice legend is Boethian in character and reads the backward glance negatively, not allowing Eurydice to come back to life from death. However, in Walter Map's twelfth-century Latin *De Nugis Curialium*, there is a Celtic story with an Orphic plot, wherein a knight rescues his dead lady from a band of faery dancers, and the original folk-tale may have influenced *Sir Orfeo*. See Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. and trans. M.R. James, C.N.L. Brooke, and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

30 Jaeger, "Orpheus in the Eleventh Century," 141-68.

[Let us speak allegorically and say that Orpheus, the child of the sun, is *Christ the son of God the Father*, who from the beginning led Eurydice, that is, *the human soul*, to himself. And from the beginning, Christ joined her to himself through his special prerogative. But the devil, a serpent, drew near *the new bride*, that is, created *de novo*, while she collected flowers, that is, while she seized the forbidden apple, an bit by her temptation and killed by her sin, and finally she went to the world below. Seeing this, *Christ-Orpheus wished to descend to the lower world and thus he retook his wife*, that is, human nature, ripping her from the hands of the ruler of Hell himself; and he led her with him to the upper world, saying this verse from Canticles 2:10: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."]³¹

Here, Orpheus is interpreted as a figure of Christ, and Eurydice is a figure of the human soul, the bride of Christ. The serpent Eurydice stepped on is the devil, and Orpheus descent into hell is Christ's harrowing of hell.³² In Bersuire's commentary, no longer is Orpheus' backward glance a moral failing; now it is a moral imperative because it represents Christ's desire to seek and save the lost.

The Pearl-Poet was apparently well-aware of the medieval commentary tradition on scripture and secular literature that interpreted texts in terms of their literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. He was familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and there are intriguing literal parallels between the elegiac plot of *Pearl* and the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice: the love of a man for a woman who dies before that love can be consummated in marriage, the man's grief over her loss, and the man's pursuit of her in the other world.³³ The Dreamer appears in the poem as an Ovidian Orphic figure, looking back in love and fear. He seems to view himself as reasonable and the Pearl-Maiden as sensual, along the Remigian allegorical interpretive lines laid down in the *Ovide moralisee*, but the Pearl-Maiden seems to view his voice and hers in Dantesque terms: a "best voice" whose questions evoke her "profound judgment." Yet there is another Orphic figure in the poem, one who corresponds not to the literal one in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but rather corresponds to

31 Quoted in Friedman, 127 (my emphases).

32 Interestingly, Eurydice is also identified here with Persephone from Greco-Roman mythology, when she was gathering flowers before she was kidnapped by Hades, and with the beloved from the Song of Solomon.

33 See Jane Beal, "The Pearl-Maiden's Two Lovers," *Studies in Philology* 100 (2003), 1-21.

the allegorical one exemplified in Bersuire's commentary: Christ.

When the Dreamer asks, "Who formed your fair figure?," the Pearl-Maiden's answer takes the reader farther away from the literal sense and deeper into the allegorical meaning, for it emphasizes the Pearl-Maiden's marriage to her matchless Lamb.

My makelez Lambe þat al may beten,
quop scho, my dere Destyné,
Me ches to Hys make, altha3; vnmete
Sumtyme semed that assemblé.
When I wente fro yor worlde wete
He calde me to Hys bonerté:
Cum hyder to Me, My lemman swete,
For mote ne spot is non is þee (ll. 757-64).

The answer itself is allegorical, a spiritual picture, because no literal girl dressed in pearls ever married a white lamb, of course, but the soul of a virgin girl who died young and entered into heaven could certainly be understood by medieval Christians as married to Christ Jesus, who is called the Lamb because He was sacrificed.³⁴ It is Christ in the poem who draws near "the new bride," who descends to the "lower world" to retake his wife, and who says, "Come hither to me" and "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." So there are clearly parallels between the Ovidian Orpheus story and the literal, elegiac experience of the Dreamer in *Pearl*, and at the same time, there is a parallel between Bersuire's Orpheus and the spiritual, allegorical sense of Christ's actions in *Pearl*. Thus, both the Dreamer in the first case and Christ in the second case can be Orphic figures.

34 See Santha Bhattacharji, "Pearl and the Liturgical 'Commons of Virgins,'" *Medium Aevum* 64:1(1995), 37-51. Also note that as lambs were sacrificed in Jewish atonement practices, so Jesus was sacrificed on the Cross and thus, in medieval Christian belief, he was the Lamb who made possible the salvation of human souls. For evocative discussion of this and its influence on western culture, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).

Clear parallels to the love story of Orpheus and Eurydice emerge in *Pearl* when examined in the light of the commentary tradition on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Yet the two mythological figures are not mentioned directly in the poem; instead, their presence in the Pearl-Poet's memory, creating parallels in his poem, remains implied rather than overt.³⁵ The Pearl-Poet does name Pygmalion and alludes to Galatea, two figures from another Ovidian love story. These two lovers had a rich tradition of allegorical interpretation associated with them in the Middle Ages as well.

The reference to Pygmalion comes immediately after the dreamer's question, "Who formed your fair figure?":

O maskelez perle in perlez pure,
Pat berez," quoth I, "þe perle of prys,
Quo formed þe þy fayre fygure?
Pat wrogt þy wede he watz ful wys;
Py beauté com neuer of nature—
Pymalyon paynted neuer þy vys,
Ne Arystotel nawþer by hys lettrure
Of carped þe kynde þese propertéz;
Py colour passez þe flour-de-lys,
Pyn angel-hauyng so clene cortez (ll. 745-54).

In this passage, the poet's reference to Pygmalion in the Dreamer's voice invokes a complex array of interpretive possibilities. Because Pygmalion and Galatea were lovers, at one level, this moment invokes romantic love, associating Pygmalion with

³⁵ There can be no doubt that the Pearl-Poet was familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which includes the love stories of both Orpheus and Eurydice and Pygmalion and Galatea. While the poet names Pygmalion directly, thus making a connection to Pygmalion that is critically indisputable, the Orphic connection is perhaps even more essential to the poem in the parallels in supplies and the deeper meanings it implies—hence the consideration given to it in this study.

the Dreamer and Galatea with the Pearl-Maiden. At another level, Pygmalion corresponds to the poet himself. In the context of these lines, his allusion is not only to the Ovidian lover but the Ovidian sculptor-artist who had the power to imitate and create life. For that is what Pygmalion did when he formed Galatea from ivory (artistic imitation), prayed for Venus to breathe life into her, and once she awakened to his kisses, made love to her so that she gave birth to their daughter, Paphos (natural pro-creation).³⁶ The poet even dares to venture into the debate over which force had the greater power, art or nature, when he makes the Dreamer assert: “Your beauty never came from nature – Pygmalion never painted your face!” An odd claim, since, if her beauty comes neither from the Pearl-Maiden’s earthly nature nor from the poet’s art, readers are left to wonder where it does come from. Does the poet seek to imply, through the Dreamer’s astonishment, that heavenly grace is the source of the Pearl-Maiden’s beauty? An answer, once again, can be found in the commentary tradition.

Like Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion and Galatea appear in the *Metamorphoses* but take on a larger life in the medieval commentary traditions. On the one hand, Pygmalion stood for the literary debate over the value of art versus nature, as exemplified in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* in the twelfth-century,³⁷ Chaucer’s “Physician’s Tale” in the fourteenth-century, and the Jean Molinet’s *Roman de la Rose Moralisé* in the fifteenth-century. It is interesting to consider a Chaucerian view since he, the Pearl-Poet’s contemporary, allows Nature to assert to her pride of place over Art – in a way that specifies why and gives insight about the origin of the Pearl-Maiden’s beauty:

36 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1983), 241-43.

37 E.V. Gordon thought it likely the poet echoes the *Roman de la Rose* when that French allegory argues that neither Plato nor Aristotle “nor the artist, not even Pygmalion, can imitate successfully the works of Nature” (ed. Langlois 16013f). In contrast to Gordon, Herbert Pilch argued that Jean de Meun’s point was that both Nature and Art are inferior to God. See Herbert Pilch, “The Middle English *Pearl*: Its Relation to the *Roman de la Rose*,” *NM* 65 (1964), 427-46 or as translated by Heide Hyprath in John Conley, *The Middle English Pearl: Critical Essays* (Notre Dame UP, 1970), 163-84. Pygmalion’s story was also used to warn against the seductions of art and the dangers of idolatry. See Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge UP, 1991), 316-38 and D.W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton UP, 1969), 99-103, 157-58.

... Lo, I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me liste: who kan me contrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bête,
Or grave or peynte ...
For He that is the formere principal
Hath makend me his vicaire general,
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list ...
My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
I made hire to the worshipe of my lord;
So do I alle myne other creatures,
What colour that they han or what figures (PhysT, ll. 11-15, 19-22, 25-28).³⁸

In this case, Nature is supreme over Art, and especially Art as represented by Pygmalion, specifically because she is the vicar of the “formere principal,” the first shaper, God. By comparing the Pygmalion reference here in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* to the one in the Pearl-Poet’s poem, we see the clear implication that the Pearl-Maiden’s beauty does ultimately come, not from Art (Pygmalion) or Nature, but from God.

But the correspondence between Pygmalion and Art is not always consistent. In addition to his allegorical meaning, he also has a typological significance. In the *Ovide moralisee* and Molinet’s *Roman de la Rose Moralisee*, he comes to stand for the divine. Claire

38 *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry Benson (Geneva, IL: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 190. For discussion of Chaucer’s deployment of Pygmalion, see the final chapter of Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). She also notes that Bersuire, commenting on Pygmalion as well as Orpheus, sees him as representative of preachers since they “know how to sculpt and paint a soul with corrections and virtues” (quoted in Chance, 268).

M. Croft has aptly stated how in her comparison of the treatment of Pygmalion in both works:

The author [of the *Ovide moralisee*] first claims that Pygmalion and his statue represents a great lord taking in a poor girl, who is beautiful, but knows nothing of the world around her. After educating her, the Lord falls in love with her and takes her as his wife. The author of the *Ovide moralisee* continues that “autre sentence i puet avoir” (X, v. 3586) and presents a second interpretation of the account. It is the second interpretation of the Pygmalion account which is a specifically Christian one, equating Pygmalion with God, and the statue with God’s creation, mankind. This is analogous to Molinet’s interpretation, reading into the Pygmalion myth the story of the Creator and his chosen people. However, where Molinet chooses to see Pygmalion as representing Christ, the author of the *Ovide moralisee* interprets him as God. Molinet equates the statue with the Church, whereas in the *Ovide moralisee* the statue is interpreted as the less specific notion of mankind.³⁹

Thus, Pygmalion can stand for Art in opposition to God and his vicar, Nature, or in a startling reversal made possible by the complex nature of medieval allegory, he can stand for God the Father rescuing humanity from sin, or Christ wedding the Church, His bride.⁴⁰

When *Pearl* is read in light of the medieval commentary tradition on Pygmalion and Galatea, the Pearl-Maiden is confirmed in her typological role as the Bride of Christ,⁴¹ and Christ emerges as not only the true Orpheus but the true Pygmalion as well. As we have already seen in the cases of Orpheus and Pygmalion, however, *figura* often correspond to more than one meaning, and this is true of the Pearl-Maiden, too.

39 Claire M. Croft, “Pygmalion and the Metamorphosis of Meaning in Jean Molinet’s *Roman de la Rose Moralisee*,” *French Studies* 59:4 (2005): 453-66. There is no modern edition of Molinet’s work, though there is one from the early-sixteenth century: Jean Molinet, *La Roman de la Rose Moralisee* (Lyons: Guillaume Balsarin, 1503).

40 It is worth noting here that the entire story of Pygmalion in the *Ovide moralisee* is narrated by none other than Orpheus. See Book X in *Ovide moralisee: poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle*, ed. C. de Boer, 5 vols. (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1915-38).

41 Similarly, Hamilton sees the Pearl-Maiden as an allegorical representation of the human soul. See Marie Padgett Hamilton, “The Meaning of the Middle English *Pearl*,” in *Middle English Survey: Critical Essays*, ed. Edward Vasta (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 117-145. For further insight on the Pearl-Maiden’s allegorical signification, see James Wimsatt, *Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature* (New York, NY: Pegasus, 1970) and James Earl, “Saint Margaret and the Pearl-Maiden,” *Modern Philology* 70 (1972), 1-8.

Implications of the Use of Liturgical Time in Pearl

The Pearl-Maiden's marriage to the Lamb, like the Parable of the Vineyard and the Parable of the Merchant retold in the poem—like the penny and the pearl and the New Jerusalem—are all allegorical pictures signifying salvation. Yet it appears to be the salvation of the dreamer's soul that is at issue in the poem, for the Pearl-Maiden clearly counsels him to forsake the world and purchase the pearl that is matchless (ll.743-44). This poem, whatever else it may be about, is certainly about salvation.⁴² The pearl on the Pearl-Maiden's breast, drawn from the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price by the poet into the allegorical world of the poem, symbolizes the possibility of winning the kingdom of heaven—that is, salvation—through the miraculous grace of an unexpected discovery; allegorically, the Pearl-Maiden herself may stand for joy in that salvation.⁴³

Because, for medieval Catholics, the drama of salvation was built into structures of remembrance—specifically the sacraments and the holy days of the liturgical year—it is no surprise that the Pearl-Poet uses these structures to shape his poem. In exploring the use of liturgical time in *Pearl*, readers can venture to interpret another dimension of the Pearl-Maiden's allegorical significance: the relationship of joy to salvation.

The poet is vividly aware of the importance of liturgical time and the way that it communicates heavenly reality—eternity—to people living in earthly realms bound by time. To emphasize how heaven and earth meet in the garden of the Dreamer's mind, he uses key dates and parables from the church's liturgy to structure his poem.⁴⁴ The poem is structured like a triptych, one that begins with

42 For a relevant discussion (with diverging viewpoint), see Nicholas Watson, "The Gawain-Poet as Vernacular Theologian," in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, eds., Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 293-313.

43 See Matthew 13:45-46. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, which directly precedes the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price and is conflated with it in *Pearl*, specifies that the man who obtained the treasure experienced great "joy" upon discovering the treasure and, as a result, sells all he has to buy the field in which the treasure resides.

44 For another view of the poet's use of time, grounded in the calendrical year rather than the liturgical one, see Lynn Staley Johnson, "The Pearl Dreamer and the Eleventh Hour,"

the image of a garden in August and ends with the image of the bread and the wine of the Eucharist from the mass (the outer panels), but focuses the reader's attention inward toward the dream and the Dreamer's spiritual progress on his Orphic journey toward the resurrection hope of Easter (the central panel).⁴⁵

Although some scholars have previously associated *Pearl* with the feast of the Holy Innocents that takes place during the Christmas season,⁴⁶ closer examination suggests that two key liturgical dates more relevant to the poem. They are the feast of Mary's Assumption that takes place on August 15th and celebration of the eve of Septuagesima Sunday that takes place three weeks before Lent. Once these liturgical contexts are noticed, deeper understanding of the Pearl-Maiden's signifying power becomes possible.

The first liturgical season in the poem is worth examining closely because this is when the Dreamer is grieving and remembering the losses he experienced in earlier seasons of the year. In August (Ordinary Time), in the first panel of the triptych as it were, he looks back and remembers his Lenten and Paschal experiences.

To þat spot that I in speche expoun

I entred in þat erber grene,

In Augoste in a hy3 seysoun,

Quen corne is coruen wyth crokez kene (ll. 37-40, my emphasis).

in *Text and Matter: New Critical Perspectives of the Pearl-Poet*, edited by Robert Blanch, Miriam Youngerman Miller, and Julian Wasserman (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing, 1991), 3-15.

45 For another interpretation of the poem's structure, see Britton J. Harwood, "Pearl as Diptych," in *Text and Matter: New Critical Perspectives of the Pearl-Poet*, ed. Robert J. Blanch, Miriam Youngerman Miller, and Julian N. Wasserman (Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing, 1991), 61-78.

46 Ian Bishop made the case for a Christmas liturgical context for *Pearl* forty years ago in *The Pearl in its Setting* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968) when he noted the Mass of the Holy Innocents contains a passage from Revelation that is paraphrased in *Pearl*. However, the same passage from Revelation also is read as part of the Divine Office in the three weeks following Easter. In fact, all the paraphrased passages from Revelation in *Pearl* are read three weeks after Easter because entire last book of the Bible is read at this time. Furthermore, unlike the companion poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript, it is clearly Paschal, not Christmas, imagery that predominates in *Pearl*.

Scholars have suggested two church holidays might be meant by this reference to a “high season”: Lammas on August 1st and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on August 15th. Andrew and Waldron find Lammas to be the more probable date alluded to because it is the festival of the first wheat harvest of the year and the very next line of the poem concerns harvest.⁴⁷ Harvesting imagery, in Christian tradition, is clearly associated with resurrection. Yet August 15th may be the more likely date because the line about the sickle being taken to the corn is a direct paraphrase of the Parable of the Growing Seed that is read as the gospel lesson in the liturgy of August 15th, Mary’s Assumption Day.

Sic est regnum Dei quemadmodum si homo iaciat sementem in terram et dormiat et exurgat nocte ac die et semen germinet et increscat dum nescit ille ultro enim terra fructificat primum herbam deinde spicam deinde plenum frumentum in spica et cum se produxerit fructus statim mittit falcem quoniam adest messis.

[So the kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not know how. Moreover, the earth produces first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come.]⁴⁸

Within the poem, it seems that this is the day when the dreamer remembers the loss of his beloved that occurred earlier in the year. Furthermore, it is more likely that the poet is alluding to Mary’s Assumption Day than to the feast of Lammas, given the importance of Mary to the poet, who recognizes her as the Queen of Heaven and then closely associates the Pearl-Maiden with her in his poem.⁴⁹ This also fits better with the poet’s tendency to create biblical paraphrases, especially of parables, from the lessons of the Mass in his

47 Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, eds., *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 56n.

48 Mark 4:26-29.

49 For a detailed exploration of correspondences, see Teresa Reed, “Mary, the Maiden, and Metonymy in *Pearl*,” *South Atlantic Review* 65:2 (2000), 134-162. However, since the poet refers to the “high season,” perhaps he refers to the two-week period beginning with Lammas and ending with the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

poem.⁵⁰ He uses parables in this way in order to place events in his poem in the context of liturgical time.

The central parable of *Pearl* is, of course, the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, which the Pearl-Maiden discourses upon in her sermon to the Dreamer as they stand separated from one another by the stream. In the Sarum Rite that was used in England in the fourteenth century (though not the Roman one that is used today), that parable was read on Septuagesima Sunday three weeks before Lent began. Thus, the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard was usually read in January or February, since Lent is forty days before Easter, and Easter is a movable feast. The repetition of the word “date,” the concatenation word in the section of *Pearl* that retells the Parable of the Laborers, draws attention to the idea—as earlier with August 15th—that Septuagesima Sunday is the liturgical date on which the parable is read.

This prompts a reconsideration of the implications of liturgical time in the poem. Such reconsideration can lead to the conclusion that the Dreamer’s vision unfolds, in a spiritual sense, between Septuagesima Sunday (when the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is read) and three weeks after Easter (when Revelation is read). The possibility that Septuagesima Sunday is the day that the Pearl-Maiden died is given by the Pearl-Maiden herself, who speaks of her death in metaphorical terms in this section of the poem,⁵¹ and by an investigation of what happened on Septuagesima Sunday in medieval churches: the burial of the alleluia.

In the Sarum Rite, three weeks before Lent begins and throughout the season of Lent itself, the alleluia is neither said nor

50 For analysis of parables in *Pearl*, see Sandra Pierson Prior, *The Fayre Formez of the Pearl-Poet* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State UP, 1996) and Douglas Thorpe, *A New Earth: The Labor of Language in Pearl, Herbert’s Temple, and Blake’s Jerusalem* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic UP, 1991).

51 How the Pearl-Maiden actually died is never actually specified in the poem, though Jean-Paul Freidl and Ian J. Kirby have argued that the *Pearl-Maiden* died as a result of one of the fourteenth-century outbreaks of the plague. See “The Life, Death, and Life of the *Pearl-Maiden*” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 103 (2002), 395-98.

sung. To recognize this significant change in the liturgy—the silencing of the alleluia—on the Saturday evening before Septuagesima Sunday, a procession, including the priest and the choirboys of the congregation, buries the alleluia, written on parchment, underground. A description of this can be found in the 15th century statute book of the Church of Toul in France:

On Saturday before Septuagesima Sunday, all the choir-boys gather in the sacristy during the prayer of the None to prepare for the burial of the Alleluia. After the last *Benedicamus*, they march in procession, with crosses, tapers, holy water, and censers, and they carry a coffin, as in a funeral. Thus they proceed through the aisle, moaning and mourning, until they reach the cloister. There they bury the coffin; they sprinkle it with holy water and incense it; whereupon, they return to the sacristy by the same way.⁵²

The farewell to the alleluia is thus ceremonialized as if it were the burial of a beloved person.

The fact that the dreamer bewails his pearl which has been closed in a “forser” (l. 263)—a casket—together with the emphasis on the word “date” in the section dealing with the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, which is read on Septuagesima Sunday, prompts two questions: is the poet trying to tell us, literally and historically, that the Pearl-Maiden died on the evening before Septuagesima Sunday? Is the Pearl-Maiden, allegorically, a figure who stands for the alleluia?

In keeping with this latter possibility, it is noteworthy that the word *alleluia* never occurs in *Pearl*, but the Dreamer directly addresses the Pearl-Maiden as if she stands for a single word when he says:

O perle, quop I, of rygh renoun
so watz hit me dere þat þou con deme
In þys veray avysyoun!
If hit be ueray and soth sermoun

52 Cited in Francis Weiser, *Easter Book* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1954) and online at <http://www.fisheaters.com/septuagesima.html> (accessed 18 May 2010).

þat þou so strykez in garlande gay,
 so wel is me in þys doel-doungeoun
 þat þou art to þat Prynsez paye. (1182-88, emphasis added)

The word “sermoun” is glossed by Andrew and Waldron to mean “speech” or “account” in this line, but like “fygure” (*figura*), it is a Middle English rendering of a Latin word, in this case, *sermo/sermonis*, which can mean “talk, conversation, discourse” or more simply “a word.”⁵³ Marie Borroff, in her elegant modern English version of the poem, translates “sermoun” as “word” in this line.⁵⁴ The fact the Pearl-Maiden “strykez” (“strikes, pierces,” or by connotative extension, “stands for, represents”) this “sermoun” is evocative diction indeed.⁵⁵ It suggests that, allegorically interpreted, the Pearl-Maiden could be a figure of the Dreamer’s *alleluia*: the “sermoun” (l. 1185), the one word, that represents his joy: “my blysse” (l. 372).⁵⁶

Conclusions

The spiritual language, Ovidian love stories, and use of liturgical time in *Pearl* all invite allegorical interpretations of the poem. While there is clearly a literal, elegiac sense to the poem, there are also allegorical meanings. This makes perfect sense in light of the tradition of four-fold scriptural and literary interpretation in the Middle Ages, which the Pearl-Poet clearly used to understand biblical parables and compose his poetic masterpiece.

53 “Sermo” and “verbum” could be used interchangeably. Years after *Pearl* was written, Erasmus rendered the opening of John’s Gospel “in principio erat sermo,” instead of giving Jerome’s traditional translation “erat verbum,” and he created a defense of his choice by arguing quite lucidly that the Church Fathers often used “sermo” and “verbum” interchangeably. See C. A. L. Jarrott, “Erasmus’ ‘In Principio Erat Sermo’: A Controversial Translation” *Studies in Philology* 61:1 (1964), 35-40.

54 Marie Borroff, trans., *Pearl: A New Verse Translation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

55 Reading the lines this way eliminates the need to emend “strykez” to “stykez” (“go”) as Sir Israel Gollancz (1921) did in his edition of the poem, and which first E.V. Gordon (1953) and then Sister Mary Hillman (1961, rpt. 1967) retained in theirs, or to suppose that “garlande gaye” stands metaphorically for the heavenly procession when it simply refers to the crown of pearls the Pearl-Maiden is wearing as she speaks to the Dreamer just as Andrew and Waldron agree (see their note on lines 1185-87 in their 1978 edition).

56 The Dreamer repeatedly refers to the Pearl-Maiden as his joy, calling her “my blysfol beste” (l. 279), “my blysse” (l. 372), “Blysfol” (l. 421), and so on.

The poet's use of metaphoric language, memory of the legends of Orpheus and Eurydice and Pygmalion and Galatea, and astute interweaving of parables from the church liturgy alongside invocations of the Lenten and Paschal liturgical seasons within his dream vision all invite readers into a deeper understanding of the allegorical sense of *Pearl*. If we accept the invitation, we pass through an open door that, afterwards, no one can shut.⁵⁷ For once the possibilities of allegorical interpretation are re-captured, readers gain a richer sense not only of the elegiac meaning of the poem but also of the greater signifying power of *Pearl*.

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57 See Revelation 3:8. As the Pearl-Maiden herself remarks, "Rygtwysly quo con rede / He loke on bok and be awayed" (ll. 709-10).

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Illumination from Pearl Manuscript, Cotton Nero A.x

Hyperreal Blessings: Simulated Relics in *The Pardoner's Tale*

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This article argues that reading the relics Chaucer's Pardoner carries through the lens of Jean Baudrillard's definition of simulacra illustrates the potential existence – and subsequent dangers – of a simulated hyperreality to the spirituality of the fourteenth century. Juxtaposing “The Pardoner's Prologue” from *The Canterbury Tales* and Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* lends meaning to both the machinations of Chaucer's (arguably) most corrupt pilgrim, and to the postmodern idea of simulated realities. Rather than doubles or imitations of an original image or conception of reality, Baudrillard's simulacra are indistinguishable replacements for the real, as the Pardoner would have us believe of his relics. Understanding the Pardoner's relics as simulacra allows us to see Chaucer's awareness of the danger of simulation to faith in medieval Christian society. By insinuating the idea of false relics to his audience through fiction, Chaucer suggests to his audience that all relics could be fakes, throwing into question the business of relics, indulgences, and possibly salvation. Further, Chaucer's invention of the Pardoner in a fiction that influences reality makes *The Canterbury Tales* a layering of hyperreality, offering a weighty, consequential example of a simulation so real that the real threatens to become non-existent.

Chaucer's Pardoner is a picture of incongruity. Scholars have analyzed his physical, spiritual, and psychological peculiarities, and called into question his sexuality, his morality, and his belief structures.¹ Just as interesting as the man himself, however, are the tools of his trade: the indulgences and relics he carries with him. The artificiality of his possessions does not hinder his attempts—often successful—to use them like “the real thing,” even to the point of allowing his own lies to seduce him into a kind of belief as well. This belief in the absence of truth adds layers of complexity to the way we understand his relics, and the effect they have not only on the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, but on Chaucer's reading audience as well. Because they are not true saints' remains but they can—and

1 For a good overview of diverse interpretations in the 1950s and 1960s, see Stephen A. Khinoy, “Inside Chaucer's Pardoner?,” *The Chaucer Review* 6, no. 4 (1972): 255-56.

are—still used as and believed to be real, the Pardoner's relics can be read as what Jean Baudrillard calls simulacra: "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."²

Not only are the Pardoner's relics not the priceless remains he claims them to be, they are also not "real" animal bones or rags. They are just words on a page. Yet the generational power of language makes them not only "real" for the pilgrims, but suggests the power of simulacra to an audience: because this same hyperreality could exist outside the fiction of *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*, I will show that the Pardoner's relics hold the potential to upset an entire religious system through a mere suggestion injected by fiction. Treating the Pardoner's relics as simulacra reveals fiction's dangerous influence over reality, and blurs the boundaries between what is "true" and what is "real." Complicating and furthering this blurring, Chaucer himself tangles the real with the hyperreal he has created by placing a version of himself in the story. This creation of a hyperreality through the *Canterbury Tales* makes restricting the Pardoner's fakes to the printed page more difficult. Thanks to the many layers of truth and cunning overlapping with reality Chaucer has created they take on life of their own.

While the Pardoner's relics can be read through Baudrillard's ideas, this is clearly an unusual and unlikely pairing of texts. Pardoners were prominent figures in pre-Reformation Europe, and Baudrillard is most often embraced and applied to postmodern topics. Baudrillard posits that simulation "is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance," but the generation of hyperreality, that is, a creation of a new reality placed upon the real in such a way that the difference is obscured. Simulation is "no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle."³ If we do not know the real is no longer real because a

² Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1

³ Baudrillard, 13.

hyperreal has replaced it, we continue to believe in the existence of reality despite its absence. Rather than creating doubles or imitations of an original image or conception of reality, Baudrillard posits that simulacra are operational, generational replacements for the real, and because we cannot tell the difference between this simulated reality and “real” reality, the simulation becomes the real for us. An image, Baudrillard claims, either “reflect[s]... a profound reality,” “masks and denatures a profound reality,” “masks the *absence* of a profound reality,” or “has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”⁴ The final principle – that an image can simulate reality without having any relation to it – suggests the creation of a false reality indistinguishable from what we consider real, and Baudrillard uses examples like Disneyland’s relation to Los Angeles, or “reality” television’s connection to the reality lived by its audiences to explain his concepts. But an opportunity for comparison to the Pardoner is opened when Baudrillard explains the danger of unmasking images through religious context, presenting the danger Chaucer seems to suggest in his tale: fiction can create doubt, and doubt can change how we understand reality.

Baudrillard cites iconoclasts to present the danger of religious simulacra. He asks “what becomes of the divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme power that is simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or does it volatilize itself in the simulacra that, alone, deploy their power and pomp of fascination—the visible machinery of icons substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God?”⁵ He describes a fear that beneath these repeated created images that represent truth, no truth exists. Despair, he says, “came from the idea that the image [of God] didn’t conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra, forever radiant with

4 Baudrillard, 6.

5 Baudrillard, 4.

their own fascination.”⁶ That is, the images represent not a hidden truth, but only themselves – models without a truth-based origin. The idea that sacred objects might disguise the absence of the sacred links Baudrillard’s postmodern, abstract theories to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, and lends Baudrillard’s ideas historical weight. Reading through the lens of the simulacrum allows us to see issues of truth and reality as indistinguishable from fiction, and vice versa, in fourteenth century literature and religion as well as twentieth and twenty-first century reality television and theme parks. Because Chaucer’s Pardoner carries fakes that cannot be distinguished from actual relics, the suggestion emerges that even “real” relics—those held by shrines and churches in the fourteenth century—could be fake as well.⁷

Chaucer unmasks this disturbing possibility through his depiction of the Pardoner as a fictional character that matches well the unmasking of image Baudrillard discusses in the case of the iconoclasts, and carries clear implications of the dangers that the exposure of simulacra as a concept hold for religion as well as society. If onlookers cannot tell the difference between “truth” and “fiction” when they look at an object, and if even the Pardoner himself is able to be convinced by his own falsehood, how can authenticity be guaranteed, if at all?

To see clearly the weight Chaucer’s suggestions carry, it is necessary to establish the kind of person he caricatures with the Pardoner. Pardoners were deeply enmeshed in Christian rites, and involved in the project of salvation through providing an opportunity for a public display of penance. In the fourteenth century, Pardoners

6 Baudrillard, 5.

7 Khinoy has suggested that the Pardoner holds a similar power, but couches his argument in an examination of the man, not his relics. He posits that at the moment the Pardoner asks the pilgrims to offer to his relics, “the Pardoner has succeeded in implicating *us*” (264). If we reject the Pardoner’s offer, “we must reject him, and his relics and pardons, too. Yet if we throw out not only the joker, but also the things he has made a joke of, what becomes of the church and of faith? In the age of Wyclif and the Great Schism, these questions are central; and here they are couched in terms that must bring the points home to everyone” (265).

sold indulgences or “pardons,” which were believed to reduce purgatorial punishment for sins.⁸ Forgiveness from sin required two steps: contrition and punishment. If you had repented and received absolution, your sin was forgiven, but the need for punishment still remained. A pardon acquired after absolution guaranteed you a shorter stay in Purgatory, mitigating some of the punishment you were promised while also allowing you to do the good deed of donating money to the Church. Thus while working to buy your way out of Purgatory was theoretically possible, pardons were intended to reduce, not eliminate, a purgatorial sentence. Further, because pardons did not relieve the moral guilt accrued by sinning, they did not guarantee salvation, and thus to allow parishioners full forgiveness, the elements of individual penance and clerical absolution were supposed to be required to earn a pardon.⁹

Chaucer’s Pardoner is well stocked with pardons to sell.¹⁰ His Papally approved indulgences and involvement in the pilgrimage to Canterbury are not unusual for the fourteenth century; Melvin Storm points out that due to the connection between shrines and indulgences, the profession of pardons was linked strongly to pilgrimage.¹¹ Pilgrims could buy pardons by making an offering to a relic or a holy site, and with many of these sacred locations, the destination point of pilgrimages, it was not unusual that pilgrims would acquire indulgences there as part of their journey. Having the Pardoner along on the Canterbury pilgrimage introduces another facet to the business of indulgences. The practice arose in the tenth century of carrying relics through the countryside to collect money,

8 Alastair Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer’s Pardoner and Wife of Bath* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 4.

9 Minnis, 73-75.

10 He also, as Eugene Vance points out in “Chaucer’s Pardoner: Relics, Discourse, and Frames of Propriety” *New Literary History*, 20, no. 3 (1989) claims to be able to provide absolution to confessors, so he can attend to both contrition and punishment for the pilgrims as they wend their way to Canterbury (741).

11 Melvin Storm, “The Pardoner’s Invitation: Quaestor’s Bag or Becket’s Shrine?” *PMLA* 97, no. 5 (1982): 810-818.

which was intended to be used for construction: repairs or additions for a church or other ecclesiastical building.¹² The Pardoner's association with Rouncivale, a hospital at Charing Cross, suggests his primary task is to collect alms for the hospital, which he would acquire by showing and receiving offerings to the relics he carries.¹³ An offering from a pilgrim would buy a pardon, which would decrease his time in Purgatory while providing needed help to a church project.

Because, however, professional pardoners like Chaucer's character were sometimes driven more by greed, pride, or the need to fill a quota than by the desire to help their congregation, it is not unimaginable that they would raise prices on or exaggerate the importance and power of their wares. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council tried to limit the abuse of indulgences by declaring a pardon granted for consecration of a church could remit no more than one year from a purgatorial sentence, and for other acts the indulgence was not to exceed forty days.¹⁴ Despite this, false documents and corrupt pardoners still circulated, making extravagant claims that certain indulgences could take hundreds or even thousands of years off a stay in Purgatory.¹⁵

In addition to his indulgences, Chaucer's Pardoner also possesses the famous collection of relics he eagerly displays to his fellow pilgrims. Though relics were sometimes clothing or possessions of deceased saints, more often they were fragments of the body such as bones or hair. Patrick Geary has cited relics as passive objects, lacking any extra-cultural significance: "although

12 Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 25.

13 Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., Larry D Benson, ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company) 1987, ln 670.

14 "62. Regarding saint's relics." Fourth Lateran Council – 1215: Constitutions, <<http://www.legionofmarytidewater.com/faith/ECUM12.HTM>> Accessed 5 Oct. 2011.

15 Fr. Enrico dal Covolo, "The Historical Origin of Indulgences," www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=1054&CFID=99824089&CFTOKEN=34039761 Accessed 5 Oct. 2011.

symbolic objects, they are of the most arbitrary kind, passively reflecting only exactly so much meaning as they were given by a particular community.”¹⁶ For the fourteenth century, this meaning was intense and driven by the desire to ensure grace. Anxious pilgrims often divided up the bodies of dead saints as holy souvenirs not only to prove they had traveled to visit the saint’s remains, but to gain access to the divine by owning a piece of a person who had definitely received salvation. Even in death, in this way saints remained intercessors, providing a link between the laity and the transcended divine.

The limited number of saints—and therefore limited number of legitimate relics—ensured that most surviving pieces were either enshrined in sacred locations like Thomas à Becket’s shrine at Canterbury, or carried by the clergy, as in the case of the Pardoner. Because true relics were in short supply, and high demand for access to them from the laity coupled with people like the Pardoner looking to gain material profit, schemes like the Pardoner’s would guarantee financial gain for corrupt churchmen, and simultaneously create a need for questions about the “truth” of holy objects. Storm avers that the Pardoner’s practice of carrying fake relics was historically unusual, though not unheard of. It would have been, however, such a perfidious, and therefore rare, activity that Chaucer must intend his audience to pay particular attention to it as they digest the Pardoner’s character.¹⁷

The Pardoner is at once a compelling and disturbing figure. The *Canterbury Tales* narrator takes care to establish his position and attempts to grant him some authority by assuring in the General Prologue portrait that the Pardoner “Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot,” and that “of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware / Ne was

16 Geary, 5.

17 Storm, 811. For a conflicting perspective, see Robyn Malo’s “The Pardoner’s Relics (and Why They Matter the Most),” *The Chaucer Review* 43, no. 1 (2008): 82-102. Malo details several European analogues to the Pardoner, suggesting the practice of relic forgery was at least common enough to have found representation in the literatures of multiple vernaculars (89-92).

ther swich another pardoner.”¹⁸ However, immediately after this justification of the Pardoner’s position and skill, the narrator reveals that “in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer, / Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl; / He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl / That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente / Upon the see... He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones, / And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.”¹⁹ In the prologue to his tale, the Pardoner himself not only admits, but practically brags that after stirring his audience to devotion, “Thanne shew I forth my longe cristal stones, / Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones – / Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon. / Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon / Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep.”²⁰ The Pardoner, then, is carrying a collection of worthless scraps. Rather than displaying a precious finger joint once belonging to a saint, he has pig and sheep bones encased in latten²¹ and glass that he openly admits are not true relics.

It is this deception, and the way the Pardoner and his unfortunate customers treat it, that resonates with Baudrillard’s definition of simulacra: “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it.”²² A simulacrum “is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.”²³ In other words, the Pardoner does not attempt with his relics to reconstruct real saints’ remains, but simply to perform the same task without relying on a dubious “real” to do so. This question of task is also crucial to Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra, which he sees as not only not

18 “General Prologue,” 687, 692-693.

19 “General Prologue,” 694-700.

20 “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” *The Riverside Chaucer* 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), ll 347-351.

21 Larry D. Benson in *The Riverside Chaucer* 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987) cites “latoun” as a brass-like alloy (34).

22 Baudrillard, 1.

23 Baudrillard, 2.

reconstructive, but also not representational. Simulacra are purely operational, and are the “resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared.”²⁴ In the case of relics, whether they are fake or not, it is their use that is important rather than their substance.

When faced with the prospect of buying forgiveness, the specific identity of the saint whose remains are claimed to be contained within a decorated vial becomes trivial, and the original function of the body part, whether it was a finger or an ankle bone, no longer matters. The crucial element is their figurative value. Their function as things, repurposed from an instrumental body part into an instrument of forgiveness, erases their former substance. They are sacred because they are believed to be sacred, and their existence generates its own meaning unconnected to their previous, organic function. Indeed, as the Pardoner claims, his chunks of crystal stuffed with animal bones are relics “as wenen they echoon,” that is, because his audience believes them to be.²⁵ They are operative because their audience believes in their veracity, not because of any preexisting inherent characteristic.

One of Baudrillard’s caveats about simulacra is that they cannot simply be a dissimulation or a pretending. He says that “pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary.’”²⁶ Though at first glance the Pardoner’s fakeries might look like dissimulations, they remain simulacra because of the method and effects of their use. Though the Pardoner himself admits his collection is primarily rags and animal bones, making it clear that for the purposes of his job he pretends these objects are sacred, there is an element of belief in his own behavior as well.

²⁴ Baudrillard, 7.

²⁵ “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” 349.

²⁶ Baudrillard, 3.

After revealing his deception and then telling his moral tale to make his fellow pilgrims happy, he launches into a sermon and seems to forget that he has already bragged about his use of waste products as sacred objects. He offers to absolve the sins of the entire company and recommends that “oure Hoost here shal bigynne, / For he is moost envoluped in synne. / Com forth, sire Hoost, and offer first anon, / and thou shalt kisse the relikes everychon / ye, for a grote!”²⁷ The Host remembers the “truth” about the Pardoner’s collection, but the Pardoner himself is so swept up by his own sermonizing that the relics become real for him. Though he is soundly berated by the Host for his attempt and therefore fails to collect any profit in the form of money or belief, both he and the narrator have already averred how successful he is in this simulation of sacredness. He explains that those who “fyndeth hym out of swich blame, / he wol come up and offre a Goddes name, / And I assoille him by the auctoritee / Which by the bulle ygraunted was to me. / By this gaude have I wonne, yeer be yeer, / An hundred mark sith I was pardoner.”²⁸ This too seems as if it could be pretending, because given the bad luck the Pardoner has had convincing the Canterbury company of his relics’ veracity, it seems possible he might always get carried away by his own cunning and reveal his secrets.

Looking back to the *General Prologue*, however, it is clear from the narrator’s admission that “with thise relikes, whan that he fond / A povre person dwellynge upon lond, / Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye / than that the person gat in monthes tweye” that the Pardoner is an expert at his job.²⁹ That is, though he admits they are actually worthless, the Pardoner’s relics are effective. Despite their status as profane objects, as both he and the narrator reveal, people pay to see and touch them, viewing them as objects capable of granting pardon. That they are treated identically as

27 “The Pardoner’s Tale,” *The Riverside Chaucer* 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987) ll. 941-944.

28 “The Pardoner’s Prologue,” 385-390.

29 “General Prologue,” 701-704.

“real” relics by people who believe them to be authentic shows that operationally, any difference between “true” relics and “false” relics has been erased, verifying Baudrillard’s explanation.

While the way the Pardoner’s fakeries are treated as “true” sacred relics makes them simulacral, it also raises an overarching concern about veracity that gives this comparison weight. Baudrillard uses iconoclasts and the idea of God as a simulacrum to make the claim that “it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them.”³⁰ This seems to be an effect of setting up the Pardoner’s relics as simulacra. By revealing to his fellow pilgrims that his relics are fakes, the Pardoner erases any chances he may have had of reaping financial benefit from his travel mates. By enacting this unmasking before the Pilgrim Chaucer, who is narrating and commentating the voyage, the Pardoner’s chances of being able to re-mask his deception become even less likely. In fact, because he has spent so long deprecating his worthless baggage to show how convincing and conniving he is, when he is pulled into his own hyperreality and tries to fool his companions he is not only refused and ridiculed, but threatened with violence. The Host responds to the Pardoner’s offer vehemently, exclaiming:

Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,
And swere it were a relyk of a seint,
Though it were with thy fundament depeint!
But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond
In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!³¹

Not only has he failed to impress his audience, since he has already unmasked his deception, but both the Pardoner’s individual authority, and by extension the authority of his profession, have been thrown into question by the Host’s outburst. The Pardoner

³⁰ Baudrillard, 5.

³¹ “The Pardoner’s Tale,” 948-955.

brags about the simulacral value of worthless objects. The Host, however, escalates possibility of simulation, insinuating that not only can rags and animal bones serve as relics, but actual bodily waste products could ostensibly be claimed as sacred. Melvin Storm points out that the Host swears by a true relic—Saint Helena’s cross—which in juxtaposition with the Pardoner’s relics reminds the other pilgrims and the audience that the abuse of relics leads to an abuse of pilgrimage.³² However, this same juxtaposition raises the possibility that all relics could be false, just as the Pardoner’s are; what is the guarantee that Saint Helena’s cross is any more real than the pillowcase the Pardoner says is “Oure lady veyl”?³³

Blending the reality with the profane stand-in, as the Host does here when he speaks of Saint Helena’s cross in proximity to the Pardoner’s “coillons” enshrined in pig feces, speaks to the generational power of language Seeta Chaganti references in her examination of the inscription and performativity of relics. Chaganti explains that the Host “speaks into being a structure, a visual and material language” when he expresses his wish to enshrine the Pardoner’s genitalia.³⁴ That the Host can create a reliquary like this in his audience’s mind simply by speaking it into being insinuates others could create such structures just as easily.³⁵ In fact, Chaucer

32 Storm, 815.

33 Robyn Malo’s assessment of the differing visibility between notable and non-notable relics seems to affirm this insecurity. Though the Pardoner’s relics, by virtue of their small size and the anonymity of their supposed former owners, are non-notable relics and therefore would not have been regarded as seriously as relics enshrined in churches or cathedrals even if they were genuine, they are at least visible to their audience, which both avers their existence and makes it theoretically possible to see their inauthenticity. Notable relics, however, were only visible to select important individuals, and ordinary pilgrims like the Canterbury group would not have been permitted to approach near enough to see them. Without the verification of visibility, there was no sure way to know there even were relics behind the altars or screens that hid them, much less whether those relics, if present, were really from a saint (85-86).

34 Seeta Chaganti, *The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 149.

35 One of the earliest and most influential *translatio* stories – that is, hagiographic narratives of the relocation of sacred relics – was of the very cross the Host swears by (Geary 13). That the Host chooses this particular relic seems another suggestion both of the power of language to create, and of the power of fiction to sway perception: because the cross was moved and its status and power as a relic averred upon arrival to its new location, there is no way outside of faith to determine its validity.

himself has done just this in his creation not only of the characters in the *Canterbury Tales*, but of the stories they tell—the *Tales* themselves. The Pardoner's relics are not what he claims they are when he is lying or telling the truth. They are just fiction: words on a page Chaucer has written into being, which through language's creative power become "realities" in the minds of his readers. This ease of creation reveals the danger of fiction's influence on reality: how is an audience to know what is real and what has been generated, or spoken into being, by imagination?

The Host's utilization of the language of relics to speak of waste products – something even more profane than the Pardoner's collection – can clearly be linked to Baudrillard's discussion of fiction as dangerous. If the "truth" of a simulation is exposed as hyperreal instead of real, this has a corresponding effect on the "real" itself. He explains of the Lascaux caves that due to the construction of an exact replica used to view the site without causing damage or degradation to the original, "from now on there is no longer any difference: the duplication suffices to render both [original and copy] artificial."³⁶ Since the Pardoner has admitted the possibility of fake relics to a group of pilgrims bound for a site that contains relics, the implication now exists that the veracity of the relics at Canterbury – the relics some of them might already be planning to offer to – could also be in question. Because the Pardoner has been successful in his job in the past, and makes a comfortable living from claiming the authenticity of his simulations, there seems to be no way of telling whether a relic is "real" in the sense that it actually came from a saint, or fake as those the Pardoner carries, unless we are told outright. With no way of determining falsity without direct admission from someone who knows, not only is veracity always in question, but in some cases it can never be determined. Though he as a character is a fiction, and though perhaps, as Storm contends, the deceptive practices he enacts were rare, the presentation of the Pardoner as successful in this heretical behavior plants a seed of possibility and therefore doubt in Chaucer's readers that extra-textual referents for

³⁶ Baudrillard, 9.

the Pardoner could exist, and extra-textual instances could as well, hidden only because their truth has not been or cannot be revealed by an instigator.

Since there appears to be no way of determining whether any individual relic is real or a simulation unless the possessor of that relic unmasks his dissimulation and tells us, it is possible that all relics could be fakes. Robyn Malo argues that through his creation of the Pardoner, “Chaucer works within a literary and historical tradition that was concerned with whether pilgrims and laypeople would get too close to relics on the one hand, and concerned on the other hand that, when pilgrims or other laypeople were offered the chance to get close to non-notable relics, the relics could well be fakes.”³⁷ Offering to and believing in relics—especially notable or famous relics like St. Helen’s cross or Becket’s bones—was such an established tradition by the time Chaucer was writing that the only connecting thread the medieval laity had to the relics’ origin—the bodies of the saints long dead—was that very tradition or cultural belief. Cultural application of authenticity in the form of inscription, authenticating documents, or an oral or written tradition, was needed to link the otherwise arbitrary object to a specific saint.³⁸

Because many reliquaries completely obscured visibility of the relic enclosed within, and in some cases crucial elements like inscriptions or identifications were added to reliquaries long after they were made, the question of how to determine veracity for the pieces inside—if indeed there were any—remains.³⁹ Because the medieval audience had only existing traditions as proof, for them, the model comes before the reality, and the possibility exists that there could be only models, like the Pardoner’s equipment, and no “real” sacred objects left, if there were any to begin with.

³⁷ Malo, 86.

³⁸ Geary, 6.

³⁹ Chaganti, 22, 12.

The idea that relics could be faked, and thus that aspects of a parishioner's search for forgiveness could be inauthentic without his awareness, has at least two larger implications, relating to indulgences and to penance. As Minnis points out, the theory behind indulgences was not only related to preaching, but also interwoven with theological ideas about the Eucharist, penance, baptism, and absolution, making it integrally related with most of the fundamentals of Catholicism.⁴⁰

Thus if the Pardoner's relics are questionable, his whole authority becomes speculative, including the indulgences he carries. If his relics are fakes but sometimes he claims they are real, there is no way to be sure his claimed papally approved indulgences are necessarily what he says they are either. After all, he does say that "Bulles of popes and of cardynales, / Of patriarkes and bishops I shewe," but he makes this seemingly authoritative statement immediately after telling his audience that "thane telle I forth me tales."⁴¹ If we stretch this linear proximity a bit, it could insinuate that perhaps the papal bulls and indulgences themselves are part of the tales the Pardoner tells. If not only his relics, but also the pardons he carries are simulacra, this has clear implications for Catholicism at large; it raises the question of which ideas the laity has been asked to follow based on faith are actually true.

In relation to penance, if the relics and possibly the indulgences the Pardoner offers are fake, it is also possible to question whether the real penance a parishioner offers has any effect. Though the results of penance and pardons differed—penance was required to obtain absolution from sin while pardons reduced time in Purgatory—because both involved a person's eventual spiritual placement, they were frequently linked. Since, as noted, the linked process involves two steps to actually have any impact on purgatorial punishment, if the public half (the pardon) is fake but the private half (the penance)

⁴⁰ Minnis, 163.

⁴¹ "The Pardoner's Prologue," 342-343, 341.

is true, it cannot be determined whether the effect is the same as it would have been if both penance and indulgence were “real.”⁴² Storm emphasizes that though the effectiveness of the Pardoner’s indulgences is uncertain, the possibility that they might not work, even if penitents believe they will, does open the door for questions about whether true penance can work in the absence of true clerical absolution.⁴³ Returning to Baudrillard’s warning that simulations can eradicate the distance between “the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary,’” the question of whether a fake sacred object can dispense “real” spiritual results becomes a concern.⁴⁴ Because living a life without sin was practically impossible, the medieval laity depended in some part on indulgences to aid them in attaining salvation. Introducing the idea that this penance for sale might not actually reduce their time in Purgatory throws their faith in the established ecclesiastical system off balance.

The fictionality of both the Pardoner and his simulacra also have a considerable overarching implication on medieval society. Not only does the Pardoner assert that his relics are rags and animal bones that do the work of saints’ remains within his story, but he tells the story within the frame of a pilgrimage narrative, directed and structured by the Host’s commands, narrated by a fellow pilgrim, and written by Chaucer the author. This dizzying collection of frames only serves to emphasize how far from “truth” the Pardoner and his relics actually are.

This is an invented character, only “alive” through the generative power of language as it is read and imagined by real people. Thus the descriptions of the simulacra he carries are only textual images. However, the power and the danger of the Pardoner’s fiction, and the fiction about the Pardoner, is that it contains the suggestion of something that could actually happen. As mentioned above, because the “real” saints’ relics pilgrims could offer to were

42 Or, conversely, if both the indulgence and the penance are inauthentic.

43 Storm, 814.

44 Baudrillard, 3.

enshrined long before Chaucer's time, and probably without a large lay audience present to establish their veracity, the relics pilgrims traveled to see might only be "real" because they were believed to be. Chaucer has offered the suggestion to his fourteenth century audience that relics could be fictions, and he has done so in a fictional work. The fact that the Pardoner and his misdeeds exist in a text means they have nothing solid as their base; they are fictional fictions and purely generative, as they have the power to create in the minds of Chaucer's readers the idea that the realities outside of this fictional model might actually be fictions as well.

While he does not necessarily contribute to the theological doubt the Pardoner's practices raise, Chaucer's existence within the *Canterbury Tales* as a character adds a final layer of complexity to the hyperreality of the *Tales* themselves. As the Pilgrim Chaucer, the voice of the narrator through whom all our readings are funneled, Chaucer offers a version of himself that can neither be trusted nor ignored. As he relates his portrait of the Pardoner in the *General Prologue*, the Pilgrim Chaucer reveals the Pardoner's secret before the Pardoner has a chance to do so himself. Thus we as readers never have the opportunity to be fooled by the Pardoner's claims, though we must ask whether the Pilgrim Chaucer has.

Not only do some of the Pilgrim Chaucer's observations seem at once naïve and impartial, but the *Tales* as a whole, and therefore the portraits in the *General Prologue*, are retrospective for the narrating character. He relates his observations only after he has had the opportunity to write them down, and therefore we cannot know whether the Pilgrim Chaucer recognized the Pardoner's equipment as fake before being told or not.⁴⁵ If our narrator's authority is uncertain, we know one of two things may be true. On one hand, Chaucer's lack of authority means the Pardoner's relics are truly

45 See the "General Prologue," where Chaucer promises to tell his observations only after "hadde I spoken with hem everichon," and that he will provide portraits of his fellows "whil I have tyme and space, / Er that I ferther in this tale pace" (31, 35-36). His references to reading and turning pages also indicate his reflections are being written down at some distance from the action they depict ("The Miller's Tale," 3176-77, "The Retraction").

simulacral: capable of fooling anyone and therefore potentially upending all trust in the practice. On the other, it means the Pardoner is such a good liar that the Pilgrim Chaucer believes—or gives no indication he does not believe—everything the Pardoner says. That would raise the possibility that the Pardoner is not successful in his deception, that he does not reap the quantities of profit he claims, and that perhaps he always meets the kind of violence and rejection he receives from the Host. Like relics, we cannot know which is true unless we are told directly, and even then we still must depend on the credibility of the teller to decide whether this “truth” is valid.

That we cannot know for sure which of these scenarios is true for Chaucer’s characters, and that this injection of an unreliable narrator identical in name to the poet himself has the potential to confuse what is real with what is fictional, makes the *Canterbury Tales* as a project a journey into the hyperreal. The portraits Chaucer offers range from specific to stereotypical: the existence of a real innkeeper named Harry Bailley with a hostelry in Southwark in the same company as a monk who exemplifies all the negative characteristics critiqued about the vocation muddies the borders of the picture we are offered.⁴⁶ Is it intended to represent the society that was, complete with caricatures of “real” people, or is it intended to critique and parody that society by describing corruption and virtue at extremes that may never have existed? What results is a hyperreality: a fiction almost more real than reality, inhabited by larger-than-life characters who replace our perception of their extra-textual referents and therefore have as much, if not more, influence over our understanding than the real people. After reading this Pardoner, all Pardoners become suspect, just as all relics and indulgences might also lose their veracity after hearing how easily the Pardoner has replaced them with simulacra.

46 Benson, 853 (Note to line 4358).

Though his motives are purely selfish, driven by a desire for material gain, Chaucer's Pardoner and his fake relics have the capacity to create ripples throughout the framework of medieval Christian society. Though he admits his collection is made up of fakes in his prologue, the Pardoner's ability to effectively mask them as true sacred objects which are believed in and treated as true by his indulgence-seeking customers marks them not as parodies or imitations, but as simulacra. Using Baudrillard's definition to explain how the Pardoner's relics operate within his fictional society not only helps us understand the intricacies of the idea of simulation, but reveals a very real danger of fiction Chaucer seems to highlight in his presentation of this character: even a simulation can have a lasting impact on a society, because even the suggestion of a fiction within a fiction can be adopted and believed in the "real" world.

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Chaucer as Pilgrim

From the Ellesmere Manuscript, Huntington Library

**Midwives as Agents of Social Control:
Ecclesiastical and Municipal Regulation of Midwifery
in the Late Middle Ages**

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Regulation of Midwifery in the Late Middle Ages was the result of both the trend toward supervisory social and institutional control and also the harnessing of midwives as agents of that control. This paper examines the procedure of ecclesiastical and municipal regulation through oaths and licensure, arguing that midwives were able to gain agency and autonomy, as well as protection, by occupying a liminal role between the private world of the birthing chamber and the public world of the witness stand. They were therefore vital to both sides of the process of regulation.

In the Late Middle Ages both the Church and the State engaged in an extensive and sustained attempt to regularize and control behavior of all kinds. This regulation included ecclesiastical and municipal efforts to monitor medicine and medical practitioners, including midwives, and manifested itself as oaths and licensure. The control that women exercised over their own bodies had for centuries been a potential threat to institutional and patriarchal society. A skilled female medical practitioner threatened male control over both medicinal practice and women's bodies and souls. But both the ecclesiastical and the municipal corporate institutions were clearly conflicted. Rather than the oft-claimed argument that midwifery regulation occurred as a result of midwives' ignorance and lack of skill, both ecclesiastical and secular authorities in fact used midwives to their advantage to harness the "tremendous social power of medicine".¹ Medicine, and especially childbirth, became

¹ Michael Solomon, "Women Healers and the Power to Disease in Late Medieval Spain" in *Women Healers and Physicians*, ed. Lilian Furst (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 81. I agree with that argument and believe it to be true for midwives as well as other medical practitioners.

a locus of the struggles between Church and State for authority and control. These institutions saw this control as a fruitful way to modify societal expectations about healing, women, and the law. It culminated in an institutional standardization of medicinal practice and empirical practitioners. Ultimately, regulation was part of a widespread manipulation of authority by both of these bodies.

While regulation in general argues for restriction of agency and control over practice, a reciprocity existed between the midwives and these authorities. In what was a codependent relationship between midwives and these institutions, both players benefitted. Ecclesiastical and municipal authorities each recognized that they could rely on midwives as representatives, both in the birthing chamber and on the witness stand. Midwives preserved the life of the mothers and children, and both groups agreed that they should preserve the life of a baby over a dying mother. They both recognized that emergency baptism was a vital responsibility for the midwife as well. And they both saw midwives as agents who could supervise and place social pressure to conform to religious and secular mandates on other women, both mothers and other practitioners. Midwives recognized the advantage of this reciprocal relationship as well. They were potentially vulnerable as those who negotiated between “female” and “male” spaces and who often presided alone over the vagaries of childbirth. They could be blamed for a negative outcome, or accused of malfeasance. It was in the midwives’ best interest, therefore, to carve out a niche for themselves as agents of both ecclesiastical and municipal officials. As midwives became limited in some ways, therefore, their agency, increased. Midwives became important tools of ecclesiastical authorities.

Institutional competition in the late medieval period allowed for spaces for midwives to assert their own autonomy and agency as each of these bodies vied for their assistance. Midwifery regulation was one aspect of the institution’s attempts to maintain its autonomy

against the secular powers of the cities and the State.² References to midwives in French ecclesiastical court records, especially the *Registre de causes* from the archdeaconry of Brie, 1499-1504 indicate that “midwives were recognized practitioners but under the regulation of local church authorities and sometimes at odds with their communities.”³

Ecclesiastical authorities wanted to gain control over childbirth because they needed midwives to help safeguard the souls of the children they delivered; they were present at childbirth and the priests generally were not. The Catholic Church used midwives to direct and control the world to which they were not privy. But while the Church officially condemned certain birthing and healing practices, such as the use of charms, incantations and what could be construed as *maleficium*, it unofficially condoned midwives if they acted correctly as religious agents. This paper illustrates the ways in which ecclesiastical and secular authorities imposed regulations upon midwives through baptism, edicts and oaths, but also allowed room for them to assert their own autonomy and agency.

The Church viewed power over the sacrament of baptism as one of the most important. The salvation of the child, both physically and spiritually, depended on the midwife. Midwives were trained to act in the priest’s place and perform emergency baptisms. Twelfth-century canon law determined that anyone could perform an emergency baptism in order to save the child’s soul, even a lay person or a woman. Thus, in this area midwives were afforded more rather than less authority. None of the many edicts regulating the practice of midwives was concerned with preserving the life of the mother, but rather with saving the child’s life long enough for it to be baptized. If the death of the baby was imminent the midwife was to baptize it in the name of the ecclesiastical authorities. There is some

2 Tiffany D. Vann Sprecher and Ruth Mazo Karras, “The Midwife and the Church: Ecclesiastical Regulation of Midwives in Brie, 1499-1504”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2011), 85, 171-192, 172.

3 Vann Sprecher and Karras, “Ecclesiastical Regulation”, 85, 171-192, 172.

evidence that the Archbishop of Canterbury called upon midwives to baptize as early as the seventh century.⁴ The *Liber poenitentialis of Theodore* says, “The woman may not presume to baptize except when compelled by extreme necessity.”⁵ We certainly know that in England baptism by midwives dates back to the thirteenth century. The Council of Canterbury in 1236 instructed midwives to prepare water for emergency baptism.⁶

The Church Council of Cologne in 1310 specified the procedure that a midwife must follow in an emergency baptism.

If the mother dies during childbirth and if the infant presents its head outside the womb of the mother, the midwife must throw water on the infant’s head and say: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, etc.” The infant is thus baptized... If the infant does not present its head or another body part, and it is not possible altogether to distinguish its sex, the midwife says: “Creature of God, I baptize you,” etc.⁷

It is clear from this statute that medieval midwives would also baptize a baby they feared to be dead even if only part of it was outside the mother, particularly the head. The Council of Cologne also says in no uncertain terms that the midwife was responsible for baptizing the infant if it was still alive by performing a caesarean section on the dying mother.

4 Thomas R. Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1966), 53.

5 Forbes, *Midwife and the Witch*, 131. [*Mulier baptizare non praesumat, nisi cogenti necessitate maxima.*]

6 There is even a reference to an instrument like a pump, which could be filled with holy water, and the midwife could thus insert it into the vagina and squirt holy water into the uterus to baptize the fetus-in-utero. Jessica Butler, “Mediaeval midwifery,” *Nursing Times* (October 7, 1981), 1764.

7 C. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles d’après les Documents Originaux*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907-1921, v. 6, pt. I, no. 699, 620. [*Si la mère meurt pendant l’accouchement et si l’enfant présente la tête hors du sein de sa mère, la sage-femme doit jeter de l’eau sur la tête de l’enfant en disant: “Je te baptize au nom du Père, etc.” L’enfant est ainsi baptisé. . . Si l’enfant ne présente que la tête ou une autre partie du corps, sans qu’il soit possible toutefois de distinguer son sexe, la sage-femme dira: Creatura Dei, ego te baptize, etc.”]*

When a mother is dying in the childbed, [the midwife] should immediately attempt the caesarean operation, and baptize the baby, if it still lives. If one can presume that the child has died in the mother's womb, there is no reason to carry out the operation, and the mother and child should be interred in the cemetery.⁸

The following year, in 1311 a Paris synod decreed that a midwife trained in baptism should be appointed to each village so as to assure that babies would be afforded that spiritual protection.⁹

Besides concern with baptismal procedure, ecclesiastical authorities sought to assure that the correct language was used, since the efficacy and the power to save lay in the words spoken. In 1303 Robert Mannyng of Brunne, an English Gilbertine Canon, detailed the correct baptismal formula for midwives in his *Handlyng Synne*, a treatise of religious instruction in verse.

Mydwyves that with wymmen wone,
Alle be pyne, bhoueth hem kone; [All the pains, beith them can]
Prestes shult teche hem the ordynaunce,
What they shuld sey and do yn chaunce,
And examine her what she couthe,
What she shuld do, and seye with mouthe.¹⁰

This early case for clerical regulation of midwifery was extremely concerned with assuring the proper practice. He told a story of a midwife who “lost a chylde both soule and lyfe” because she used the wrong words in the baptism.¹¹

8 Hefele and Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, Livre vi, pt. 1, no. 699, 620. [*Lorsqu'une femme meurt en couches, il faut tenter sur-le-champ l'operation cesarienne, et baptize r l'enfant, s'il vit encore. S'il est mort, il faudra l'enterrer hors du cimetiere. Si on peut presumer que l'enfant est mort dans le sein de la mere, il n'y a pas lieu de faire l'operation et on enterrera la mere et l'enfant dans le cimetiere.*]

9 Vann Sprecher and Karras, “Ecclesiastical Regulation”, 173. Also, Kathryn Taglia, “Delivering a Christian Identity: Midwives in Northern French Synodal Legislation, c. 1200-1500”, in *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, eds. Peter Biller and Joseph Ziegler (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), 77-90, 83.

10 Frederick J. Furnivall, ed. “Robert of Brunne's “*Handlyng Synne*” (Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint, 1988), 300, lines 9613-9619. Harley MSS 273, 4657, 1701, and MS Bodley 415

11 Furnivall, ed., “Robert of Brunne's “*Handlyng Synne*,” 298.

Thys mydwylfe, whan the chylde was bore,
She helde hyt on here lappe before;
And whan she sawe that hyt shulde deye,
She bygan, loude for to crye,
And seyd, “God and synt Ione
Crysten the chylde, both flesshe and bone.”

The midwife, the priest soon discovered, had used the wrong procedure to baptize babies, and thus the mother and baby could not be buried in the church cemetery. When the priest realized that the midwife used the wrong words, baptizing the children in the name of God and St. John, he restricted her from baptizing future babies. In this case, the midwife could no longer be trusted to act as an ecclesiastical representative.

The Church was also concerned with midwives’ use of any prayers or incantations during a birth, even Christian ones. Midwives and laboring mothers alike used these prayers, either alone or with other pagan or Christian rituals to hasten delivery and protect mother and child. In a sixteenth-century oath taken at the direction of the Bishop of Chester midwives promised that they would not use any “witchcraft, charms, relics, or invocations to any Saint in the time of travail.”¹² The most common of all Christian prayers made in labor was one made to Saint Margaret of Antioch. According to legend, a moment before being beheaded she prayed to God for any woman in labor. In this prayer at the instruction of her midwife a woman would say: “A woman/big with child . . . humbly begs you that God may save her from peril . . . may the child come out/safe and sound, so that I can see him/baptized joyously.”¹³

Besides training in emergency baptism and regulation of practices, ecclesiastical and municipal governments alike began requiring midwives to take oaths and become licensed. While the

12 Forbes, *Midwife and the Witch*, 145.

13 Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Ceasarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), 8. [*femme grosse d’enfant qui a toy, . . . et humblement te requerroit, que Dieu de peril la gardast, . . . face mon enfant yssir hors sain et sauf, si que je le voye baptizé a bien et a joye.*]

ecclesiastical bureaucracy used midwives to perform spiritual care, they also began regulating their practices to that end. The Archbishop of Paris was ordered to confirm the selection of midwives in Meaux and to ensure their proper licensing at the bishop's court after examination and an oath-taking ceremony in 1365.¹⁴ Before taking the oath the midwife would receive instruction on baptism and would be examined by the local bishop. In this way Church officials could keep a close watch on what she was doing, both spiritually and medically.

Midwives could potentially be vulnerable to legal action if they did not engage in this reciprocal relationship and their role as ecclesiastical agents could also protect them from legal trouble. The pressure that the Church placed on midwives to save these babies' souls occasionally led to accusations that they secretly baptized stillborn babies, allowing them to enter heaven fraudulently. Under some legislation, a midwife could be killed for such an offense, especially if she delayed in performing a Caesarean section.¹⁵ Another accusation leveled against them was that in order to baptize babies before their deaths some midwives would "hasten" the death of the mother. Since in most cases the mother would have died anyway, it was not considered murder but it was condemned by ecclesiastical officials, who followed St. Paul's declaration in Romans 3:8 that "Evil should not be done that good may come". There was, however, a grave fear of children being baptized more than once. Catholic theology saw subsequent baptism as negating the first, and thus placing the child's soul in mortal danger. Church officials feared that a midwife would keep the baptism a secret under familial pressure to hold a public ceremony, thus jeopardizing the baby's salvation. In one case the priest instructed midwives to make sure they only perform the sacrament once.

14 Taglia, "Delivering a Christian Identity," 83-84.

15 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born*, 103.

Othere brynge hyt to the chyrche a-non,
And caste hyt in the font stone,
But folowe thow not the chylde twye [twice],
Lest afterwarde hyt do the nuye.[harm]¹⁶

Despite their role as agents, clerical officials periodically accused midwives of spiritual transgressions. The frequency with which clergy made these and other accusations against midwives meant that they often needed witnesses to testify on their behalf that they followed religious procedure, and were thus reliable ecclesiastical agents. As a result, many of the ecclesiastical regulations starting in the fifteenth century instructed midwives to call in another midwife or a priest for help in difficult births and to act as witnesses if necessary.¹⁷ In order to mitigate this vulnerability midwives offered testimony against others instead.

Ecclesiastical authorities sometimes pitted women against one another through testimony in an attempt to delimit female medical practice and reinforce patriarchal control. In perhaps the clearest indication of midwives' agency as representatives of institutional patriarchy, midwives practicing without a license could be "presented" to the Church court, where they could be fined or otherwise punished. They were used to testify both for and against women, both mothers and other midwives. Furthermore, as ecclesiastical agents, midwives were utilized to report and testify against other women, including not only midwives practicing without a license, but also those who may have given birth illegitimately, or used magic, either angelic or demonic, during childbirth. An ecclesiastical ordinance in Aachen from 1527 ordered that midwives report all "secret births," that is illegitimate births, to the court.

In this way the Church not only regulated and restricted midwives, but in fact all women. They were concerned that midwives would, out of a feeling of female solidarity, protect the

¹⁶ Myrc, *Instructions for a Parish Priest*, 4, lines 117-120. Line 117 is not in Douce MS 103.

¹⁷ Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born*, 68.

sins of their patients from the ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁸ The *Fabric Rolls of York Minster* from 1362 to 1550 also make several references to midwives presented to the court of the Archbishop for use of “incantations.” For example, “Agnes Marshall, alias Saunder, of Emeswell, exercising the office of midwife, does not use the obstetrical science, instead using incantations.”¹⁹ Another such presentation concerned a woman, perhaps a midwife, who prepared and distributed abortifacients to other women. “Agnes Hobson of Alne administers . . . apothecaries’ potions of her own preparation, wherewith she destroys the foetus in the womb and even the mother, and she has given the said potions to very many women. She has made expiation 2 July.”²⁰ These presentations are a clear indication of testimony, often of midwives, being used against other women to impose ecclesiastical control.

Despite the similarities in the push toward regulation by religious and secular authorities in the late medieval period, they sometimes had different goals. For municipal authorities the reciprocal relationship with midwives was one based on limitation. Municipal midwifery regulations did not begin formally until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By and large, ecclesiastical regulations placed more trust in the midwives’ abilities than the municipal regulations did. The cities’ regulations were more restrictive, focusing on what the midwives could not do, rather than instructing them in what they could do. The Church’s interest in baptism *in extremis* explains this dramatic, and perhaps otherwise inexplicable, divergence.

18 A very late municipal oath called the Midwives’ Act from 1694 in Edinburgh says: “I shall never conceall nor concur in concealling any birth, father or mother therof.” R.E. Wright-St Clair, “Early Essays at Regulating Midwives” *New Zealand Medical Journal* 63 (November 1964), 725.

19 J. Raine, ed., *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*; (Durham: G. Andrews, 1859), 260. [Agnes Marshall, alias Saunder, de Emeswell, exercet officium obstetricis, et non habet usum neque sciencian ostritricandi; utitur etiam incantationibus.]

20 “Ministrant poccula . . . sive medic Agneti Hobson de Alne servienti suae, per quod destruit puerum in utero suo et eciam mulierem, & dicta pocula ministravit aliis pqam-pluribus mulieribus. Purgavit se ij Jul.” *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, 273.

The first municipal ordinances involving the regulation and licensing of midwives occurred in Nuremberg in 1381 and in Regensburg in 1452. The first such ordinance in England took place in 1512, saying the midwives had to get a license from the local bishop.²¹ A large part of this certification, however, while ostensibly secular, also consisted of religious instruction in emergency baptism. These cities also used Church officials to give midwives religious instruction and examinations as part of the licensing process.²² But unlike ecclesiastical ordinances, they also subjected midwives to examination by a male physician in their medical knowledge practice. They had to pass an exam by the town physician in order to become sworn municipal midwives, paid by the city.²³ These regulations have certain things in common that the cities thought were necessary to make midwives swear to do in order to continue to act as agents of control. These common elements in municipal regulations provide insight into midwives' attitudes and practices, and also about what municipal governments were concerned at the end of the medieval period.

Regulation of all medical practitioners occurred in earnest throughout Europe since at least the twelfth century.²⁴ Everything from prostitution to bathing was regulated, particularly after the plague in the mid-fourteenth century caused concerns about proper hygiene. The licensure of midwives by the municipal governments was not, however, only due to a desire to control the midwives who had heretofore practiced relatively autonomously, but was also part of the larger regulation of society by the state. Before the twelfth century, female practitioners were allowed by the Church,

21 Hilary Bourdillon, *Women as Healers: A History of Women and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 24.

22 Gordon P. Elmeer, "The Regulation of German Midwives," 16.

23 Graham, *Eternal Eve*, 145.

24 During the plague of 1450 the French physician Jacques Des Pars called upon the magistrates of Paris to prohibit steam-baths as a way of halting the illness. By the sixteenth century these closures became official and systematic. Georges Vigarello, "Concepts of Cleanliness: The Water That Infiltrated," in *Social History of Western Civilization*, v. I, ed. Richard M. Golden (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 171.

courts of law, and male physicians to practice virtually all types of medicine, but at that time there was a push toward licensing all over Europe.²⁵ Men were also persecuted for practicing without a license at this time. In 1311 the University of Paris passed a statute addressed to both male and female surgeons that said: “No surgeon or apothecary, man or woman, shall undertake work for which he or she has not been licensed, or approved.”²⁶ Women were admitted to the Medical School at Salerno in the eleventh century as well, and students had to pass entrance examinations in order to be admitted to the program.²⁷ The paradox was that midwives had the practical knowledge that male physicians lacked, but doctors had prestige that was determined by the social order. What could have been a partnership, became, at best, an uneasy acceptance, and at worst a competition.

As early as 1417 sixteen midwives are mentioned in Nuremberg in the *Aemterbuchlein*, a list of all occupational groups required to take an annual oath before the town council.²⁸ These oaths all specify that midwives must promise to deliver all women

25 There have been many studies done on chronicling female practitioners, and determining the exact limits of their practice. Among the best is Monica H. Green’s “Women’s Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe,” in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M. Bennett. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). In it she argues that midwives were part of a much larger community of women practitioners and that there was not a clearly defined sexual division of labor in male and female spheres. Other studies have merely chronicled the female practitioners of certain areas, such as Robert Gottfried, “English Medical Practitioners, 1340-1530,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 58 (1984). He chronicles 2153 practitioners during that time, only twelve of whom were women, although this does not seem to be a reliable source. Of course, both point out that female practitioners are more difficult to find because they left fewer records. It is not my intention here to continue this particular aspect of study on female practitioners in the Middle Ages, but I am working within the assumption that medieval midwives were only one of many groups of healers, male and female, which included surgeons, physicians, barber surgeons, and apothecaries. All of these groups were subject to regulation from the fourteenth century on. Roger II of Sicily (1130-1154) required all to be examined, and in 1329 a court in Valencia, Spain, said all medical practitioners had to have a university degree, undergo an annual examination, and that all women were prohibited “under penalty of being whipped through the town.”

26 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born*, 99.

27 John Harrington, *The School of Salernum* (Rome: Edizioni Saturnia, 1953), 15.

28 Biller, “Childbirth in the Middle Ages,” 43.

regardless of their ability to pay: “from now on every woman who gives birth, whether rich or poor, [is] to be supplied with a midwife and to be neglected in no way.”²⁹ A fifteenth-century oath from Basel also established that midwives must go to all women day or night, rich or poor.³⁰ Jews were the exception to this rule: “only Jewish women they shall not come to.”³¹ Midwives also had to promise not to leave one woman in labor in order to deliver another who had more money: “And no midwife shall go away from the woman to whom she has been summoned, even if a richer one who has the money to pay, or another woman for whom she would prefer to work has sent for her, until she is completely finished.”³² Because they were paid city employees, midwives were not allowed to become “rich” by attending to only wealthy women. Despite the fact that it limited their earning capacity, however, it was still in midwives’ own interest to work as municipal employees.

There may have also been some “sworn” midwives in fourteenth-century Paris, Rouen, and Rheims. Although the earliest recorded national statute ordering them to become so in France occurred in 1560, municipal records from Lille indicate the existence of oaths, exams, licensure, and apprenticeship, and in the *Registre aux memoires* from 1460.³³ Catherine Lemersne, the wife of a baker,

29 Elseuise Haberling, *Beitrage zur Geschichte des Hebammenstandes* (Berlin: Elwin Straude, Berlangsbuchhandlung, 1940), 107. Text of the Regensburg Midwife Ordinances from 1452. [*Sölchs zu fürfomen, und darvortten daz furan ain iede geperende fraw Reich oder Urm, mit hebammen alhie verforgt und In nichte verwarloft würden*]

30 Elmeer, “The Regulation of German Midwifery,” 17.

31 Regensburg, 1452. [*zu kainer Jüdenn sullen sn nicht kommen*] Haberling, *Beitrage zir Geschichte*, 107. Jewish women almost certainly had Jewish midwives. Jews likely served as other practitioners as well, although an edict of Pope Sixtus IV (1474-1484) confirmed a law of the College of Physicians of Rome forbidding any unqualified man or woman, Christian or Jewish, to treat the human body, either medically or surgically. Belota the Jewess was brought before the masters of the Faculty of Medicine in the fourteenth century for practicing without a license, just like Jacoba Felicie. A. L. Wyman, “The Surgeoness: The Female Practitioner of Surgery 1400-1800,” *Medical History* (1984): no. 28, 25.

32 Regensburg, [*Und sol kain hebamm von der frawn geen dohin si gesodert komen ist, ob ain Reichere du paz zulonen hat, oder ain anndre der sn lieber dienen wolt, nach ir schichtte Solanng bis sn ganz verttig sindt.*] Haberling, *Beitrage zur Geschichte*, 107.

33 Peter Biller, “Childbirth in the Middle Ages,” 43. Richard L. Petrelli, “The Regulation

was licensed by city magistrates after they were informed by the examining doctor that she had passed his exam. In addition, in 1472 Agnes LeClerc, wife of an old-clothesman, was allowed to take the midwifery oath on the basis of her own statements regarding her abilities and on those of several women who said she had “aided [pregnant women] on several occasions which provided evidence of her apparent ability and diligence.”³⁴

As in the ecclesiastical realm, we also see municipal authorities using midwives to act as agents to police the craft by turning in unlicensed midwives. These first formal midwife oaths in Germany included a promise to bring any woman found delivering without a license to the board of supervisors.³⁵ In 1463 the city council instituted the office of the *Ehrbaren Frauen*, women from the upper class given responsibility to oversee and control the midwives, assigning them to indigent mothers, and disciplining them if they were not following the midwives’ oath.³⁶ These *Ehrbare Frauen*, or “noble wives,” were knowledgeable and skilled in gynecology and obstetrics, and were to examine the midwives’ medical knowledge and practices in order to license them. These “wives” did not deliver children themselves, but made an annual report to the city council noting any problems with the practitioners. They did not, then, take over the midwives’ medical function, but rather served as representatives of the cities in the public and legal spheres.³⁷ The

of French Midwifery during the Ancien Regime,” 276. Biller writes that we see regulations in fourteenth century Paris. I cannot confirm that. Petrelli argues that it isn’t until the mid-sixteenth century that we see them, with which I am inclined to agree.

34 E. Leclair, *Un chapitre de l’histoire de la chirurgie a Lille* (Lille, [n. p.], 1910), 7. Petrelli, “Regulation of French Midwifery,” 281.

35 Edward Shorter, *Women’s Bodies: A Social History of Women’s Encounter with Health, Ill-Health, and Medicine* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 41.

36 Merry Wiesner, “Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study,” in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, edited by Barbara Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 96.

37 Merry E. Wiesner, “The midwives of south Germany and the public/private dichotomy,” in *The Art of Midwifery in Europe*, ed. Hilary Marland (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 81. In this thorough article, Wiesner argues that the regulation of German midwives in the Early Modern period illustrates the dichotomy between public and private, as well as class divisions between midwives and physicians. She notes, then, that midwives were expected to play a public role in regulation, as well as baptism and court testimony. Also, Elmeer, “Regulation of German Midwifery,” 19.

focus on certification creates a desire in these women to seek quality control and uniformity in the field. In Regensburg midwives had to promise to bring any woman they found doing unlawful deliveries, probably referring to deliveries without a license, before this female board of supervisors: “and whenever they notice that a midwife not sworn in has been with a birthing woman they shall take the child away from her, and they shall bring this midwife in lieu of the woman who is in her care to a hearing, [to find out] whether she is knowledgeable, or whether she wants to take it up.”³⁸

Midwives were also required to report all illegitimate births with the names of the father and the mother and the outcome of all legitimate births. The cities then, like the Church, attempted to get midwives to act as informants and agents of moral propriety. Town councils desired to control all activity, including some of the most personal events of people’s lives. Midwives were also required to report all miscarriages and were not permitted to bury a dead child without the knowledge and permission of the municipal authorities.³⁹ This order is similar to what we see in ecclesiastical ordinances, to assure that midwives were not using the babies’ bodies for witchcraft or some other surreptitious reason.

Municipal ordinances also restricted medical practice and the ability of midwives to deal with dead mothers and babies. According to the regulations of Heilbronn, if the mother died during or shortly after the delivery, she could not be buried before the third day, perhaps to assure the midwife and authorities that she was really dead. The midwife must make a report of the burial to the authorities. Furthermore, midwives there also may not dismember a dead child in *utero* without the consent of a physician, or pronounce a woman dead without first calling one.⁴⁰ We also are told premature

38 Regensburg, [*daz ain ungesworne Hebamm, wen einer gepernden frawn gewesen ist der mugent sn daz kindt nemen, und sullen deselben Hebamen pringen sür dn frawn dn ob in sindt, zu einem verhören, ob sn zu sölchem etwaz künne, oder sich darumb annemen welle.*] Haberling, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 107.

39 Elmeer, “The Regulation of German Midwifery,” 22.

40 Elmeer, “Regulation of German Midwifery,” 30.

babies must be examined by a physician, as well as a child with a physical deformity or problem. Thus institutional supervision was imposed upon these agents.

In a clear mechanism by which midwives should observe and inform on one another, the Regensburg city council issued an edict that in the case of a difficult birth midwives were to call another midwife or, if necessary, a third or fourth to assist them. They all had to be sworn midwives, and in the case that they are “with pregnant women and none can be sent to her, then she shall ask for other honorable women who see, hear, and bear witness that nothing has been neglected.”⁴¹ According to the ordinance these honorable women’s recommendations should be followed, and they should note the hardworking midwives who should be compensated, and the “careless” ones who should be punished “according to her guilt.”⁴² These situations where midwives acted as institutional agents to implicate another begs the question: Is this self-regulation, or external control? Because their agency is exercised on behalf of the cities, this seems to be a case of control imposed from outside. However, contextual factors determined the mechanism of control and the amount of autonomy midwives were able to maintain.

The regulation of medieval midwives was a change, but not for the sole purpose of circumscribing or limiting their power. Rather, as part of a larger trend toward institutional control, midwives were used as envoys of the Church and State. Restrictions placed on midwives in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries generally were not based on a desire to push them out of the field, but rather to

41 Regensburg, *[wäre aber all Hebammen pen tragenden frawn, daz man Ir kaine habn mocht Erst mag dn Hebamm ander erberg frawn zu Ir voder die sehn, hörn und Seudnisz gen daz do nichts verwarlost sen.]* Haberling, *Beitrage zur Geschichte*, 108. About a century later the Regensburg ordinance was revised to say that the midwife who was called first should keep her full pay, and not have to give any of it to any other midwives who may have been called.

42 Regensburg, *[und der unbesichtigen verwarlosen strass nach irm verschulden]*, Haberling, *Beitrage zur Geschichte*, 108.

monitor and direct their practices. But the Church also granted new rights to midwives, including the most important of sacraments, baptism. In the same vein, cities relied on them to police, supervise, and testify against each other as experts, just as they did in cases of impotence and paternity. Thus, it would seem that medieval midwives were not being regulated because they were ignorant, unskilled, and indifferent, but rather because they were capable and powerful and continued to occupy a liminal role between trusted confident and moral authority, and between medical practitioner and public official. They were therefore on both sides of the process of regulation and manipulation of authority.

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A woman giving birth on a birth chair
Engraving from *Der Rosengarten* (1513) by Eucharius Rösslin

Approaches to the Atonement in the Mystery Plays

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The English Corpus Christi plays were a vibrant expression of late medieval Christianity, but they did not survive the Reformation. Many Protestant reformers opposed religious drama altogether, but there were some attempts by reformers to edit the plays and recast them in a Protestant mold, attempts which were ultimately unsuccessful. This paper examines one such attempt and finds that the problem went far beyond obvious references to, and representations of, specifically Catholic beliefs. Focusing on representations of the Atonement in the York and Towneley plays, I found at least four distinct theological approaches to this central concept of Christian theology, approaches not only found side by side, but interwoven. This theological eclecticism may have increased the plays' didactic effectiveness, appealing to a diverse audience, but it also sealed their fate at a time of intense focus on doctrinal orthodoxy.

In 1568, the town council of York sent the text of their Creed play to Matthew Hutton, Dean of York Cathedral, asking him for revisions to satisfy the the Elizabethan reform of the church.¹ Each year, the council would deliberate whether it would hold such a play, either Corpus Christi, Creed, or Paternoster.² The text of the play York's council sent does not survive, but in a letter, Dean Hutton expressed his conclusion that there was no way to revise the play that would allow it to be performed. Offensive elements would be near-impossible to root out: "yf they shuld either be altogether cancelled, or altered into other matter, the whole drift of the play should be altered, and therefore I dare not put my pen to it."³ The town council decided not only to cancel the Creed play, but to not

1 Clifford Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 143.

2 Richard Beadle, "The York cycle," in Beadle, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, 93.

3 Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, eds., *Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 353-4.

stage any play at all. The following year, the year of the Northern Rebellion, Dean Hutton, now acting as administrator of the diocese during an archiepiscopal vacancy, suppressed the Corpus Christi play, as well.⁴

The injunction was meant to be taken seriously in the archdiocese. In 1575 the Lord Mayor of Chester was summoned to London to answer for allowing the “popish plaies of Chester to be playd” in spite of the injunction from the archdiocese of York. In 1576, the attack on Corpus Christi plays was repeated in Wakefield, thought to be the performance location of the Towneley mystery plays. For Wakefield an ecclesiastical commission named a list of prohibited dramatic depictions: “God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, or the administration of either the Sacrament of baptism or of the Lord’s Supper . . . or anything which [would lead] to the maintenance of superstition and idolatry” and anything else running afoul of laws civil and divine. The list was so encompassing, and at the same time so vague, that it effectively ruled out any Corpus Christi play.⁵

It would be simple enough to attribute the demise of such plays during the English Reformation to their obvious references to Catholic beliefs, such as the seven sacraments.⁶ Nevertheless, Dean Hutton’s frustrated attempt to revise the play in accord with Reformed theology suggest that the problem was more involved than expurgating the occasional offensive passage, or even removing

4 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 143.

5 Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages*, v. 1 (New York: Columbia UP, 1959), 115-16; Peter Meredith, “The Towneley Pageants,” in Beadle and Fletcher, *The Cambridge Guide to Medieval English Theatre*, 162; James H. Forse, “Pleasing the Queen but Preserving Our Past: Cheshire and Lincolnshire Attempt to Continue Their Cycle Plays and Satisfy Elizabeth’s Injunctions,” *Popular Culture Review*, 18 (2007), 105; Lawrence M. Clopper, ed., *Records of Early English Drama. Chester* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 97, 104, 109.

6 There is, for instance, evidence in the Towneley manuscript of an attempt to revise the *John the Baptist* play by deleting a reference to the seven sacraments. Meredith, “The Towneley Pageants,” 162. Authorities in Chester also sought to revise their cycle by purging “popish” plays and references. See Forse, “Pleasing the Queen,” 104-05.

individual plays from the York mystery play cycle, such as *The Assumption of the Virgin* or *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Rather, objections by reformers from the Lollards to Luther suggest that it was the mystery plays' theological eclecticism that ultimately sealed their doom at a time when points of doctrine had become the focal point of civil war and religious persecution.

A focus on presentations of the Atonement in the York and Towneley mystery plays sheds light on the problem. Here, in the *Crucifixion* and *Harrowing of Hell* plays, one can detect every major theological explanation of the Atonement, side by side, and combined in so ingenious a manner it would resist any reformer's attempt to impose theological uniformity. And yet it is this plurality of theological approaches that probably would have broadened the appeal of the plays and increased their didactic effectiveness.

Atonement as Ransom

The mystery plays abound in explanations of the Atonement as an act of ransom. In the Towneley plays, thought to be from the mid-sixteenth century,⁷ Christ, nailed to the cross, explains to the audience the significance of this act:

Gyltles thus am I put to pyne [suffering],
Not for [my] mys, man, bot for thyne;
Thus am I rent on rode,
For I that tresoure wold not tyne [lose],
That I markyd and made for myne;
Thus by [buy] I Adam blode....
Bot with my flesh and blode...
My brethere that I com for to by...⁸

In the same play, John tells Mary at the foot of the cross of Christ "with his dede raunsom to make."⁹ In the York *Crucifixion*

7 Individual plays, however, seem to have been staged earlier, and there is clear borrowing from the York plays. Meridith, "The Towneley Pageants," 155-6.

8 Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, ed., *The Towneley Plays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 295-6 (23.276-86). Play number and lines hereafter given in parentheses. All bracketed words translating Middle English come from the glossary of this edition.

9 Steven and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 298 (23.360).

play, probably from 1422,¹⁰ Christ addresses his Father:

Almyghty God, my fadir free,
Pou bade þat I schulde buxsome [obedient] be
For Adam plight for to be pyned [tormented].
Here to dede I obblisshe [pledge] me
For þat synne for to saue mankynde.¹¹

In the York *Death of Christ* play, Christ explains the significance of his death to Pilate:

For thy misse [sin] amendis will I make.
My bake for to bende here I bide,
Pis teene [affliction] for this trespass I take.¹²

The idea of a universal ransom is one of the oldest approaches to the Atonement, stemming from the idea of spiritual jurisdiction: through the trickery of the devil, humanity had become his subjects, slaves to sin. Christ, however, was free of sin; therefore the devil stepped outside his jurisdiction when Christ was crucified. In punishing the innocent, the devil lost jurisdiction over humanity, and Christ could rightfully assume this jurisdiction and restore humanity to its original state. This approach preserved the immutability of God, “which would be compromised if the ransoming death of Christ were thought of as changing God’s mind or as appeasing his bloodthirsty demand for revenge.”¹³

Richard Southern has pointed out the paramount role of justice in this approach, a popular one in the medieval era. It satisfied the need for justice in the universe, and it emphasized Christ’s authority “to lay down laws for those whom he would redeem. Further, it

10 Beadle, “The York cycle,” 100.

11 Richard Beadle, ed., *The York Plays* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, 1982), 316 (35.49-54). All bracketed words translating Middle English come from the glossary of this edition.

12 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 326 (36.122-24).

13 Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 138.

recognized the cosmic scale of Man's fall: he had fallen, after all, to the greatest enemy of God, and the recognition of the Devil's ensuing rights gave a certain dignity to the sinner, if not to sin."¹⁴

The York *Harrowing of Hell* play, which the Towneley text follows closely, provides support for the idea of the Atonement as a legal transaction. When Christ confronts the devil, the latter objects—"Nowe sen þe liste allege þe lawes" [Now since it pleases you to set forth the laws]—and argues that those in Hell deserve to be there.¹⁵ At the end of much legal disputation, replete with references to precedent, Satan requests that at least some souls be left in Hell, and Christ grants him those who break the new law: "And all þat liste noght to lere [learn] my lawe/ Pat I haue lefte in lande nowe newe."¹⁶

It would appear, then, that there is ample justification for the judgment of Theodore K. Lerud that the mystery plays are dominated by legalistic notions of a ransom-price and satisfaction for sins.¹⁷ Yet alongside ransom theory, other approaches to the Atonement clamor for the attention of the listener, and this may have been deliberate. Not all audience-members may have been able to follow the nuances of Christ's legal case.

A Divine Deception?

Some medieval and modern theologians have pointed out that in ransom theory, God only appears to pay the debt, implying an element of deception. The devil, unaware of Christ's true nature until it was too late, "thinks he is a mere man and hence legally his prey. Christ, who is without guilt, thus is able to offer himself as

14 R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 208.

15 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 340 (37.277).

16 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 341 (37.313-14).

17 Theodore K. Lerud, *Social and Political Dimensions of the English Corpus Christi Drama* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 50.

a ransom for those who have waited in Limbo.”¹⁸ Some patristic writers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Isidore of Seville, subscribed to this interpretation. Inspired by the image from Job 41:1 of Leviathan caught on a hook, Peter Damian and other medieval theologians agreed.¹⁹

Gustaf Aulén, the Swedish theologian, insisted that deception-language in the patristic writers was merely symbolic; hence, the legal bent of their writings. “The essential idea which the legal language is intended to express is that God’s dealings even with the powers of evil have the character of ‘fair play.’”²⁰ Yet the presence of deception in the mystery plays is undeniable, and one wonders how the audience could not help but take it for literal truth. At their confrontation in the York *Harrowing of Hell*, Satan fails to recognize Christ:

Satan: Thy fadir knewe I wele be sight,
He was a write [carpenter] his mette [food] to
wynne,
And Marie me menys [I recall] þi modir hight—
Pe vttiremeste [furthest] ende of all þi kynne.
Who made þe be so mekill [great] of might?

Christ: Pou wikid feende, latte be thy dyne [din].
Mi fadir wonnys [dwells] in heuen on hight,
With blisse þat schall neuere blynne [end].
I am his awne sone,
His forward [promise] to fulfille,
And same [together] ay schall we wonne [win]
And sunder whan [whom] we woll.²¹

Lest one think that the devil is merely taunting the Son of God, Christ reveals that deception had been an integral part of God’s plan from the beginning:

18 Clifford Davidson, *From Creation to Doom: The York Cycle of Mystery Plays* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1984), 140.

19 Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 134-5.

20 Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Herbert (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), 54.

21 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 339 (37.229-40).

Satan: God sonne? Panne schulde þou be ful gladde,
 Aftir no catel [goods] neyd thowe crave!
 But þou has leued [lived] ay like a ladde [low-born
 person],
 And in sorowe as a symple knave.

Christ: Þat was for hartely loue [heartfelt love] I hadde
 Vnto mannis soule, it for to saue;
 And for to make þe mased [bewildered] and madde,
 And by þat resoune þus dewly to haue
Mi Godhede here, I hidde
In Marie modir myne,
For it schulde no3t be kidde [should not be known]
*To þe nor to none of thyne.*²²

To be sure, one finds echoes of deception-language even in Martin Luther, who wrote in his commentary on Galatians: “Nor did humanity conquer sin and death; but the hook that was concealed under the worm, at which the devil struck, conquered and devoured the devil, who was attempting to devour the worm.”²³ For Luther, however, this was an analogy that illustrated his teaching on the hidden God, a theological nuance likely to be lost in a play such as the *Harrowing of Hell*. One would be hard-pressed to interpret this scene as simple allegory. It is the climax of the battle for the souls of fallen humanity and the point at which the true work of the Atonement is revealed to the devil.

Aulén objected strongly to any idea of the devil being deceived, claiming that “the application of any such thought to God is at least dangerous, and that the realistic expressions of it, if taken literally, are absurd.”²⁴ Yet the York and Towneley *Harrowing of Hell* plays are exactly that: realistic depictions of the devil being deceived by God, explained by Christ himself. Some medieval theologians, however, objected not only to deception-talk but even to the implications of ransom theory.

22 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 339 (37.241-52). Italics mine.

23 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works (Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4)* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 267.

24 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 55.

Atonement as Satisfaction

In *Why God Became Man*, Anselm criticized the implications of ransom theory. If the devil is completely under God's power, he reasoned, deception is unnecessary, and one cannot speak of justice with the devil as one party to the agreement:

...Neither the devil nor man belongs to anyone but God....
What action did God need to take with... someone who was
his own, apart from punishing this bondsman [*servus*] of his
who had persuaded his fellow-bondsman to desert his master
and come over to join him...?²⁵

Although humanity deserved to be punished, Satan had no right to be the one to do it, since he was "impelled by the force of malice."²⁶ For Anselm, sin had created a distance between God and man that had little to do with the devil, and this distance could only be bridged by one both God and man, namely, Christ.

For all the legal disputation between Christ and the devil in the York and Towneley *Harrowing of Hell* plays, the sense of God's sovereignty over, not against, the devil is never entirely absent. After revealing his identity, Christ tells the devil that the souls in Hell were never truly the devil's at all: "Þai [They] were here with my wille./ And so schall þei fourthe wende."²⁷ In the Towneley play, the devil accuses Christ of being unkind and begs for clemency, but Christ addresses him in a manner evoking Anselm's lord and his *servus*:

Nay, tratur, thou shall won in wo [live in woe],
And till a stake I shall the bynde.²⁸

This was a fitting reply to one who, in the *Creation* play that opened the cycle, had dared to sit on God's throne, and whom God had cursed for leading mankind astray. One modern commentator

25 Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 272.

26 Anselm, *The Major Works*, 273.

27 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 341 (37.297-8).

28 Stevens and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 332 (25.327-8).

has argued that Anselm's theological influence is unmistakable in the Towneley *Creation* play's depiction of the angels' fall,²⁹ and it appears that his satisfaction theory of the Atonement was also an influence. The strongest element, however, may have been an approach better to dramatic depiction.

Christus Victor

A common motif in medieval imagery was of the Cross as banner: Christ's death on the cross was battle ending in the ultimate victory over the powers of evil.³⁰ It is this victory that brought about "a new relation, a relation of reconciliation, between God and the world."³¹ Represented poetically in *The Dream of the Rood* and hymns dating back to the sixth century, this approach envisions Christ as a warrior going into battle and triumphing over the powers of sin and death.³²

Even though this victory was won on the cross, the idea of Christ as warrior helped to explain, theologically, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which spoke of Christ descending into the lower regions of the earth (Eph. 4:9), as well as the Apostles' Creed ("He descended into hell"). Medieval theologians developed this into the idea of a harrowing, a divine assault on the underworld that freed all those unjustly held, before the Crucifixion, in the chains of Limbo.³³

In the *Harrowing of Hell* play, the audience would witness that battle. Satan, his lieutenant Beelzebub, and the entire satanic host, must "spar the yates" [gates] and "set the watches on the wall" as Christ leads an angelic army against the citadel of Hell.³⁴ The Son of Man demands entry, quoting Psalm 24:

29 Thomas J. Jambeck. "Anselm and the Fall of Lucifer in the Wakefield Creation Play," in *Faith Seeking Understanding: Learning and the Catholic Tradition: Selected Papers from the Symposium and Convocation Celebrating the Saint Anselm College Centennial*, ed. George C. Berthold (Manchester, NH: Saint Anselm College Press, 1991), 117-26.

30 Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 132.

31 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 5.

32 Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 132-3.

33 Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 154; Clifford, *From Creation to Doom*, 137-8. Those who make an appearance in the plays include Adam, Eve, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daneil, Simeon, and John the Baptist.

34 Stevens and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 327 (25.125, 126); nearly identical to Beadle, *The York Plays* 337 (37.139, 140).

Attolite portas, principes,
 Oppen vppe, 3e princes of paynes sere,
Et elavamini eternales,
 Youre yendles 3atis [gates] þat 3e haue here.³⁵

The battle in the *Harrowing of Hell* is not short by any means, and one can almost see the action as field reports come in. Beelzebub orders an underling to summon his demonic lords “to giffe þer counsaile in þis case.” Later, another demon exclaims, “Beholdes, oure baill is brokynne./ And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras,” as Limbo is lost.³⁶ In the York play, David triumphantly announces Christ in knightly terms:

Satan: What page is þere þat makes prees [commotion]
 And callis hym kyng of vs in fere [all together]?
David: I lered leuand, withouten lees [truly],
 He is a kyng of vertues clere,
 A lorde mekill of might
 And stronge in ilke a stoure [each battle]
 In batailes ferse [fierce] to fight
 And worthy to wynne honnoure.³⁷

This is clearly Christus Victor, and while the battle rages, Christ is interested in the sword, not the law. “In this battle... Christ is a knight whose cross may be thought of as his palfrey and whose goal is to release man’s soul from bondage to Death.”³⁸

In discussing the descent into Hell in his *Institutes*, John Calvin admitted that “there is no one of the fathers who does not mention [it] in his writings,” but this was only to be understood as Christ’s suffering on the Cross. Calvin argued that the descent into Hell, “although it is repeated by great authors, and even today is

35 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 336 (37.121-24); see also Stevens and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays* 326 (25.120).

36 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 336 (37.114); 338 (37.195-6).

37 Beadle, *The York Plays* 336 (37.125-32). A similar announcement is put in Daniel’s mouth in the Towneley play. Steves and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, 327 (37.133-36).

38 Davidson, *From Creation to Doom*, 139.

earnestly defended as true by many persons, still is nothing but a story. It is childish to enclose the souls of the dead in a prison. What need, then, for Christ's soul to go down there to release them?"³⁹ When Calvinist reformers objected to various "absurdities" in the Chester mystery plays in 1572, the entire harrowing of Hell came under fire, alongside such elements as transubstantiation, Purgatory, and the adoration of the Magi.⁴⁰ Chester's last performance of the plays came in 1575.⁴¹

Martin Luther, on the other hand, accepted the idea of a spiritual descent and devoted a sermon to discussing it. Noting that children were acting out the harrowing during Easter, Luther tacitly approved, provided "you depict, act out, sing, and recite the story in a very simple way and let it remain at that and not concern yourself with sublime and precise ideas about how it actually took place. For it did not happen in a physical manner."⁴² The descent into Hell was a mystery beyond human understanding, and grasping it might require poetic imagery of a harrowing in which the gates of Hell were broken.⁴³ Beyond that, however, the Christian should not go, lest he become lost in "complicated, useless questions," and by no means should he assert "that it happened physically, with a great display of splendor or with wooden placards and cloth banners, or that hell is a building made of wood or iron."⁴⁴ To do otherwise would earn mockery from the enemies of the faith and their "rotting wisdom."⁴⁵

39 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 513, 514.

40 David Mills, "'Some Precise Cittizins': Puritan Objections to Chester's Plays," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 29 (1998): 225-30.

41 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 50.

42 Martin Luther, "Torgau Sermon on Christ's Descent into Hell and the Resurrection," tr. Robert Kolb, in Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 246.

43 Luther, "Torgau Sermon," 249, 247.

44 Luther, "Torgau Sermon," 248, 247.

45 Luther, "Torgau Sermon," 249.

Luther's reservations do not leave much room for the harrowing in the mystery plays, with their explosions, furnaces, and spring-loaded gates, or for the demon's complaint, recalling Psalm 107, "Brosten are alle oure bandis of bras."⁴⁶ Might some in the audience of the *Harrowing of Hell* have taken it literally? The extent to which they did so must remain conjectural, but the power of the imagery in mystery plays was what reformers feared. The Lollards worried that that the rich raiment of biblical plays might "cause people to wrongly associate Christ and his apostles with wealth and to forget that they lived in poverty."⁴⁷ What Calvin saw as mere analogy or "story" and what Luther saw as symbolic could have been taken at face value by some members of the audience; hence Luther's concern that Christians not be criticized for their simplicity, for "the world still wants to be smart in the devil's name."⁴⁸ The difficulty of gauging what a person understood by an image, as opposed to the merely spoken word, was at the heart of the difficulty in revising the mystery plays to suit Reformation thinking. And yet there remains one more layer of theological accretions in the mystery plays' representations of the Atonement.

The Atonement as Moral Example

In another approach to the Atonement, the elements of Christ as victorious warrior, of the Crucifixion as a deception of the devil, or even of retributive justice were all absent or downplayed. To Abelard, the Passion was a means for God "to reveal his love to us or to convince us how much we ought to love him 'who spared not even his own Son' for us."⁴⁹ Christ is the ideal Man, and through his life and death, Aulén explains, God "sees a new and more hopeful view of humanity" and "therefore reconciles Himself with mankind."⁵⁰

46 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 338 (37.195-6). Psalm 107:16: "For he shatters the doors of bronze, and cuts in two the bars of iron." (NRSV)

47 Lerud, *Social and Political Dimensions*, 30.

48 Luther, "Torgau Sermon," 248.

49 Qtd. in Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 129.

50 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 137, 142, 141.

This approach would pick up steam after the Enlightenment with theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher.⁵¹

The Towneley *Resurrection* play, while continuing the idea of Christ buying humanity through his sacrifice, contains echoes of this idea of moral influence, as when Jesus recounts his wounds and then says:

All thise paynes wold I thole efte [suffer again]
And for the dy;
Here may thou se
That I luf the,
Man, faythfully....

If thou thy lyfe in syn haue led,
Mercy to ask be not adred;
The leste drope I for the bled
Myght clens the soyn [straightaway],
All the syn
The world [world] within
If thou had done....

*But luf [love] noght els, aske I of the,
And that thou fownde[try], fast [earnestly] syn to fle;
Pyne [take pains] the to lyf in charyté,
Both nyght and day,
Then in my blys
That neuer shall mys [fail]
Thou shall dwell ay [always].*⁵²

Here, God requires not retribution or satisfaction for sin; He asks for “nought else” but love and acts of charity. The Atonement marks a change in the spiritual life of humanity, a deepening of the soul’s consciousness of God and His love.⁵³

51 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 139.

52 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 344-5 (26.299-338).

53 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 136.

Late medieval Christianity in general became more focused on Christ's suffering, and the performers of the plays found ways to depict that suffering in visually arresting ways, including concealing a bladder of blood in the costume so that when Christ's side was pierced by the spear, blood would run down.⁵⁴ Clifford Davidson notes that "the plays absorb the affective religiosity of the time that depended so much on visualizing the suffering of the Savior, in part surely as a way of diminishing one's own suffering and anxiety."⁵⁵ While the vicarious nature of Christ's suffering in the plays is apparent, and "such imaginative and compassionate participation in the long-ago events of the Passion could paradoxically be of great comfort and ultimately of joy," one can oversimplify the matter.⁵⁶ In this emphasis on Christ as moral exemplar, humanity is no longer the passive subject of a cosmic war or ransom but is called by Christ, in Remigius of Auxerre's words, to "follow in the footsteps of his passion."⁵⁷ As Christ proclaims to the audience in the *Last Judgment* play:

Man, sore aught þe for to quake,
 Þis dredfull day þis sight to see,
All þis I suffered for þi sake—
 Say, man, what suffered þou for me?⁵⁸

A stronger, even more subjective sense of Christ's suffering did not necessarily lead to comfort and joy.

The Lollards, criticizing plays performed by friars that depicted the Passion, warned that images had the power to lead

54 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 159.

55 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 146.

56 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 167.

57 Qtd. in Pelikan, *Medieval Theology*, 127.

58 Beadle, *The York Plays*, 413 (47.273-6).

the beholder to place an undue emphasis on Christ's humanity.⁵⁹ Worse, the vicarious suffering of the audience member might come to be seen as meritorious; hence, the subjective or moral influence approach could be the most dangerous.

In a late-fourteenth century Lollard tract targeting "miraclis pleyinge," which would have included the mystery plays, the author voiced the concern that people paid more attention to such plays than to the preaching of the word of God, "and therfore thei seyen that siche pleyinge doith more good than the word of God whanne it is prechid to the puple."⁶⁰ In fact, one modern commentator has argued that the mystery plays may have been instituted, at least in part, in order to counter Lollardy.⁶¹

An Attempt to Revise?

Dean Hutton's task in 1568 was clearly not enviable. In looking over the text of the York Creed play, he perceived that more was at stake than obvious references to Catholic teachings:

...And as I finde manie thinges that I muche like because thantiquitie, so see I manie thinges, that I cannot allowe, because they be Disagreinge from the sinceritie of the gospel, the which thinges, yf they shuld either be altogether cancelled, or altered into other matter, the whole drift of the play should be altered, and therefore I dare not put my pen to it....suerlie mine advise shuld ne, that it shuld not be plaid[,] ffor thoghe it was plausible 40 yeares agoe, & wold now also of the ignorant sort be well liked; yet now in this happie time of the gospell, I knowe the learned will mislike it and how the state will heare with it I knowe not.⁶²

59 Lerud, *Social and Political Dimensions*, 26, 30; Lauren Lepow, *Enacting the Sacrament: Counter-Lollardy in the Towneley Cycle* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990), 26; see also, D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., "Quike bookis": the Corpus Christi drama and English children in the Middle Ages," in *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Josie P. Campbell (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State Univeristy Popular Press, 1986).

60 Qtd. in Lepow, *Enacting the Sacrament*, 27.

61 This is the argument of Lauren Lepow's book *Enacting the Sacrament*.

62 Johnston and Rogerson, *Records of Early English Drama*, 353-4.

Dean Hutton possessed a keen sense of the volatility of the political situation: staging controversial plays might precipitate violence as well as state censure. Hutton, who would later become archbishop himself, also had a sense of the power of drama to convey theological concepts. As Davidson points out, his remarks “are indicative of drama that had audience appeal beyond what could be delivered by a didactic presentation of doctrine alone.”⁶³ The “ignorant sort,” the unlettered masses, would like it, and even Dean Hutton admits his approval for “manie things,” but revising the play in line with Reformation religiosity would prove insurmountable. To strike out certain passages and change others would eventually change “the whole drift of the play.” Behind Dean Hutton’s reluctance to make just such an overhaul, one might detect a concern that the performance itself might be more difficult to rein in than the text, “and therefore I dare not put my pen to it.” Better that it not be played at all, as indeed it was not, the script itself disappearing soon after.⁶⁴

To understand the concerns of reformers such as Dean Hutton requires going beyond the surface doctrines of the mystery plays, to understand the ways in which “the whole drift of the play” would have to be changed. Revision could not guarantee that the individual viewer would distinguish properly between reality, symbol, and analogy. And if the audience could see the Atonement depicted or explained in so many different ways within the same play, the prospects for less central aspects of Christian theology did not look good.

One could try to escape this problem by arguing that these approaches to the Atonement were but superficially exclusive, more of a concern to churchmen versed in theological nuance than to the layman. But these various representations of Christ’s death on the

63 Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 104.

64 Although the content of the Creed play, remains in the realm of speculation, it appears to have been much lengthier than its name suggests, perhaps two-thirds the length of the entire Corpus Christi cycle, from Creation to Doom. It play may have ended with the Assumption and Coronation of Mary. See Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, 92-105.

Cross imply quite different things about God: a God who demands propitiation, a sacrifice beyond human capacity to satisfy, seems quite different from a God who responds to the subjective change in the human heart. A God who scrupulously attends to the rules of fair play, even when dealing with the devil, seems quite different from a God who re-captures humanity through a cosmic act of deception. One can see why would-be revisionists despaired of their task.

The question remains, then, what we are to make of such a rough-edged eclecticism of theological approaches to the Atonement. Did it represent a theologically confused mind in the “Wakefield Master” or the “York Realist,” the unknown authors of these plays? Perhaps, although that does not explain why, after 150 years, virtually the same play was pressed into service to serve Wakefield’s need for a Harrowing of Hell. Nor does it do justice to the artfulness of the plays: these men knew what they were about.

The most likely explanation for the theological eclecticism of the mystery plays is that it increased the plays’ didactic effectiveness. If the plays were too Catholic, it was also the case that they were too catholic, or universal. Multiple approaches to the Atonement perhaps satisfied the need for a total victory of Christ. The Son of God must have the most just and legally sound case ever conceived, but He and his angelic army must also be able to trounce the demonic forces in knightly combat. The devil’s cunning must be undone by a divine cunning capable of pulling off a deception on a cosmic scale, but it must be love, above all, that leads to Christ’s victory. Late medieval expressions of lay piety found ready reflection in the plays, while those viewers more in tune with “antiquity,” as Dean Hutton put it, could find something in the plays which resonated with them. The merchant in the audience might easily follow the legal wrangling and scrupulous concern for fairness; the young man could find a Christ “worthy to win honor,” storming Hell; while those of a more gentle nature could identify easily with the One who asked “nought else but love.”

By the end of the play cycle, Christ has beaten the devil in every possible way: he has overcome him through force, bested him in legal argument, deceived the great deceiver through superior cunning, and revealed that at no point did Satan ever leave the all-sovereign power of God in Christ. There was a unity here that may escape us today, but which evidently had the power to move the audience. To pick it apart and label each component helps us to grasp the immensity of the task faced by the likes of Dean Hutton, but it does not necessarily help to understand a popular tradition that consistently defies categorization. The mystery plays represent a vibrant religious tradition that gave life to Christian ideas and shaped them, a tradition, however, that could not and would not survive the “happie time of the gospell.”

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Towneley Cycle: Second Shepherds' Play Manuscript

Huntingdon Library MS HM1, fol. 38r

**Modernizing Matthew Paris: The Standards
and Practices of the First Printed Editions**

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*This article discusses the first printed editions of Mathew Paris's thirteenth-century chronicle, *Chronica Maiora*, arguing that these editions show a much higher level of editorial sophistication than has yet been recognized. Written between 1235 and 1259, the *Chronica Maiora* is one of the most extensive and detailed chronicles of medieval England; yet the work was not printed until 1571, as part of a series of historical publications overseen by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Although the text of Parker's edition has been almost universally criticized by scholars, this work suggests that he actually set a high editorial standard, especially by collating several manuscripts to produce his edition. His successor, William Wats, who republished Matthew Paris in 1640, went even further with his collations, adding at the end of his edition an appendix that detailed the differences among the seven manuscripts used. Wats was also one of the earliest editors to advertise his collations in his title, suggesting that he regarded his work as more scholarly than that of his contemporaries. Analyzing the editorial work of Parker and Wats can illuminate both book history and the history of printing: Parker's clear interest in preservation as one motive for his edition (an interest that supports the contention of Elizabeth Eisenstein that printing was a means of preserving texts); the use of one manuscript as a copy text in the printer's shop; and the intriguing joint publication of Wats's edition by two London publishers. Reassessing these editions and their editors, suggests that both the editors and their editions have been too readily dismissed.*

In 1571, the first printed edition of the chronicle of Matthew Paris was published in London, under the auspices of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Nearly seventy years later, in 1640, a second English edition was published, edited by William Wats, rector of St. Alban, London. These first two printed editions of Paris's chronicle in England were extensively critiqued by the two editors of the nineteenth-century Rolls Series editions, Frederic Madden

(1866-1869) and H.R. Luard (1872-1883).¹ Not all of their criticisms were unfounded: both early editions contain errors and unwanted interpolations. But we need not today dismiss Parker and Wats so cavalierly. Their editions were, for their time, careful and creditable, telling stories beyond the predictable one of substandard early-modern editing. They tell us about manuscript collecting and preservation through print; of editing consistent with the standards of the time; of compositors more skilled than previously thought; of extensive and early collation; and of collaborating printers.

Matthew Paris and the Printed Editions of His Works

(1571 and 1640)

Matthew Paris (1200-1259) spent his adult life as a monk at St. Albans Abbey. From roughly 1235 until his death, he was the historian of his abbey, continuing a chronicle of life at St. Albans in particular and England in general. Paris was preceded as chronicler by Roger of Wendover (whose work he altered and elaborated in places) and succeeded by a monk now thought to be William Rishanger. Paris's greatest work is undoubtedly his contribution to this chronicle that extends from creation to 1272 (the end of the reign of Henry III).² Paris's section is now known as the *Chronica Maiora*, although it was titled *Historia Major* by Parker and Wats. Paris also composed an abbreviated version of his portion of the great chronicle, now called *Historia Anglorum*, but was known to Parker and Wats as the *Historia Minor*.

Parker and Wats each printed a selected portion of the *Chronica Maiora*, beginning with the Norman Conquest in 1066

1 Parker's work was the first edition ever printed, but it was followed by two editions in Zurich (1589 and 1606). Wats's work was the second edition in England, and it was reprinted twice: once in Paris in 1644 and once in London in 1684 (Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, 1958), 154-5). Frederic Madden, ed, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum*, 3 volumes (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866-69) and H. .R. Luard, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Maiora*, 7 volumes (London: Longmans and Company, 1872-1883).

2 For more on the St. Albans School of history see V.H Galbraith, *Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris* (Glasgow: Jackson, Son and Company, 1944) and Galbraith, *St Albans Chronicle, 1406-1420* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

and ending shortly after the death of Henry III.³ In his edition, Wats also included three separate works by Matthew Paris, *The Lives of the Two Offas*, *The Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans*, and the *Book of Additions*, a collection of letters and documents that pertain to events in the *Chronica Maiora*.

With the 1571 edition, entitled *Matthæi Paris Monachi Albanensis Angli, Historia Maior, à Guilielmo Conquæstore, ad vltimum annum Henrici tertij*, Matthew Paris's *Chronica Maiora* was first brought into print. In addition to the selected text, Parker added an index and a preface. Matthew Parker was not explicitly credited as the editor, but the opening capital, in which the arms of Canterbury were shown, clearly indicated Parker's involvement.⁴ As Archbishop of Canterbury Parker had many other matters on his mind and although, as we will see, he had a strong hand in his edition, he did not prepare it alone. The final page was the colophon of Reginald Wolfe, official Latin printer of the Queen.

Parker collated several manuscripts to create his edition. In his preface, Parker stated, well aware of the scattered and distorted state of medieval manuscripts, that he had brought together as many codices of Matthew Paris's *Chronica Maiora* as he could find.⁵ Parker used the following manuscripts: Corpus Christi College Cambridge 26 (then belonging to Edward Aglionby of Balsall Temple, Warwickshire); Corpus Christi College Cambridge 16 (then belonging to Henry Sidney, Knight of the Garter and Lord Deputy of Ireland); Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B (then belonging to Sir William Cecil, Secretary of State); and British Library, Royal 14 C vii

3 In the printed editions, the dating is off by a year in the final years the text covers. Henry III's death, by our calendar, occurred in November 1272, but the printed text placed it in 1273.

4 Matthew Parker, ed, *Matthæi Paris Monachi Albanensis Angli, Historia Maior, à Guilielmo Conquæstore, ad vltimum annum Henrici tertij. Cum indice locupletissimo* (London, 1571), Ai(r). Hereafter cited as Parker.

5 Parker, *Præfatio*, †iijr; "mutilata & in multis locis misere & turpiter deprauata, quod ex variis collatis codicibus manifeste depræhenditur."

(then belonging to Henry, earl of Arundel). Parker also noted that he had “restored” the Sidney manuscript, using an unnamed exemplar to replace several mutilated folios. This exemplar was probably owned by John Stow and is now Cotton Nero D.V (see Table 1).⁶

Table 1: Manuscripts used by Parker and Wats for the *Chronica Maiora*

Modern Designation	Parker’s Designation	Wats’s Designation
CCCC 26	Aglionby	Corpus Christi <i>librum</i>
CCCC 16	Sidney	Corpus Christi <i>librum</i>
Cotton Nero D.V.	Stow	Cotton
Royal 14 C vii	Arundel	Chronicon, King’s Library
Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B	Cecil	Used Seldon’s transcript
Cotton Otho B.V.	---	Wendover
Cotton Vitellius D.II	---	Minor (Lambarde’s transcription)

Although each of these manuscripts contains part of the years 1066-1272 excerpted by Parker, none contains the entire period (see Figure 1). Madden, who has examined all of the manuscripts, posited Parker’s collations as follows: Prologue and 1066 from Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B; 1067 to 1188 from CCCC 26, collated from 1089 to 1092 with Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B and Cotton Nero D.V.; part of 1092 to 1253 from CCCC 16; and the rest from Royal 14 C vii.⁷ This is incorrect, for CCCC 16 commences in 1189. More than likely Parker collated CCCC 26, Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B, and Cotton Nero D.V. for the years 1066 to 1188, and then collated Nero D.V. and CCCC 16 manuscripts for the years 1189-1253. The final section of the book, from 1254 to Henry’s death, must have come from Royal 14 C vii, as it alone covers these years (see Figure 2).

6 Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 16 [accessed online <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home> (19 March 2008)], 236r; Parker, *Præfatio*, †iijv. See Frederic Madden, ed, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum*, v. I, xxxi, lxiv on the Stow exemplar.

7 Parker, *Præfatio*, †iijr-†iijr; Madden, I, xxxiii.

Figure 1: The Manuscripts Used by Matthew Parker

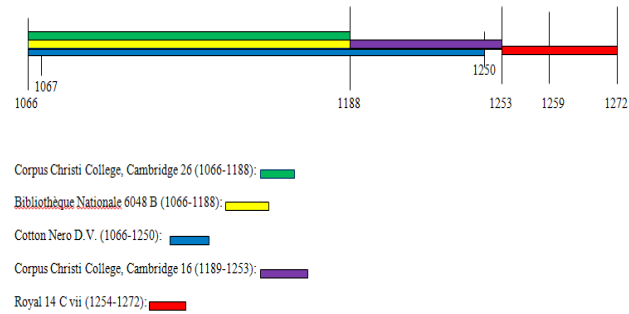
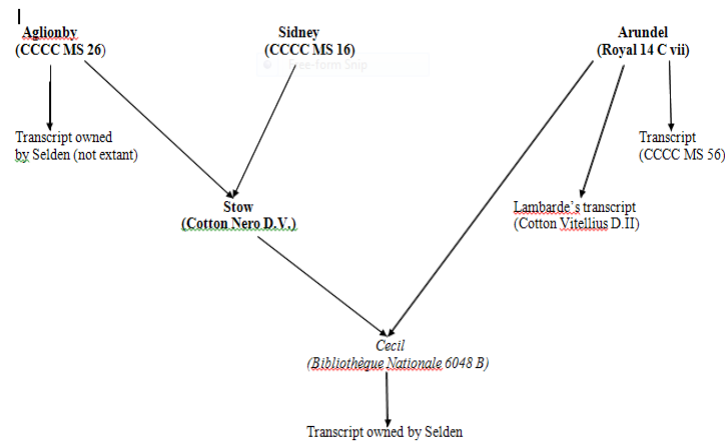


Figure 2: Matthew Paris Manuscripts used by Parker and Wats for the *Chronica Maiora*⁸



⁸ Modern references, when known, are given in (). Thirteenth-century manuscripts are in **bold**. Later medieval manuscript copies are in *italics*. Transcripts Parker had made are in plain font.

William Wats's 1640 edition relied on Parker's text but also expanded on it.⁹ Wats added his own preface to Parker's, and appended a list, entitled *Variantes Lectiones ex Manuscriptis Codicibus Excerptæ*, that compared his manuscript collations to Parker's. Wats also added a two-page comparison of the *Historia Anglorum* (Royal 14 C vii) with a transcript made by the antiquarian William Lambarde in 1565.¹⁰ After the usual printer's errata for the *Chronica Maiora*, the edition is effectively divided in two, a second title page appearing for the *Lives of the Two Offas*, *The Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans*, and the *Book of Additions*.

Although Wats collated several manuscripts for his edition, he did not alter Parker's earlier text. Instead, Wats included thirty-six pages of manuscript collations outlining the textual variations among seven manuscripts and transcripts. And while he used seven individual manuscripts, Wats merged the two Corpus Christi manuscripts into a single abbreviation siglum.¹¹ In addition, Wats used a manuscript of Roger of Wendover¹² and a Cotton manuscript, which was almost certainly Nero D. V.¹³ Wats acknowledged these manuscripts were used more frequently by creating a special abbreviation

9 The full title is: *Matthæi Paris Monachi Albanensis Angli, Historia Major. Juxta Exemplar Londinense 1571, verbatim recusa. Et cum Rogeri Wendoveri, Willielmi Rishangeri, Authorisque Majori Minorique Historiis Chronicisque MSS, In Bibliotheca Regia, Collegii Corporis Christi Cantabrigiæ, Cottonidæque, fidelitèr collata. Hic primum Editioni accesserunt, duorum Offarum Merciorum Regum; & viginti trium Abbatum S. Albani Vitæ: Unà cum Libro Additamentorum. Per eundem Authorem. Editore Willielmo Wats S.T.D. Qui & Variantes Lectiones, Adversaria, vocumque barbarum Glossarium, adjecit: simul cum Rerum, Nominumque, Indicibus locupletissimus.*

10 Madden, I, lxx.

11 These are MSS 26 (creation to 1188) and 16 (1189-1253), which are part of the Parker library at Corpus Christi College Cambridge. According to the *Præfatio ad Variantes Lectiones*, though, it seems Wats used a transcript of MS 26 that was owned by Selden; however, Wats did not acknowledge that he was using a transcript.

12 Wats stated that he used a Roger manuscript from the Cotton Library, presumably Otho B.V. Galbraith, *Roger Wendover and Matthew Paris*, 20 stated as much, which the online catalogue supports (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/cotton/cotframe.htm>).

13 Nero D.V. contained a history from creation to 1251 (*A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, Deposited in the British Museum* (London, 1802) 238. This work was copied, likely under Matthew Paris's supervision, from the Cambridge Manuscripts (Madden, I, lxi-lxii).

siglum, O, for when all three manuscripts agreed (and contained a different reading from Parker's text). This symbol also indicated that Wats was not simply using the manuscripts to correct Parker's text, but to compare them with each other and show where the manuscripts themselves varied.

Wats also re-consulted Royal 14 C vii, also used by Parker and the only extant copy of the third part (1254-1259 and Rishanger's continuation) of the *Chronica Maiora*.¹⁴ Finally, Wats used a transcription of the Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B manuscript, which was in the possession of John Selden. Selden's transcript consisted only of the years 1189-1199 (used for pages 148-196), and while Wats made full use of the text when collating those years, he was apparently unable to access the original and so could not collate further with this text.¹⁵ Each of the aforementioned manuscripts received their own abbreviation sigla, which Wats displayed just underneath the title to the *Variantes*; he did not, however, limit himself to the manuscripts he initially identified. Wats collated with a manuscript he referred to as *Minor*, which he used only for the years 1255 to 1273; the collations for the *Minor* began with page 901. This manuscript was actually the transcription made in 1565 by William Lambarde, which was copied from Royal 14 C vii.¹⁶

Wats also used Cotton manuscripts for the second portion of the work, which contained *The Lives of the Two Offas*, *The Lives of the Abbots of St Albans*, and the *Book of Additions*. *The Lives of the Two Offas* and *The Lives of the Abbots* were both found in two manuscripts, Nero D. I and Claudius E. IV; the *Book of Additions*

14 George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1921) 135-6. This manuscript is largely an autograph copy.

15 William Wats, ed, *Matthaei Paris Monachi Albanensis Angli, Historia Major. Juxta Exemplar Londinense 1571, verbatim recusa* ... (London, 1639-40) *Variantes Lectiones*, [Ssss6r-Tttt4r]. Hereafter cited as Wats, *MP*. Also see Madden, I, lxxviii. How the Cecil manuscript ended up in France is unknown; it was owned by Jean-Baptiste Colbert.

16 Wats, *MP, Variantes Lectiones*, [Vuuu6r-Vuuu6v]; Madden, I, lxx. This manuscript is now Cotton Vitellius D. II. Wats mentioned this transcript in his preface to the *Variantes*, but did not identify the manuscript in the same way that he did the others.

was only found in Nero D.V.¹⁷ In addition, Wats used a manuscript owned by the antiquarian and historian Sir Henry Spelman (now British Library, Additional 62777) for the Lives of the Offas and the Abbots.¹⁸ (see Table Two).

Table 2: Manuscripts used by Wats for the Lives and the Book of Additions

Modern Designation	Wats's Designation
Cotton Nero D.I.	Cotton
Cotton Claudius E. IV.	Cotton
Cotton Nero D.V.	Cotton(<i>Libro Additamentorum</i>)
British Library, Additional 62777	Spelman

Interestingly, the title page revealed that this latter portion of the work (in terms of its appearance in the book) was actually executed first, by Miles Flesher in 1639 (the main chronicle was done in 1640 by Richard Hodgkinson). Thus, these new parts were not an afterthought, but designed to be an integral part of the work.

Previous scholarship focused on the defects in the work of Parker and Wats. Frederic Madden and H.R. Luard, the editors, respectively, of Matthew Paris's *Historia Anglorum* (published in three volumes from 1866-1869) and *Chronica Maiora* (published in seven volumes from 1872-1883) for the Rolls Series were among the first, and most vehement, to criticize the earlier editions. Madden, in the margin of his preface to Volume I of the *Historia Anglorum*, referred to the "[u]nfaithful and worthless character of Parker's printed text," a comment which he supported with three examples "taken almost at hazard" from Parker's work.¹⁹ H.R. Luard, editor of the *Chronica Maiora* (the text Parker published), called Parker an "utterly untrustworthy" editor and took great joy in publishing five pages of errors perpetrated by Archbishop Parker.²⁰ Luard, howev-

17 *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, 236-7, 198.

18 Wats, *MP*, [*1r]. Wats, [*2v] acknowledges this was Sir Henry Spelman, an antiquary and acquaintance of Wats.

19 Madden, I, xxxxiv (quotes) to xxxv.

20 Luard, *Matthæi Parisiensis*, v. II, xxii, xxiii-xxviii (errors).

er, was not quite as harsh as Madden, giving Parker the backhanded compliment that “the later portions of the history give, at least, the impression that his intention was to adhere to his MS.”²¹

Some modern scholars have agreed with Madden and Luard. As late as 1971, May McKisack admitted that Parker was a “poor hand at editing manuscripts.”²² Since the 1990s, scholars have taken a more tolerant approach. R.I. Page, while lamenting that Parker, in his quest for order, would destroy what was disorderly or expendable (to him), has noted that Parker did a great service for the preservation and conservation of medieval manuscripts, even if he had ideas somewhat different from those held now.²³ Benedict Scott Robinson has also cast Parker’s manuscript work in a less critical light, arguing that the purpose of Parker’s scholarship was to restore texts—and through the restoration of historical texts to remake the past of England into a Protestant one.²⁴

If we move beyond the quality of the texts, which are generally defective by modern standards, we can consider what the creation of these earliest editions can teach us about early modern printing. These editions by Parker and Wats reveal tantalizing details about early modern print shops and printing. They show us editing consistent with early modern standards; collaboration between printers; and highly-skilled compositors.

Print as Politics

Scholars today agree that Parker collected manuscripts and published works such as those by Matthew Paris in order to promote the Church of England by showing the antiquity of Protes-

21 Luard, II, xxviii. Luard does point out a few more errors (merely a paragraph’s worth) in the text of the reign of Henry III (Volume IV, xvii).

22 May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 43.

23 R.I. Page, *Matthew Parker and his Books* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993) 46-52.

24 Benedict Scott Robinson, “‘Darke Speech:’ Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 29 (Winter 1998) 1079-80..

tant ideas in England.²⁵ He thereby legitimized the new Church by suggesting that Elizabethan Christianity was similar to what the Anglo-Saxons had practiced. Parker wanted his church to not be new, but instead returning to the purity of an ancient English church.²⁶ Matthew Paris, however, was writing in the thirteenth century and could not directly speak to the ancient customs of the English Church. But Parker had a special job for him; seeking to “underline what he [Parker] perceived to be the unwarranted growth of papal power in England as the middle ages progressed,” the archbishop published Paris’s *Chronica Maiora* because of the “frankness” the monk used to describe “papal abuses.”²⁷ Parker acknowledged this motivation in his preface, in which he stressed that the work illustrated the overbearing arrogance, the insatiable cupidity, general tyranny, and unjust rule of the Roman pontiff.²⁸

Wats, too, was interested in Matthew Paris for religious reasons. In his preface, he highlighted Paris’s frequent stories about the rapacity and avarice of the Roman curia.²⁹ Wats also included in his edition testimonials from notable Protestants, such as quotations from the published works of John Leland and John Bale, praising Paris and his criticism of the papacy, as well as comments from Catholics, such as the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine, denouncing Paris as a heretic.³⁰ Wats’s editing of Matthew Paris also dovetailed with

25 Timothy Graham, “Matthew Parker’s manuscripts: an Elizabethan library and its use,” in Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, eds, *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, v. I (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2006) 334; C.E. Wright, “The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies, Matthew Parker and his Circle: A Preliminary Study,” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, v. 1 (1951) 226.

26 Robinson, “Darke Speech,” 1062.

27 Graham, “Matthew Parker’s manuscripts,” 335.

28 Parker, *Præfatio*, †ijr.

29 Wats, *MP*, [A4v].

30 Wats, *MP*, b3r-dr, but see especially b3r-[b5v] and [c3v-c4r]. Paris should not really be considered a heretic, and his criticisms of the papacy, while ubiquitous and vitriolic, do not question its ultimate authority the way Protestantism does. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 141, 263.

his other publishing activities. From 1632 to 1634, he wrote a periodical called *The Swedish Intelligencer*, which praised the Lutheran Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Wats also wrote and had published, in 1631, *St. Augustines Confessions translated and With Some marginall notes illustrated*. This work previously had been translated by a Catholic, and Wats set about correcting this man's translation, as well as providing comments on religious doctrine.³¹ Wats particularly emphasized places where St. Augustine upheld the authority of the Scriptures, and instances when the "popish translator" had attempted to weaken or twisted the import of St. Augustine's words to support justification by faith and works.³² Clearly, Wats was as concerned with using print generally—and Matthew Paris specifically—to promote Protestant ideals as Matthew Parker had been.

Contemporary events could also have encouraged the printing of the *Chronica Maiora* in 1640. As Janelle Greenberg especially has explored, it became common during the Stuart era to use historical sources to craft political ideologies concerning the respective powers of king and Parliament.³³ Working after publication of Wats's 1640 edition, John Milton, in his *Defence of the English People*, used a reference from the *Chronica Maiora* to support the idea of the king being subject to punishment if he failed in his duty.³⁴ The preface to Wats's edition gives no indication of political ideas behind its publication, but Wats and the printers likely were aware

31 Wats announces "the marginall notes of a former Popish Translation, answered." Wats, *St. Augustines Confessions translated and With Some marginall notes illustrated* (London, 1631) [A1r].

32 Wats, *St. Augustines Confessions*, 8, 284, 401, and 810 are some examples.

33 Janelle Greenberg, "The Confessor's Laws and the Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution," *English Historical Review*, v. 104 (July 1989), 611; R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 1-10. For a more detailed look at how medieval history was used to political ends, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

34 Greenberg, "Confessor's Laws," 628. Paris is a particularly useful source because he recorded "contemporary events... in fuller detail than almost any other medieval writer," making his work "unique among medieval English chroniclers" because of its "scope and size" (Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 125, 126).

that Paris's history of the turbulent reign of Henry III might have special constitutional resonance.³⁵

Marginal notations in the Huntington Library's copy of the 1571 edition (number 302989) clearly shows that Paris's history could be invested with political meaning.³⁶ The book contains reader's notes, one in a sixteenth-century hand belonging to Isaac St. George Jr. and the other a seventeenth-century hand belonging to William Bohun.³⁷ Bohun, the later owner, wrote the bulk of the comments and possibly did the majority of the underlining, as he appears to have been the more active reader. Bohun also seems to have seen a copy of the 1640 edition, as evidenced by a note he made on page 92, concerning a Bishop of Lincoln named Alexander. Bohun wrote,

note 'tis said in the notes on Matthew Paris that this is an error, for tho Paris, Wendover, & the Cotton MS name this Alexander Bishop of Lincoln, yet 'tis said there was at this time no Bishop or Bishopric of Lincoln, nor any Bishop named Alexander.³⁸

Bohun's note bears remarkable similarity to the note given in the 1640 edition for page 7, line 9, which highlighted those same manuscripts and same problem.³⁹ Since the 1571 edition did not contain any such notes (and certainly would not have referenced a Cotton manuscript), unless these notes were published separately, Bohun

35 Although the work was dedicated to Charles I, and the printers were royal printers, the dedication could have been a formality or a way to deflect suspicions. See Wats, *MP*, [iiiir]. For more on the printers, see below.

36 For a detailed study of an active reader, see Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past and Present*, No. 129 (Nov., 1990), 30-78. For more information on marginal notations in books at the Huntington Library, see William H. Sherman, "What did Renaissance Readers Write in Their Books?" in Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, eds, *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia, 2002), 119-137.

37 William Bohun's signature is clearly visible; St. George's has been blackened out and is not entirely visible even under a blacklight. Thus, his proposed ownership is more tenuous than Bohun's.

38 Parker, 92. Abbreviations and capitalization have been expanded and modernized.

39 Wats, *MP*, Xxxx 2r. Bohun has misplaced his note. He puts it in 1123, by which time there was a bishopric of Lincoln. The note in the 1640 edition is for the year 1070, when the bishopric of Lincoln did not exist.

likely saw a 1640 copy. This note helps establish that Bohun was annotating during the Stuart era, when the use of historical sources for political ends was particularly in vogue.

A few of Bohun's notes indicate that he was reading with an eye for evidence of the antiquity of Parliament. Bohun made many marks in the text of *Magna Carta* and in the middle of it noted "this shows the Commons were a part of the ancient Parliament;" another time, when Paris recorded a tax on movables that Henry III was granted in 1237, Bohun commented "[t]his grant must be by the Commons."⁴⁰ Other manicules suggest a reader was interested in highlighting the power of the nobles to check the king.⁴¹ One manicule pointed to the story of how Richard, earl of Cornwall, younger brother of Henry III, refused to submit to the king's will without first obtaining the judgment of his peers.⁴² Other manicules pointed to times when Henry III issued charters of liberties or to events concerning the Provisions of Oxford, the list of demands limiting the king's power that played an important role in the subsequent civil war.⁴³ And while passages highlighting the pope's tyranny were also underlined and commented on, the attention given to limitations on the king's power indicates that the *Chronica Maiora* could also be read for evidence supporting Parliament and might have been printed for that reason as well.

Print as preservation

Concerned with preserving England's past, Archbishop Parker oversaw a series of historical publications, of which his 1571 edition of Matthew Paris's *Chronica Maiora* was one.⁴⁴ In promot-

⁴⁰ Parker, 343, 583.

⁴¹ For more on manicules, see William H. Sherman, "Towards a History of the Manicule," March 2005 [available online at http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/papers/FOR_2005_04_002.html].

⁴² Parker, 450.

⁴³ Parker, 1210, 1313.

⁴⁴ For a list of Parker's publications, see Wright, "Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries," 225-6.

ing these publications, Archbishop Parker harnessed the preservative power of print, which Elizabeth Eisenstein has christened one of the most important of printing's duplicative powers.⁴⁵ Before Parker could print editions, though, he needed to possess manuscripts, and the archbishop was not above using his high position to get what he wanted. In 1563, for instance, Parker negotiated with one Dr. Nevison for the "ancient written books" of his predecessor Archbishop Cranmer; when the doctor proved unwilling to hand the materials over, Parker sought recourse through the Queen's council. Parker wrote to Sir William Cecil, asking him to convince the council to provide letters for him, through which he might suitably awe the doctor and force him to hand over the manuscripts.⁴⁶ Parker was notified in slightly over two weeks that the council had sent Dr. Nevison a letter demanding that he surrender the manuscripts to Archbishop Parker.⁴⁷ This approach proved so effective that on 4 July 1568, Parker wrote to Cecil again, asking that he have the council "subscribe" to new letters he had enclosed.

The letters gave Parker the power to take manuscripts (after notification) from their current owners in order to peruse and study them, after which they would be returned to their owners. The owners, however, were then under the responsibility of keeping such treasures safe in case the precious knowledge they contained needed to be consulted further.⁴⁸ In a surprisingly fast turnaround, a broadsheet was issued on 7 July by the Privy Council giving Parker the very powers he had requested.⁴⁹ Although some of the Matthew

45 Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 87.

46 John Bruce and Thomas Thomason, eds, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1853) 191. Parker did say that he was working on behalf of the owner of these items, although he did not reveal who that was. Nevison was the son-in-law of Reginald Wolfe, from whom he might have obtained Cranmer's books (Wolfe was close to Cranmer). See Pamela M. Black, "Matthew Parker's Search for Cranmer's 'great notable written books,'" *The Library*, 5th Series, v. 29 (1974) 318.

47 Bruce and Thomason, *Correspondence*, 195-6.

48 Bruce and Thomason, *Correspondence*, 327 and 327, n.4.

49 Page, *Parker and his Books*, 43. The broadsheet is given on page 62 (plate 24).

Paris manuscripts were obtained through friends and not through his newfound powers, the Archbishop did not always follow the guideline of returning manuscripts to their owners. The Aglionby and Sidney manuscripts, for example, were still in Parker's possession at his death and bequeathed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Parker spent much of the 1560s searching for manuscripts of Matthew Paris. One was rather easy to find. On 30 July 1560, Parker received a letter from the antiquary John Bale, who was replying to Parker's request for the names of "bokes of Antiquite, not printed." One of the works Bale highlighted was that of Matthew Paris, which was already in the hands of the earl of Arundel. At that time Bale thought it was a unique copy, writing, "[i]t were much pytie that that noble story shulde perish in one coppie."⁵⁰ Sometime later, but before 27 January 1567, John Joscelyn, a member of Parker's household and a textual scholar himself, created a list of medieval historians, which included Matthew Paris. At that time, Matthew Parker already had seen the Arundel (Royal 14 C vii) manuscript because, according to Joscelyn's list, he had his own transcript of that text.⁵¹

By 1569, if not earlier, Parker knew that Sir William Cecil possessed another copy of Matthew Paris, which he requested to borrow "but for a week or two." In that same letter Parker informed Cecil that he "would turn it to the commodity of our country;" the book being "in few men's hands" and its "testimonies not to be lost."⁵² Recognizing that few manuscripts of Matthew Paris were extant,⁵³ Parker seemed intent on spreading the lessons of Paris among more people. Printing, which Parker almost certainly had in mind, was one way of accomplishing this. As Eisenstein has sug-

50 Timothy Graham and Andrew G. Watson, *The Recovery of the Past in Early Elizabethan England: Documents by John Bale and John Joscelyn from the Circle of Matthew Parker* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 17, 29-30.

51 Graham and Watson, *Recovery of the Past*, 55, 89. This would be William Lambarde's transcription.

52 Bruce and Thomason, *Correspondence*, 353.

53 He attributed this to a papist conspiracy, although time would be a more likely candidate. Parker, *Praefatio*, †iijr.

gested: “Quantity counted for more than quality.”⁵⁴ To that end, Parker not only saved manuscripts from being lost or destroyed, but also guided several of them into print, so that they could be preserved as a result of their abundance. As John Joscelyn noted:

that these antiquities might last longe and be carefullye kept he caused them beinge broughte into one place to be well bounde and couered. Ard [*sic*] yet not so contented he endeouored to sett out in printe certaine off those aunciente monumentes whearoff he knew very fewe examples to be extante and which he thoughte would be most profitable for the posteritye.⁵⁵

John Stow made a similar comment concerning Parker’s endeavors, even highlighting that Matthew Paris was one of those monuments of which few examples remained.

Also making diligent search for the antiquities of the Brytons, and English Saxons, to the end those monuments might be carefully kept, he caused them to be well bound and trimly couered, and such wherof he knew very few examples to be extant (among the which was Matthew Paris, Matthew Florilegus and Thomas Walsingham) he caused to be printed.⁵⁶

Parker thus recognized that print was a form of preservation, which could, and should, be utilized in conjunction with the preservation of original manuscripts.

The printing of the 1571 edition: compositors

The way in which the manuscripts Parker collected were preserved in print can be partially reconstructed. Exactly what text was given to Reginald Wolfe’s print shop to furnish the early portion of the text is not known. CCCC 26 does not show any obvious signs

⁵⁴ Eisenstein, *Printing Revolution*, 88. Eisenstein was here referring to the physical differences between vellum and paper, although Madden and Luard would probably prefer to think in terms of the text.

⁵⁵ Robinson “Darke Speech,” 1066 from *The Life off the 70. Archbishopp off Canterbury presentlye Sittinge* (1574) C1r-v. Ard should read “and.”

⁵⁶ John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1592) 1161. In the 1600 edition, Stow added that Parker received these manuscripts from him (Robinson, “Darke Speech,” 1071, n. 37).

of having been in the printer's shop. From Wats's preface to the collations (*Variantes Lectiones*), it seems he used a now-lost transcription rather than the original manuscript, which suggests that Wolfe's shop might have done the same.⁵⁷ From Bibliothèque Nationale 6048 B Parker had another transcript made, which covered only the years 1189-99; Madden argued this transcript was made for the press.⁵⁸ From Royal 14 C vii, Parker also had two transcriptions made. One of these was the copy made by William Lambarde (now Cotton Vitellius D.II), and the other is now CCCC 56, made around 1567. No mention was made of the Lambarde edition being used for the press, but CCCC 56, which covered the years 1254-73, was used by the printer.⁵⁹ The years 1189 to 1250 are covered both by CCCC 16 (which extends to 1253) and Cotton Nero D.V; no known transcripts of either manuscript have survived. CCCC 16, however, provides evidence that it was sent directly to the printer's shop. Various folios, such as 259r, show printer's ink and collations in the margins. Perhaps the most obvious example, though, is folio 82v, where a woodblock has been laid across the top-left corner, leaving ink marks that cut diagonally across the top of the left-hand column.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, CCCC 16 went to Reginald Wolfe's shop,⁶¹ and the text in Parker's 1571 edition for the years 1189 to 1253 came straight from this manuscript. Exactly why CCCC 16 was sent to the printer's shop and none of the others is a mystery. It would

57 Wats, *MP, Præfatio ad Variantes Lectiones*, [Rrrrv], Rrrr2r for collating. This is probably also the copy mentioned in the *Novi Editoris Præfatio ad Lectorem*, [A2v]. This transcript belonged to John Selden, although, based on Wats's description, it seems to have only contained part of the text of CCCC 26. See also Madden, I, xxxiv, n. 1.

58 Madden, I, xxxiii, n. 4.

59 Madden, I, lxix. Presumably the transcript was sent by Parker with 26 and 16 to Corpus Christi. However, Wats did not use this Cambridge manuscript when collating his text (the abbreviation for Cambridge manuscripts did not appear after the year 1254 in the *Variantes* and the transcript only covers the post-1254 period).

60 Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 16 [accessed online <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home> (19 March 2008)].

61 Page, *Matthew Parker and his Books*, 59.

seem, though, that the compositor worked directly from this manuscript; Page even speculated that the woodblock mark on folio 82v was the result of an attempt to hold the page open while placing the letters of the press.⁶²

While printing directly from a manuscript was not rare, it was not standard practice. Sometimes a transcription was made of the original manuscript, and that version was used as copy text. Aldus Manutius, a learned printer in late fifteenth-and-early sixteenth-century Venice, often hired scribes to copy manuscripts, perhaps because their owners denied him permission to bring actual manuscripts to his shop.⁶³ In 1664, when a supplement to Sir Henry Spelman's *Concilia* was published, Sir William Dugdale copied the necessary manuscripts, which were housed at Lambeth Palace, for use by the printer.⁶⁴ Reginald Wolfe, printer of the 1571 edition, similarly employed men to copy extracts from manuscripts that he owned. Copy-text transcriptions suggest that owners and printers were wary of subjecting manuscripts to the messy world of print shops, but such wariness was not universal.

Manuscripts were also used as copy text in England. The Huntington Library possesses one manuscript, a copy of the *Prick of Conscience* (HM 130), which shows signs of having been in the printer's shop (marked-off pages and inky thumbprints).⁶⁵ Gavin Bone has previously discovered three other manuscripts that were used as copy text in the early days of printing: Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* from a manuscript now in St. John's College, Oxford; Lydgate's *Assembly of Gods* from Trinity College, Cambridge MS R

62 Page, *Matthew Parker and his Books*, 85.

63 Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979) 99.

64 Percy Simpson, *Proof-reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Oxford UP, 1935) 88.

65 H.C. Schulz, "Manuscript printer's copy for a lost early English book," *The Library*, 4th Series, Vol. 22, No. 1 (June 1941) 139. See H.C. Schultz, "A Middle English Manuscript used as Printer's Copy," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, v. 29 (1966) 325-36 for more details.

3 19 (both printed by Wynkyn de Worde); and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* from Magdalen College, Oxford MS 213 (printed by Caxton).⁶⁶ Robert W. Mitchner and Margery M. Morgan found two further examples of manuscripts used as copy: MS Eng. Th.d. 36 in the Bodleian, which was used by Richard Pynson to print *Dives and Pauper* and the Plimpton MS (de Ricci No. 263) in the Columbia University Library, which was used by Wynkyn de Worde to print his English translation of *De Proprietatibus*.⁶⁷ The first printer in Oxford also used a manuscript, British Library Sloane MS 1579, as copy text for his *Expositio Symboli* by Rufinus.⁶⁸

Manuscripts taken into print shops (or at least, those known today to have been taken into print shops) were mostly written in English and in recent hands. For instance, the manuscript Caxton used for the *Confessio Amantis* was a late fifteenth-century copy, probably easy for a compositor to read in 1483.⁶⁹ The manuscript of *Dives and Pauper* used in 1493 by Pynson also dated from the 1400s, while the Plimpton (used for *De Proprietatibus*) and Sloane (*Expositio Symboli*) manuscripts were copied c. 1440 and printed, respectively, in 1495 and 1478. The Huntington manuscript, dating from the late fourteenth or early part of the fifteenth century, is seemingly the earliest manuscript yet known to have been used by a compositor.⁷⁰ The discoveries of manuscripts being used as copy text

66 Gavin Bone, "Extant Manuscripts Printed from by W. de Worde with Notes on the Owner, Roger Thorney," *The Library*, 5th Series, v. XII, (June 1931) 285, 290, 293, 303-4, 303, n. I.

67 Margery M. Morgan, "Pynson's Manuscript of *Dives and Pauper*," *The Library*, 5th Series, v. VIII, (December 1953) 217; Robert W. Mitchner, "Wynkyn de Worde's Use of the Plimpton Manuscript of *De Proprietatibus Rerum*," *The Library*, 5th Series, v. VI (June 1951), 7.

68 A.C. De La Mare and Lotte Hellinga, "The First Book Printed in Oxford: The *Expositio Symboli* of Rufinus," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, v. 7 (1978), 184-5.

69 Bone, "Extant Manuscripts," 285. The St. John's MS is also of late extraction (286).

70 Morgan, "Pynson's Manuscript," 217; Mitchner, "Plimpton Manuscript," 7; De la Mare, "First Book," 184; C.W. Dutschke, *Guide to the Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, v. I (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library, 1989), 173.

seems to have generated some excitement, but no one seems to have considered the mechanics of printing from an original text. How did compositors read manuscripts and put them into hand type?

In the case before us, the compositor used a thirteenth-century Latin manuscript. By the late sixteenth century, mid-thirteenth-century handwriting was arcane and antiquarian. It was so distinctive from contemporary hands that Matthew Parker employed a man named Lyly to mimic old handwriting on the pages Parker inserted into manuscripts that were missing portions; in fact, several folios for CCCC 16 are in Lyly's hand.⁷¹ In the print shop, the compositor was a highly-skilled worker, and Reginald Wolfe must have employed especially skilled compositors because he was the royal printer of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew from his appointment in 1547 by Edward VI until his death in 1573. In this capacity, Wolfe printed not only all Latin, Greek, and Hebrew books (although in practice he mainly printed Latin works) in England, he also printed vernacular religious works by men such as Thomas Cranmer and Matthew Parker. Wolfe even had antiquarian interests: he dreamed of publishing a "Universal Cosmography."

Wolfe hired William Harrison and Raphael Holinshed to work on this project, which was published after his death as Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577).⁷² Wolfe owned some twenty-four manuscripts, two of which he saw into print (works by John Cheke and John Ponet, who were Wolfe's contemporaries), while the rest were presumably for his "Universal

71 Robinson, "Darke Speech," 1076. Robinson does not speculate on Lyly's identity, but perhaps Parker's "Lyly" was a young John Lyly, the playwright, or more likely his father Peter, who was Registrar of Canterbury. See G.K. Hunter, "Lyly, John (1554–1606)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.usc.edu/view/article/17251>, accessed 15 Jan 2012]. My thanks to Professor James Forse for this suggestion.

72 Andrew Pettegree, "Wolfe, Reyner (d. in or before 1574)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford, Sept 2004; online ed, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29835>, accessed 11 April 2008]; Cyndia Susan Clegg, "Reyner (Reginald) Wolfe," in J.K. Bracken and J. Silver, eds, *The British Literary Book Trade, 1475–1700*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, v. 170 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1990) 330–2.

Cosmography.”⁷³ This does not mean, though, that Wolfe was in the habit of printing from medieval manuscripts; Wolfe hired Harrison and Holinshed to prepare the universal history, suggesting that the two men were making selections from manuscripts and preparing copy text.

Despite Wolfe’s antiquarian credentials, he was almost certainly not the compositor for Parker’s 1571 edition (for which CCCC 16 was used as copy text), meaning another man of learning must have been in residence. In fifteenth-century Italy, satirists suggested that poor students served as compositors,⁷⁴ but were those students expected to read medieval manuscripts themselves? The editors and compositors who worked for Aldus Manutius sometimes worked from original manuscripts; occasionally, these original manuscripts were thirteenth or fourteenth century rather than contemporary.⁷⁵ While this suggests that the abilities of Wolfe’s compositor were not unique, it still raises questions concerning his training, especially since there was no university in London from which poor students could be recruited (if the satirists were correct).⁷⁶ Just how much training the compositor received is unknown,⁷⁷ but he needed training beyond basic literacy in order to be able to read a medieval manuscript in the dim and chaotic atmosphere of an early modern print shop. Did Wolfe generally hire exceptionally learned compositors

73 Black, “Matthew Parker’s Search for Cranmer’s ‘great notable written books,’” 318. These manuscripts were Leland’s, bought after his death.

74 Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, 12; satirist part from Lawry citing S. Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. by E. Zeydel (New York, 1962) 125.

75 Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, 99, 234–49. Lowry indicated some medieval manuscripts were also used for the press, although he did not go into much detail. Lowry even revealed that Manutius used a sixth-century text, although he was unclear if this codex was used as copy text.

76 Of course, there were poor students at Oxford and Cambridge who perhaps were hired to do such work between terms. John Lyly, mentioned above, was a student at Oxford from 1569 to 1575. See G. K. Hunter, “Lyly, John (1554–1606),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.usc.edu/view/article/17251>, accessed 15 Jan 2012].

77 Joseph Moxton in *Mechanick Exercises*, Vol. II (London, 1683) 198 suggests the compositor needed to be “a good English Schollar” in to correct the the spelling of authors.

or was this man brought in only to set the Paris text? Where did compositors obtain such training? Alternatively, was Wolfe's standard compositor given a quick lesson in thirteenth-century handwriting? The Parker text naturally provides no information concerning these questions, but the text's journey from manuscript to print does suggest that some compositors were highly skilled and underwent extensive training in both languages and paleography.

The printing of the 1640 edition: printer relationships

The compositor who worked on the 1640 edition had an easier time setting the text because he used the 1571 work as copy text. The title to the 1640 edition proclaimed that the book was based on the 1571 edition.⁷⁸ This text was easier to read than manuscripts and provided a more accurate estimate of the length of the new work, and thus the amount of high-cost paper that was needed, because length could be more easily determined from an already-printed work.⁷⁹ The 1640 edition was physically larger than the 1571 book, meaning that the pages would not align exactly, but it still must have been easier and faster to calculate the amount of paper necessary from a formatted book than to recalculate from a two-columned manuscript. Additionally, Richard Hodgkinson, who printed the 1640 *Chronica Maiora*, probably could not have printed from the original manuscripts even if he had wanted because the Corpus Christi manuscripts were then housed in the college's library and were difficult to access.⁸⁰

Financial concerns might have been a reason the 1640 work was printed in two separate parts, although these parts were apparently sold together.⁸¹ The first part (in order of appearance) contained

78 Although the title suggests a certain fixity to the 1571 version, it was an imperfect fixity. Page (A)ir of the Huntington copy differs from page (A)ir of the British Library copy (seen through Early English Books Online).

79 Martin Davies, "Humanism in Script and Print," in Jill Kraye, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 2001) 57.

80 Parker placed many restrictions on his books, as well as establishing a system of inspection, which could lead to the manuscripts being sent to another college if Corpus Christi proved unable or unwilling to properly care for them. See *Matthew Parker's Legacy: Books and Plate* (Uxbridge, 1975) 7-8.

81 Both Huntington copies (21404 and 606936) and the British Library copy on Early English Books Online are bound as single editions. The works were sold by Cornelius Bee and Laurence Sadler of Little Britain. Wats, *MP*, [iir], [*1r].

the *Chronica Maiora*, which was published by Richard Hodgkinson in 1640. The second part of the work, the *Lives of the Two Offas* was published by Miles Flesher in 1639. One reason Hodgkinson and Flesher might have collaborated would be the size and cost of the work: the book was a folio volume with well over one thousand pages. Interestingly, Flesher, the more established printer, printed the shorter part of the work.⁸² Alternatively, the two men might have separately decided to print works by Matthew Paris and joined their texts when they discovered what the other printer was doing. Another possibility is that Flesher actually owned Hodgkinson's press. Although both were master printers, approved by the Star Chamber in 1637, Flesher and his associates Robert Young and John Haviland owned several businesses that still carried on in other men's names.⁸³ Both Hodgkinson and Flesher, though, were well-suited to publish Matthew Paris. Flesher, although much of his work was religious in nature, had also published translated works of Erasmus and one work translated from Greek.⁸⁴ Hodgkinson also printed learned works, such as a catechism in both Greek and Latin.⁸⁵

One of the most fascinating aspects of the printing, though, was that Wats was not hired as editor until the text through the reign of Henry II had already been printed.⁸⁶ That amounted to 153 pages, or slightly over 15 percent of the total text of the *Chronica Maiora*,

82 Flesher had been a printer since at least 1618 in a partnership with George Elde. When Elde died in 1624, Flesher became a master printer. Hodgkinson registered his first work with the Stationers' in 1624, and although he was also a master printer by 1634, he was "a very late Erection." See Edward Arber, ed, *A transcript of the registers of the company of stationers of London, 1554-1640 A.D.*, Vol. III (London, 1876) 689, 700 and Arber, *Stationers' Register*, IV, 30.

83 Arber, *Stationers' Register*, III, 25; IV, 528, 532; V, xxx. The Stationers' Register records Flesher buying out several printers, and although Hodgkinson was not one of them, there is still the possibility that Flesher owned Hodgkinson (Arber, *Stationers' Register*, III, 25; IV, 119, 466-7).

84 Arber, *Stationers' Register*, IV, 104, 355.

85 Arber, *Stationers' Register*, IV, 430.

86 Wats, *MP, Novi Editoris Praefatio ad Lectorem*, A2r. Wats, who generally refers to himself in the plural, notes "opellam nostram...implorant." An earlier editor, whom Wats might have replaced, was not mentioned.

which was a significant amount that the printer would not want to waste. Wats made minimal corrections to the text itself and placed his thirty-six pages of collations at the back, in a separate section. Wats's tardy employment suggests that Hodgkinson did not initially intend to have the text edited, but merely to reprint it. What then caused him to seek Wats's assistance? Did Hodgkinson or someone in his shop notice defects in the text? If so, how? Or was it something altogether more practical, such as the belief that editing the edition would increase sales? Whatever the reasons, the 1640 edition of Matthew Paris suggests that the printer desired a learned book and also indicates the possibility of cooperative printing. Just as the 1571 printing implies that some compositors were educated beyond the basics, the 1640 printing shows that printers could cooperate to produce a large work.

Collation of the 1640 edition

Wats's use of the term *collata* is an early one. In early modern book titles, *collata* had two main meanings: the more literal translation is "having brought together," designating books in which a series of disparate examples or contemporary sources were presented together but *collata* could also mean collation, and Wats used the word in that sense. While Wats was not alone in collating manuscripts, he did engage in a larger, more sophisticated project, placing his work at the forefront of early modern textual studies.

Texts using both definitions of *collata* were published throughout the early modern period. One earlier, English example is a 1585 edition of the works of Zacharias Ursinus. Seven *exemplaria* "having been diligently compared to each other" and corrected in many places were used in publishing the work.⁸⁷ This sounds rather

87 Zacharias Ursinus, *Doctrinæ christianæ compendium: seu, commentarii catechetici, ex ore D. Zacharias Ursini, verè theologi theology (qui Heydelbergæ catecheseos explicationem continuare solebat & iterare) diuerso tempore ab ipsius discipulis excepti. Ad septem exemplaria, diligenter inter se collate, pluribus in locis emendati, varijs quæstionibus, thesibus & argumentis auctiores facti, & nunc denuo non parua accessione eorum, quæ in commentarijs desiderabantur (quod ex indice facile apparebit) locupletati. Cum indice præcipuorum capitum* (Cambridge, 1585).

like what Wats would do in 1640 with his manuscripts, except that the editor of Ursinus's work was not using medieval manuscripts but either contemporary handwritten documents (Ursinus having just died in 1583) or even printed exemplars (an English copy of some of Ursinus's work was published in 1584).⁸⁸

A slightly later example, without evidence of collation, are the debates of William Whitaker, theologian at St. John's College, Cambridge, and Robert Bellarmine, a Jesuit, published in 1599. The title announced that the first of the seven debates came from the mouth of the author and was then brought together with other examples.⁸⁹ Though these other examples probably were not published before, this work was still the result of bringing together contemporary material. A later example used *collata* to reference the extraordinary benefits conferred on the Eucharist by God, using the word's actual meaning of "having brought together."⁹⁰ *Collata* thus was not limited to meaning collation, the way in which Wats used it, but could indicate an author had brought together various sources, without necessarily comparing them to one another.

Wats was not the only one to collate medieval manuscripts. Matthew Parker before him had collated, as did some of Wats's contemporaries. Using manuscripts to point out errors in previously published religious literature was seemingly a favorite use of collation. In 1610, Thomas James, librarian at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, published a pamphlet that identified, in tabular format, the errors in

88 John Stockwood, ed and tr., *A verie profitable and necessarie discourse concerning the obseruation and keeping of the Sabboth day seruing as well to confute the superstition of the Iewes* ... (London, 1584).

89 William Whitaker, *Prælectiones doctissimi viri Guilielmi Whitakeri, nuper sacrae theologiae in academia Cantabrigiensi doctoris et professoris regii, et collegii S. Ioannis Euangelistae in eadem academia praefecti. In quibus tractatur controversia de Ecclesia contra Pontificios, inprimis Robertum Bellarminum Jesuitam, in septem quaestiones distributa, quas sequens pagina indicabit. Exceptae primum ab ore authoris, deinde cum aliis exemplaribus collatae, & post eius mortem ad breues illius annotatiunculas examinatae. Opera et cura Ioannis Allenson ... His accessit eiusdem Doct. Whitaker vltima concio ad clerum, vna cum descriptione vita & mortis, authore Abdia Assheton....* (Cambridge, 1599).

90 John Adamson, *Ioannis Adamsoni Carmen eucharisikon, ob eximia beneficia in se à Deo collata, ac certo conferenda, in Iesu Christo Domino* (Edinburgh, 1651).

two editions of Gregory the Great's collected works. The printed editions used were a 1591 version from Rome and a 1564 edition by John Bale, both of which were deemed corrupt when compared with manuscripts from Oxford libraries, such as the Bodleian, Merton, and St. John's.⁹¹ James continued this work in 1626, publishing a longer pamphlet that, again using Oxford manuscripts, pointed out the errors (and corrected some) in works of the Church Fathers that had been published by Catholics (examining, for instance, a Roman version of Gregory and a Parisian version of Ambrose).⁹²

Jeremiah Stephens continued James's work in 1629, with an edition of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*. The title page and the preface both stated that the published work was created by collating an already printed version (from Rome and thus naturally suspect) with manuscripts at the Bodleian, Oxford.⁹³ In the margins, Stephens indicated when a certain manuscript varied from the printed text. In 1632, Stephens published another work, this time an edited and annotated book of St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. In his title, Stephens claimed that he collated his text with theological manuscripts at Oxford. In his preface, Stephens failed to give details about these manuscripts, and he did not include any variations between them.⁹⁴

91 Thomas James, *Bellum Gregorianum siue Corruptionis Romanæ in operibus D. Gregorii M. Jussu Pontificum Rom. recognitis atq[ue] editis, ex typographia Vaticana, loca insigniora observata à theologis ad hoc officium deputatis* (Oxford, 1610) [A1r-A4v]. See especially [A4v] for information on the manuscripts. However, James set up his table as printed editions vs. manuscripts, treating all the manuscripts as one group.

92 Thomas James, *Specimen corruptelarum pontificiarum: in Cypriano, Ambrosio, Gregorio M. auctore operis imperfecti & in iure canonico collatione facta cum MSS. varijs. Inscriptum Clero Anglicano* (London, 1626) especially C3r-[C4v]. James had begun his collating work earlier, with an edition of the *Philobiblon* by Richard de Bury. The complete title indicates that James used several manuscripts, but like, Parker, he does not show where the manuscripts differed. James also provides an appendix listing manuscripts at Oxford; this list does not relate to de Bury's work, as it includes manuscripts by men such as John Capgrave (1393-1464) who were born after de Bury (1287-1345) died.

93 Jeremiah Stephens, ed, *B. Gregorii Magni Episcopi Romani, De cura pastorali liber verè aureus: accuratè emendatus, & restitutus è vet. mss. cum Romana editione collatis ab eximijs aliquot Academiæ Oxoniensis theologis. Editus à Ieremia Stephano Oxoniensi SS. Th. Baccalaureo* (London, 1629) [C 1r], [C 6v- C7r].

94 Jeremiah Stephens, ed, *D. Caecilii Cypriani Episcopi Carthaginensis De vnitæ Ecclesie, libellus singularis, cum vet. mss. diligenter à Theologis Oxoniensibus collatus...* (London, 1632).

In his 1633 work on Cyprian, though, Stephens did indicate variations between manuscripts in the Annotations section.⁹⁵

At nearly the same time that Wats was doing his work, John Spelman, son of Henry Spelman, the antiquary from whom Wats borrowed a Matthew Paris manuscript, was also collating. Spelman was working on a collection of Psalms in Old English; he used a manuscript owned by his father and three others: one from the Academy of Cambridge, one from Trinity College, Cambridge, and one owned by Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel and Surrey. Going one step further, Spelman assigned each of these latter three manuscripts an abbreviation siglum and used that siglum in the margins of his text to indicate which manuscript differed from his printed text.⁹⁶ This suggests that Spelman was using his father's manuscript as his main text, and collating it with the other three.

His action, though, bears a marked similarity to Wats's *Variantes Lectiones*; the main difference being that instead of being placed at the end, the collations are scattered throughout the text. Although these examples show that Wats was not unique in his extensive use of collation, an interesting, perhaps tenuous, connection to Spelman presents itself. William Wats had earlier helped Sir Henry Spelman, John's father and owner of the manuscript of Psalms, with his *Archæologus in Modum Glossarii ad Rem Antiquam Posteriores* (1626); furthermore, a set of Anglo-Saxon type, which Henry Spelman had ordered cut, was used by Miles Flesher in his publication of Matthew Paris.⁹⁷ Although Wats appears more connected to Sir Henry than to John, the two men could have known

95 Jeremiah Stephens, ed, *S. Cyprianus De bono patientiæ Collatus cum ms. Oxoniensibus, editus a Ierem. Stephano, SS. Theol. Bac. cum spicilegio notarum* (Oxford, 1633) 59-87. Although Stephens gives number designations to his manuscripts, he does not provide any specific information about the manuscripts the way Wats did. The reader only knows manuscript 1 differs, but not anything else about that manuscript.

96 John Spelman, ed, *Psalterium Davidis Latino-Saxonicum vetus. A Iohanne Spelmanno D. Hen. fil. editum. E vetustissimo exemplari Ms. in bibliotheca ipsius Henrici, & cum tribus aliis non multo minus vetustis collatum*, (London, 1639 or 1640) [A1r], [A3v], [A4v].
97 Peter J. Lucas, "From Politics to Practicalities: Printing Anglo-Saxon in the Context of Seventeenth-Century Scholarship," *The Library*, 7th Series, v. 4, (June 2003) 39-40.

each other. Possibly they had the same source of inspiration leading them to do such extensive collations. And while Wats was clearly not alone in collating medieval manuscripts, he used more manuscripts and tackled a larger work than his predecessors and contemporaries.⁹⁸ Since the use of the term *collata* in titles was not limited to actual collation, much less to collation of medieval manuscripts, Wats was one of a relative few who collated medieval manuscripts. Thus, despite the imperfections in his work, Wats forged an early path which later collators followed.

Conclusion

To modern textual scholars, Parker and Wats clearly made mistakes when transferring Matthew Paris's words from manuscript to printed page. Although Parker once claimed that he was not altering his edited texts, he had a different view of what constituted altering than his nineteenth-century successors.⁹⁹ Based on Peter L. Shillingsburg's categories of scholarly editing, Archbishop Parker was an aesthetic editor, someone who altered the wording of his edition, probably because he wanted to publish "the 'best' text of a work." By the time the Rolls Series editors undertook their task, editing had changed. Between the late-sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, editing moved towards a form that saw the author as sole authority for the text.¹⁰⁰ Editors following this method would not render the text more elegant or try to improve the prose.¹⁰¹ Madden and Luard followed this method, reprinting Paris's text without altering the phrasing or interpolating other works to cover various omissions, because his authority as author was paramount. His work was not

98 A 1643 example also used six manuscripts and illustrated the variations in the same manner as Spelman. See Abraham Whelock, ed, *Historiae ecclesiasticae gentis Anglorum libri V...* (Cambridge, 1643).

99 Matthew Parker, ed, Asser's *Alfredi Regis Res Gestae* (1574); John Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker*, Vol, II (Oxford, 1821) 501.

100 Marcus Walsh argues that for the editing of vernacular literature in England, this change occurred over the course of the eighteenth century. See Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, and eighteenth-century literary editing: the beginnings of interpretative scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 9.

101 Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age*, 3rd edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 25.

to be improved on artistically because that was not what Paris had written, and presenting his work was more important than presenting an aesthetically-pleasing version.¹⁰²

Even though the methods of Parker and Wats are no longer in vogue, their work is being used to this day. The only complete English translation of Matthew Paris, done by J.A. Giles in the 1850s is a translation of the 1684 version of Wats.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the Rolls Series never published either *The Lives of the Two Offas* or *The Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans*; in 1958, when Richard Vaughan wrote his influential book about Matthew Paris and, his quotations from Paris' works were taken from Wats's 1639 edition.¹⁰⁴

So while one might question Parker's methods of conservation and lament his editing skills, his contribution ought not to be dismissed. Parker preserved Matthew Paris for posterity and set a standard so high that Wats took it as his exemplar and could not improve upon it with a mere reprint. Wats's collations, indices, detailed notes, and added material took the scholarly qualities of the work to a higher level. While that level might not have been to the standards and taste of modern scholars, the 1571 and 1640 editions were still great achievements whose creation sheds light on book history—its political as well as its preservative functions, its skilled compositors, and its scholarly editors.

102 Shillingsburg also discusses a documentary/historical orientation in editing, which tends to promote the presentation of a historical text nearly exactly as it was written, often without mixing readings from various incarnations of the same text (17-20). Since Madden and Luard collated various Paris manuscripts to produce a best text, and introduced non-historical forms (such as æ when Paris simply wrote e), I have decided that their work does not qualify as historical editing.

103 J.A. Giles, *Matthew Paris's English History*, Vol. I (London: Henry J. Bohn, 1852), vii. While Richard Vaughan has retranslated selections from the *Chronica Maiora*, the full work is only available in Giles's work. See Vaughan, *Chronicles of Matthew Paris: monastic life in the thirteenth century* (Gloucester, 1984) for a translation of the years 1247-50. In this work, Vaughan also translates a section of *The Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans* (that of John de Cella, William of Trumpington, and John of Hertford, which covers the years 1195-1255).

104 Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 270, see pp. 189-204 for citations. Wats printed *The Lives of the Abbots* as the *Viginti trivm abbatvm Sancti Albani*.

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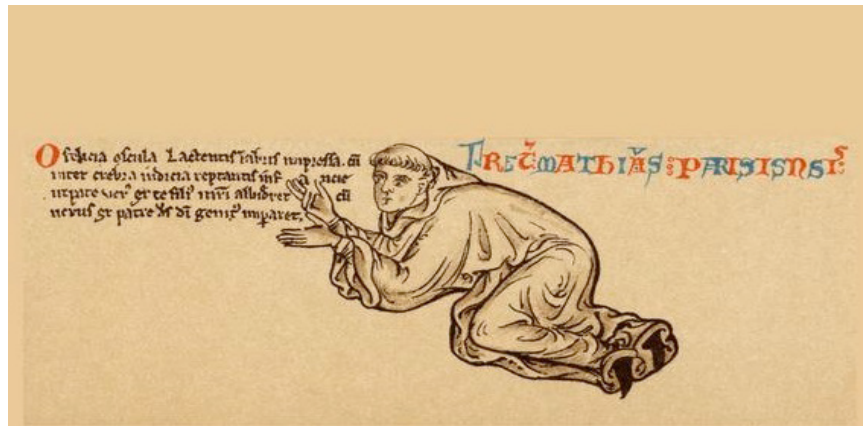
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Self-portrait of Matthew Paris from the original manuscript of *Historia Anglorum*
(London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.VII, folio 6r).

‘Robes and Furr’d Gowns Hide All’:

Edgar’s Role(s) in *King Lear*

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Despite his centrality in the play, Edgar’s role in King Lear has rarely attracted sustained analysis. To be sure, scholarly neglect doubtless results from Edgar’s own elusiveness, from the disguises that grant him access to the major characters in the play, disguises that encourage others to read in him what they wish to see. Analyzing what other characters see or fail to see in Edgar’s disguises offers important light on his character and his role in the play. A Lacanian analysis of Lear’s reading of Edgar’s role as Poor Tom shows that Lear’s effort to establish (or to re-establish) his own lost identity ends in total failure. Despite his better judgment, Gloucester, similarly, succumbs to Edgar’s deceptive illusions as he seeks an escape from a world of terrible disorder. Edmund and arguably Albany, too, are taken in by Edgar in his two concluding roles as messenger-champion and potential king, seeing in him a worthy challenger and leader. But the hope that each character finds in him ultimately fails to materialize. In this paper, I examine how the essential fecklessness of Edgar’s character throughout can profoundly deepen our experience of the tragedy and shed further light on the sense of disillusionment in the end.

King Lear posits the question, “Does any here know me? . . . Who is it that can tell me who I am?” (1.4.226-230).¹ These same lines might be fittingly asked of Edgar whose character poses intriguing questions of identity, desire and the ultimate function of illusion in the play. Although he initially manipulates his appearance as a means of hiding, his disguises as madman, guide, fisherman, messenger, and champion make him increasingly entangled in the lives of the major male characters and in the fate of the kingdom. His power of illusion gradually comes to surpass the confines of his disguise as a means of concealment, expanding from a desire for self-preservation to an attempt to preserve his family and ultimately,

1 Unless noted otherwise, all textual references to Shakespeare’s *King Lear* are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 1249-1305.

the state. Disguised as a bedlam beggar, Edgar encounters the king who looks to him to help piece together his identity, which lies as divided and in such a state of disarray as his kingdom. He then transforms from Poor Tom to a guide who tries to direct Gloucester away from a path leading towards suicide. Edgar's disguises seem to inspire in both Lear and Gloucester a trace of hope that he will rescue them from their despair. But it is a trace that lasts only as long as each part he plays. Even in his role as Edmund's challenger, while Edgar vanquishes the enemy his guise distracts from saving the king and his youngest daughter. And yet Albany continues this cycle of hope, finding in him a man fit to be king.

A study of these characters' responses to Edgar tells us more about each of them, but it also reveals much about Edgar and the ways that he participates in and compounds the tragedy. As I see it, with each disguise, he heightens the tragic element of the play, stringing behind him a trail of thwarted hopes; and by play's end, we are forced to conclude that *King Lear* ends in the bleakest darkness, the kingdom still divided, and should Edgar accept the crown, ultimately leaderless. Shakespeare leaves us with a potential king whose reliance on illusion renders him unlikely to make the successful leader needed to restore order to the world of chaos left in Lear's wake. To believe otherwise, is to be deceived.

Edgar is a slippery character to study. Between the time he is introduced on stage and his flight to "escap[e] the hunt" (2.3.3), he has spoken only thirteen lines. Prior to his appearance we know that he is the legitimate son of Gloucester, and we suspect from the Earl's surprised reaction to Edmund's letter that he is a character whose "matter" is typically "good." Yet our judgment is quickly put to question as Gloucester's opinion changes and the son that he has mentioned with pride becomes an "Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish! . . . Abominable villain!" (1.2.75-78). At this point Edgar has not appeared to either confirm or abolish our suspicions. So we must construct him from the words of others, in particular a conspiring brother and a credu-

lous father. Yet their depictions of him are inconsistent, leaving one to question his character. When Edgar finally steps onstage, he fails to resolve the contradictory accounts concerning his identity. His brief conversation with Edmund puts him in a frantic scramble to escape recognition to save his life. From the moment he retreats to “escap[e] the hunt,” he prompts the audience to search for him as well, and for the remainder of the play he requires that we piece together his character from beneath the cloaks of disguise.

It is interesting to note that scholarly reactions to Edgar’s illusive nature have been as wide-ranging as the responses of the characters with whom he comes into contact.² Pointing out that he once merited a place in the title of the 1608 Quarto: “M. William Shak-speare: His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King LEAR and his three Daughters. *With the unfortunate life of EDGAR, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of TOM of Bedlam,*” William C. Carroll sees him as a significant character.³ Russell A. Peck pronounces him “the more important figure in the subplot, perhaps even the second most central figure in the play,” and Harley Granville-Barker describes him “as true a gentleman as the play gives us . . . he is kept himself and no mere moraliser to the last.”⁴ Too, Christ-like interpretations of Edgar as Poor Tom have depicted him as one who suffers selflessly for the faults of others.⁵

Quite to the contrary, S. L. Goldberg sees Edgar as “the most lethal character in the play” and points to the murder of Oswald, the killing of Gloucester and the slaying of Edmund as acts of brutality,

2 Here I ought to acknowledge William C. Carroll whose article, “‘The Base Shall Top Th’Legitimate’: The Bedlam Beggar and the Role of Edgar in *King Lear*,” provides an invaluable review of scholarly perspectives regarding Edgar. In *Shakespeare’s Middle Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. David Young (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993).

3 Carroll., 222.

4 “Edgar’s Pilgrimage: High Comedy in *King Lear*,” *Studies in English Literature* 7 (1967): 219; “King Lear: The Characters and Their Interplay” in *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1940), 213.

5 William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, directed by Jonathan Miller, BBC production, 1982.

not typically assigned a “good” character.⁶ Others debate whether Edgar can legitimately be considered a character at all. Regarding him merely as a string of disguises, a “dramatic function,” Leo Kirschbaum argues, “to make a psychological unity of these various roles is, I think, a misguided endeavor . . . his various roles do not tell us more about Edgar. They tell us more about the play in which he is a character.”⁷ Yet I would argue the strikingly divergent interpretations Edgar inspires suggest a complexity of character that goes beyond mere “function” or plot device.⁸ He possesses a consistency of character that is revealed to us slowly, in bits and pieces; and it is precisely through his many roles and disguises that we come to know him and to understand how his many parts are inextricably tied to the play’s themes of division, identity and preservation. I believe his constantly evolving motives do not reflect a superficial character, but rather stem from other characters in the play imposing their own desires upon him as they react to his use of illusion.

At the outset, however, Edgar does not seek to influence the characters he does. In fact, he takes on his role as Poor Tom with the intention of hiding until the situation with his father cools, hence the disguise of a beggar in the isolation of the hovel. Unlike Kent, who poses as a servant so that he might “serve where [he] dost stand

6 *An Essay on King Lear* (London: Cambridge UP, 1974), 121, 87.

7 “Banquo and Edgar,” *Essays in Criticism* 7 (1957): 9.

8 For additional examples of the differing views of Edgar, many of which deal with the moral nature of his character, see: A. C. Bradley’s “Lecture VII-VIII: *King Lear*,” in *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (1904; repr., London: Penguin, 1991), 225-304 and Janet Adelman’s introduction to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Janet Adelman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1978), 1-21. Both question the benevolence of a son capable of prolonging his father’s suffering through his refusal to reveal himself until the end, appearing more concerned with retribution than forgiveness, although Adelman believes that we can see goodness in Edgar if we consider his character as both emblematic at times and increasingly moving towards his true identity. In *The Masks of King Lear*, Marvin Rosenberg suggests that perhaps Edgar takes his moralizing too far, noting his insistent attacks on his father’s sexuality after his death (caused by the timing of Edgar’s revelation of his identity) and the unrelenting attitude he displays towards Edmund for being born a bastard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 306-08. Stanley Cavell offers an interesting discussion of the fine line drawn between the Christian and the Machiavellian represented by Edgar and Edmund in his essay, “The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*,” in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 267-353.

condemn'd" (1.4.5), Edgar's motivation is simply to "preserve [him] self" (2.3.6). And despite his being doubly concealed below ground and beneath the guise of a madman, he meets the king.

Although much of what Lear imagines as similar between himself and Poor Tom is what he projects onto the beggar, he clearly identifies with something in Edgar's disguise. In fact, his first words in the hovel are directed to Edgar: "Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And / art thou come to this?" (3.4.49-50). He vehemently denies Kent's interjection that "he hath no daughters, sir," insisting that "nothing could have subdu'd nature / To such a lowness but his unkind daughters" (3.4.70-71). Such an unwarranted identification between king and beggar shows Lear grasping blindly for meaning, made more obvious as Gloucester reveals that he himself has more in common with Lear than ever a Poor Tom of Bedlam might.

Why is it that Lear fails to recognize these obvious parallels with Gloucester and instead identifies with Gloucester's son? An old father in a similar situation as the king, the Earl also has lost a loyal child to rash judgment, and his villainous son has connived his way to the family inheritance, just as the "unkind" daughters, Goneril and Regan, sycophantically gain a kingdom from theirs. When Gloucester enters the hovel, he empathetically relates to the king:

Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vild
That it doth hate what gets it
My duty cannot suffer
T'obey in all your daughters' hard commands (3.4.144-146, 148-149).

Yet, here we do not see a glimmer of recognition awaken in Lear at this news, or a hint of his identifying with the Earl's plight, despite having just experienced his daughters' heartlessness himself. Instead he blatantly disregards these similarities in their circumstances and gives his full attention to the "philosopher" and "learned Theban."

There are two commonly agreed upon explanations for this discordance in identification: 1) Because Lear himself is bordering on insanity at this point in the play, it makes sense that he would respond to the self-imposed madness of Edgar's character as Poor

Tom. 2) Lear views Tom as the epitome of “unaccommodated man,” having come to the realization that despite one’s worldly status, be it beggar or king, man “is no more but such a poor, bare, fork’d / animal” (3.4.107-108). Clearly, his interest in the beggar could come from his having just “expose[d] [him]self to feel what wretches feel” (3.4.34).

Compelling as some find these explanations, Lear’s fixation on Poor Tom, I think, suggests a decision to see *not* what he has become, but instead what he can still *hope* to become. From the moment Lear sees Poor Tom he is fascinated by him and looks to him for assurance, attempting to redefine himself through the “poor naked wretches” that people his kingdom (3.4.28). This choice seems reasonable for one who no longer knows where he stands in a world with the natural order of things turned on its head. Having relinquished power over the two areas that had most defined who he is – his family and his kingdom – Lear has nothing to support the man he “hath been.” Unsure of his current status, he turns to others to reaffirm his identity. Twice, he tries to regain a sense of being both father and king through Poor Tom, first by making him “learned justicer” in a trial to condemn his eldest daughters (and thereby acquit himself of his paternal guilt for unequally dividing the kingdom amongst them), and secondly, by “entertain[ing him] for one of [his] hundred” (3.6.21, 79).

While both of Lear’s attempts to confirm his former self are unsuccessful, he remains transfixed by the beggar, seeing in Edgar’s disguise what he desires to see. But it is not the image of a king or a father that he glimpses. Instead, as C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler explain, “The play, in taking Lear into madness, takes him back to the source of the self in earliest infancy, to a deeper, more archaic level of being where self and world, child and parent, interpenetrate.”⁹ Thus, he returns to a state prior to kingship or fatherhood. He looks to Poor Tom to lead him not only to the realm of unaccommodated man, but also to that of pre-accommodated man

9 *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare’s Power of Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 291.

– lying safe and secure beneath the layers of worldly superficiality, beneath the “robes and furr’d gowns [that] hide all” (4.6.165). As Shakespeare suggests, “Old fools are babes again” (1.2.19). Especially notable about this old fool, however, is the literalness with which he performs his part. Tearing off his clothes in imitation of Edgar’s costume and shouting, “Off, off, you lendings! Come, / unbutton here” (3.4.108-109), he exalts in the idea of stripping down (with help) to the simple world of naked babes, unhampered by clothes or responsibility. He *is* once again a child.

When considered in conjunction with the psychoanalytic concepts of Jacques Lacan, Lear’s regressive behavior and his fascination with Poor Tom become both more intriguing and insightful. Applying Lacan’s concepts of the division of the I as distinct from the primordial id, one can interpret Lear’s rejection of castle walls as a retreat from the I, “symbolized in dreams by a fortress, or stadium” that represent his identities as head of the kingdom and family, to the “remote inner castle whose form . . . symbolizes the id in a quite startling way.”¹⁰

From this beginning, it is possible to further understand Lear’s engagement with Edgar if we consider it to be an acting out of the Lacanian “mirror stage” of childhood development. To a baby, yet untied to any sense of enduring identity, his perception of the image in the mirror is unique in that he sees something other than himself in his reflection. Because the child is accustomed to feelings of awkwardness and disjointedness, he does not identify his body with the fluid, coordinated, and coherent movements that he observes coming from the figure in the mirror. Instead, all is perceived as exterior to the baby – the jerky kicks and jolted bounces, the head nodding towards the reflection, and the hand that reaches out to touch the “other” baby. Regardless of this misrecognition, something draws the child to its own reflection. We see this happen in the common scenario of a mother holding her infant up to the looking glass. Though both of their reflections can be seen, the

10 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 5.

child's attention will inevitably become fixed on the figure most like itself, remaining oblivious to that of the mother. As Lacan explains it, the baby perceives a cohesiveness, an Ideal in the reflection, that fascinates him.¹¹ Similarly, Lear, having regressed to a state unhampered by social bonds, sees his reflection in Poor Tom.

From a psychological standpoint, the mirror stage plays an integral role in identity formation, for it is a baby's passage through this stage that prepares it for induction into the world as a distinct being. In other words, it is here that one's "self" is born. In many ways, this seems a likely place for Lear to return. Regressing towards a childlike dependence on his mother-daughters, he "resum[es] the shape which [one might] think / [he] ha[d] cast off for ever" (1.4.309). As the Fool plainly tells him, "thou mad'st / thy daughters thy mothers . . . when thou gav'st them / the rod, and put'st down thine own breeches" (1.4.172-174). But while Lear swaddles himself in childlike narcissism, each of his daughters denies him the pleasure of the unity of mother and child. Cordelia asserts that she loves him "according to [her] bond, no more nor less" (1.1.93) and the "professed bosoms" of Goneril and Regan demand that their "child-changed father" respect their independence.¹² Earlier seeking his daughters' obedience and love as reassurance of his authority, now, or so the fool would have it, he must learn to obey them. Far from the loving security he had envisioned in his daughters' "kind nursery" (1.1.124), he finds himself rejected. Driven insane by fragmentation and laden with a desire for a wholeness he once knew, he turns to the powerful embrace of nature upon the heath where he finally discerns a world beyond the boundary of self.

Yet prior to the scene in the hovel, as we know, Lear has similarly vacillated between man and babe, clinging to the privileges reserved for a king and father while expecting to be treated like a spoiled child. In the brief moment before his retreat to the

¹¹ Lacan., 2.

¹² In *The Norton Shakespeare's* introduction to *King Lear* Stephen Greenblatt points out the ambiguity of this phrase, defining "child-changed" as meaning "changed by his children" and/or "changed into a child" (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 2446-47.

womb-like security of the hovel, we glimpse the true majesty of the king for the first time in the play, in perhaps the only scene in which Lear puts aside his own concerns and gives his full attention to others. Standing in the midst of the storm he reflects on his subjects “that bide the pelting of this pitiless storm / [with] houseless heads and unfed sides” (3.4.28-30) and exclaims:

O’ I have ta’en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just (3.4.32-36).

At last, Lear begins to perceive a kingdom that exists beyond the walls of his castle and realize his influence upon it as king. But Lear’s identity is as constant as his eldest daughters’ love for him. Stephen Greenblatt notes, “His moments of insight and those of all the other characters in the play are radically unstable, like brilliant flashes of lightning in a vast, dark landscape.”¹³ A moment after Lear’s eloquent speech he appears mad as a kite, no longer exhibiting the lucidity of a good king but instead the absorbed self-interest of a child as his world narrows from a kingdom to the small shelter of the hovel. It is here he attempts to reaffirm his identity through the disguised Edgar.

Herein lies the great irony of the mirror stage. That is, by seeing one’s reflection in the mirror as something other than one’s self – as a separate being – an individual’s sense of identity takes shape. Although setting out in a “fictional direction” in which the self is misrecognized, Lacan insists on the formative effects of this phase of development in “establish[ing] a relation between the organism and its reality,” for it is against this reflected image that the child will come to compare his socially constructed identity, and always find it lacking.¹⁴ As he explains, “The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure

13 Norton *Shakespeare* introduction, 2313.

14 Lacan, 4, 2.

of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality.”¹⁵

Edgar serves as one such fantasy for Lear. Having been severed from the maternal presence of his daughters, Lear’s attraction to Edgar suggests his desire to establish a link to a world of which he is finally becoming aware. Like a child who sees his reflection in “contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him,” he exhibits the same excitement and fascination with regard to the disguised Edgar.¹⁶ He becomes the child peering into the mirror who delights in the form that he sees—a form with the potential to open his eyes to a new reality and initiate an understanding of his place within it.

Paradoxically, it is Edgar’s lack that represents a wholeness, or primordial Ideal. “Wouldst thou give ‘em all?” (3.4.64) Lear asks this figure who “ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no / wool, the cat no perfume” (3.4.104-105). However, before he can fulfill the mirror stage and experience any formative effects, Lear is whisked away from the hovel, leaving more crazed than when he entered. As Edgar notes at the end of this scene: “how light and portable my pain seems now / When that which makes me bend makes the King bow” (3.6.108-109).

Interestingly, Poor Tom’s influence upon the king becomes evident when the two meet again in the fields near Dover. King Lear appears [*mad, crowned with weeds and flowers*], speaking with the looser, less measured meter reflective of the current state of his mind (4.6). Still obsessed with the injustice of his daughters’ actions, Lear takes on the role of justicer that he had earlier assigned to Poor Tom. However, while Edgar’s commandments—“Obey thy par-/ents . . . commit not / with man’s sworn spouse” (3.4.80-82)—point to the unforgiveable sins of Goneril and Regan who have denied their father love and fight for the affections of Edmund, Lear absolves Gloucester of his lecherous sins:

¹⁵ Lacan, 4.

¹⁶ Lacan, 2.

I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No,
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful sheets (4.6.109-116).

At the same time, he condemns the female gender:

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above;
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiends': there's hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding,
Stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah! (4.6.124-129)

Such muddled logic begotten from a sense of alienation within his own realm and expulsion from the female presence are a far cry from the influence one might have hoped the "noble philosopher" to have had on Lear. Ultimately Lear fails to gain anything substantial through his identification with Poor Tom or by retracing the steps of the mirror stage. As the Fool suggests, it is too late for a man of his age and experience to start over. He simply "shouldst not have been old till [he] / hadst been wise" (1.5.44-45).

More to the point, perhaps, Lear's unsuccessful passage through the mirror stage results from his identification with a disguise. So the image that Lear sees in the mirror *truly* lacks substance. As a man reduced from king and father to a shattered vision of himself peering into the veil of one who has exchanged his noble and familial identity for a madman's guise, he significantly identifies with "nothing." In answer to the Fool's question, "Can you make no / use of nothing, nuncle?" he answers honestly, "Why, no, boy, nothing can be made out of / nothing (1.4.130-133).

Yet throughout the play those who encounter Edgar attempt to make *something* out of his disguises. With each role he invents, he meets others whom he inadvertently helps to create their own

deceptions. It is here that the tragic nature of Edgar's character lies. For despite the wretched plights of those with whom he comes into contact, he invariably manages to make their situations worse, subtly intensifying the tragedy at every turn.

While Lear transforms this disguised Edgar into his "learned justicer" and philosopher, Gloucester next recreates him to fit the role he desires – a peasant guide who can lead him to his death. He seeks an escape from this world of chaos where:

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father (1.2.106-109).

Unlike Lear's metaphorical blindness to his daughters' affections and the state of his kingdom, Gloucester's metaphorical blindness becomes real at the hands of Lear's offspring. Driven to despair, he seeks a guide to lead him to the cliffs of Dover and recruits Edgar, still disguised as Poor Tom. Though Gloucester cannot see him, so earnestly does he believe Edgar to be a beggar that he requests clothes for him and gives him his purse (unknowingly contributing further to his disguise).

Different from his passive participation with Lear that fails to cure the king of his derangement, here Edgar plays an active role in attempting to restore his family and create a world where loyalty and filial love hold greater power over deception. Ironically, he must deceive his father (and perhaps himself) to believe that this natural order of things can and will be restored. Though Gloucester had earlier fallen for his son's disguise in the hovel, this time Edgar cannot rely on his appearance to deceive his now blind father and must be even more careful to manipulate the "lunatic bans," nonsensical rhymes, and "prayers" necessary to deceive his father as a means to save him. But there are moments when he falters and lapses into the language of the nobleman he is. Lear missed the flaws in Edgar's disguise, but Gloucester does not. He reveals his skepticism as the pair nears "Dover:"

Gloucester: When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?
Edgar: You do climb it now. Look how we labor.
Gloucester: Methinks the ground is even.
Edgar: Horrible steep.
Hark, do you hear the sea?
Gloucester: No, truly.
Edgar: Why then your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes' anguish.
Gloucester: So may it be indeed.
Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.
Edgar: Y' are much deceiv'd (4.6.1-8).

And indeed, Gloucester is.

To preserve his father's life, Edgar goes to great lengths to construct the world that the old Earl seeks. Though once more he insists, "Methinks y' are better spoken" (4.6.9), Edgar is quick to direct his father's attention away from a dangerous line of inquiry that may prematurely reveal his identity. All of a sudden they conveniently arrive at their destination: "Come on, sir, here's the place; stand still. / How fearful / And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!" (4.6.10-12). Edgar has no intention of allowing his father to commit suicide. As he explains, "Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it" (4.6.33). This intervention marks the first instance of his donning a disguise with the intention of protecting a life other than his own. So desperately does Gloucester wish for Edgar to take him to the cliff's point to resolve matters, he ignores even what a blind man might sense and "jumps." In so doing, the audience is to assume he has become convinced that his guide is either a trustworthy soul who has truly led him to the cliffs of Dover, or perhaps one who has taken him to the edge of a precipice that he clearly suspects does not exist. The latter may account for how quickly his disappointment at finding himself "preserved" gives way to his resolve to persevere as Gloucester promises, "Henceforth I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself / 'Enough, enough,' and die" (4.6.75-77).

However, just as Edgar is unable to restore Lear's sense of identity, his efforts to preserve Gloucester's life fail miserably. Edgar finally reveals himself once armed to challenge Edmund and restore the order that his father desires, where love and filial duty can

overcome the “unnatural dealing[s]” Gloucester so despises (3.3.1-2). O fault indeed! Having “led [him], begg’d for him, sav’d him from despair,” the revelation of his true identity to his father is what kills his father:

His flaw’d heart
(Alack, too weak the conflict to support!)
‘Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly. (5.3.192, 197-199)

Despite Edgar’s attempt to use his disguises more purposefully as he tries to mend the divisions within his family, he is unable to save his father a second time. Gloucester dies, happy, but potentially deceived, believing that the natural order of things will be restored as Edgar leaves his father at the base of a tree – a stark contrast to the “happy hollow of a tree” that provided Edgar his first shelter from “the hunt” – to go challenge his brother.

This optimism, though bleak, grows throughout the play and infects even Edgar himself as he begins to manipulate his disguises more carefully to shape the course of events. Having discovered the extent to which family matters have become embroiled with politics, he determines to protect both his family’s honor and save the kingdom from his brother’s plotting. He appears to Edmund, who reads in his disguise a formidable opponent. Unwilling to engage in a duel with anyone of lower status but too proud to ask his challenger’s name, he glosses over formalities basing his reasoning on Edgar’s deception:

In wisdom I should ask thy name,
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head (5.3.143-148).

At the same time, Albany sees in Edgar the champion he desires. He could have challenged Edmund. He has as much reason, if not more, to defend his marriage and the state. Yet repeatedly, he has proven his powerlessness as a husband to stand up to Goneril. A man of words rather than action, he verbally attacks his wife regarding her treachery, claiming that her womanhood protects her from

his fury: "Howe'er thou art a fiend, / A woman's shape doth shield thee" (4.2.66-67). Likewise, he has proven an ineffectual duke who has failed to protect the kingdom from those who plot against it. Upon discovering Cornwall's treatment of Gloucester, he vows, "to revenge thine eyes" (4.2.96) though he defers action. In fact, it is not until *after* Edgar has appeared to him and promised to engage Edmund in a duel that Albany challenges Edmund for "his heinous, manifest, and many treasons" (5.3.92), assured that Edgar will appear as the champion that he seeks. Both Edmund and Albany look to Edgar to fulfill their desire to find themselves more worthy or heroic. But his illusion cannot maintain what does not exist in itself.

In truth, he deceives all who believe, quite possibly even himself, that he can lead to a restoration of order in the kingdom. To his credit, he denounces Edmund as: "a traitor; / False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father, / Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince" (5.3.134-136). But his primary motivation comes not from a desire to save the kingdom from Edmund's tyranny but to avenge his father's death, as we know when he finally reveals himself as "Edgar, and thy father's son" (5.3.170). Although he vanquishes his brother, as always he is unaware of the fullness of Edmund's plots. Their confrontation and Edgar's revelation of his identity provide the distraction that allows Edmund's orders to be carried out. Despite his final wish to do "some good," Cordelia is hanged. Regardless of Edgar's noble intentions, hope gives way to grief once more.

Therefore, when Albany offers him a final role as king, the audience feels uncertain how to react. The fact that Edgar is one of the few to survive the catastrophic events of the drama would in itself make his use of disguise seem a success. Though he initially would have preferred to remain hidden until the affair with his father quelled, his motivation for taking on each new guise expands from a desire for self-preservation to preservation of his family and the state. He meets and influences the king, and indirectly, the state of the kingdom. And though he grieves when he sees his parti-ey'd father, almost unable to "daub it further," he quickly resolves that he must if he hopes to save him (4.1.52). What he fails to realize is the chances of saving his father are as slim as those of helping the king

or the kingdom. Lear leaves the hovel finding it even more impossible to restructure his sense of identity and regain his integrity after having peered into the illusory mirror of Edgar's disguise, and he dies, flitting in and out of insanity. Like Gloucester, Edmund dies as well, convinced his sins have led to his downfall, and that the natural order of things must inevitably prevail. Ultimately, Edgar saves only himself.

Responsible for his ineffectualness are his optimism and naiveté, which prevent him from comprehending the extent of the chaos in the kingdom that nonetheless surrounds him throughout the play. It is this tragic flaw that contributes to his inability to set things right. Other characters recognize the grim direction their world is headed from the beginning. Kent warns Lear against the "hideous rashness" of dividing the kingdom (1.1.151). And once done, Edmund predicts the consequences:

unnaturalness between the child and the parent, death, dearth,
dissolutions of ancientamities, divisions in state, menaces and
maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffidence, ban-
ishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and
I know not what. (1.2.144-149).

Even before Gloucester fully understands the portent of his words, he exclaims, "We have seen the best of our time. Machina- / tions, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders / follow us disquietly to our graves" (1.2.112-114).

Curiously, however, Kent and Edgar, the two characters disguised for most of the play, are the ones to whom the kingship is offered.¹⁷ Albany confers this new position upon them, expecting

17 Although there has been great debate as to the inheritor of the crown at the end of *King Lear*, I find the Folio to be more in line with the rest of the play by assigning the last speech to Edgar, thereby implying that he will be the next to rule rather than Albany. Though some claim the kingship is Albany's by marriage, as Marvin Rosenberg states, "The final lines are clearly . . . Edgar's. The argument that they might be Albany's on the grounds that he ranks the highest has just been undercut by his own refusal to accept that rank." *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 322. Too, it seems incongruous that after offering the crown to Kent and Edgar, Albany would allow Kent to answer and not give Edgar an opportunity to respond. For further discussion on this point, see Steven Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of King Lear* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

them to manipulate the role of king as well as they have their others, to “rule in this realm, and the gor’d state sustain” (5.3.321). In keeping with the wisdom and loyalty of his character, Kent rejects the crown, knowing that he is a poor candidate and expecting to soon follow Lear to the grave. Edgar’s response is less clear; and though the play concludes ambiguously, the audience is left with the faintest trace of hope that stability will once again be restored by Edgar, although the extent of this hope depends on one’s perception of and confidence in Edgar.

In his support, Hugh Maclean sees him as “the wise and active pattern for men in a tough world.”¹⁸ Others point to Edgar’s confrontation of Edmund as a clear demonstration of his growing sense of responsibility as reflected in the improved status of each disguise, from beggar to knight to king. Andrew Dillon sees his “journey to maturity” leading to his being “seen as the one who has learned how to govern both himself and, ultimately, the realm.”¹⁹ Similarly, Peck concludes that, “Through his trials Edgar attains maturity and even gains a kind of authority,” and therefore is “the most fit to rule.”²⁰

Yet I would argue that the text in no way supports the view of Edgar as a mature and able leader. At the conclusion of the play, he is the same character as he began, lacking the authority and leadership needed to restore the kingdom. Edmund’s response, “the wheel is come full circle, I am here” is more fitting than he knows, for we do indeed (5.3.175). In many respects, we find ourselves back where we started. Edgar and his supporters fail to learn from the mistakes that cause Lear’s downfall, and the cycle of division begins anew with a king who has already proven his failure at anything beyond self-preservation. When one takes into account his generation’s blindness to the lessons that should have been gleaned from their predecessors’ mistakes in judgment, the future begins to look

18 “Disguise in *King Lear*: Kent and Edgar,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11 (1960): 54.

19 “Edgar’s Journey: Shame, Anger, and Maturity in *King Lear*,” *North Dakota Quarterly* 57 (1989): 82.

20 “Edgar’s Pilgrimage: High Comedy in *King Lear*,” *Studies in English Literature* 7 (1967): 234.

even darker than the past. While Edgar may be the best of those left to rule, this factor in itself epitomizes the tragic in *King Lear*. And his final speech, “we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long” (5.3.326-327), becomes the more foreboding when we recall that he has already forgotten the lesson we thought he had learned earlier, “And worse I may be yet: the worst / is not / So long as we can say, “This is the worst” (4.1.27).

The greatest deception of the play, however, lies in the impossibility of creating a kingdom out of illusion and deception, that devising an identity for Lear, an imaginary terrain for Gloucester at Dover, a formidable challenger for Edmund and a champion and king for Albany will not construct the future stability of the kingdom. Philip Armstrong supports this notion, explaining that it is not uncommon in theater that:

on a platform stage devoid of background scenery, the language of the characters must create what the audience are to imagine around them. But in this play, the audience are made aware—through his own asides, and through Gloucester’s inability to hear the sea or feel the slope—that Edgar’s ‘landscape’ is *nothing but* a discursive illusion.²¹

Thus, Edgar’s greatest power seems to reside in his ability to lead some to believe that he is capable of successfully wielding the power of king. But to see a hopeful resolution in Edgar’s possible ascendancy to the throne is to be deceived. Whether Edgar clothes himself in the poor rags of a beggar, the armor of a knight, or the robes and furr’d gowns of royalty, one must remember that beneath it all Edgar tells us with all honesty, “In nothing am I chang’d / But in my garments” (4.6.8). A master at disguise, Edgar is expected to construct a new kingdom from nothing, while all he has to offer is the creative power of illusion.

21 “Uncanny Spectacles: Psychoanalysis and the Texts of *King Lear*,” *Textual Practice* 8, no. 3 (1994): 429.

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Scene on the Heath
Act III, scene iv

The Library Shakespeare

Illustrated by Sir John Gilbert, George Cruikshank, and R. Dudley

(London: William Mackenzie, 1873-1875)

“A neighbour, hedges haue eyes, and high-wayes haue eares”

**Traveling Players, Traveling Spies in *1 Henry IV*
and *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third***

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The Elizabethan government used companies of travelling players to serve a number of intelligence functions, which extended to the surveillance of audiences during performances. This surveillance was facilitated by the discursive instabilities of their plays and the architecture of the spaces in which they were performed. Surveillance by travelling players was part of an essentially colonial project in which the crown sought to extend its power and increase its visibility while attempting to fashion a nationalist, pro-Protestant, pro-Tudor identity in the provinces. To consider these dynamics, this article considers two conjectured performances. First, Shakespeare’s 1 Henry IV performed by the Chamberlain’s Men at the New Hall in Norwich, which was the center of a socially, religiously, and economically divided region. Harry and his band’s surveillance of commoners in order to exploit “their Saint the Common-wealth” exposes the status of these fissures to the view of the Chamberlain’s Men. Second, The True Tragedie of Richard the Third performed by the Queen’s Men at the Common Hall in York, a recusant bastion historically friendly to Richard. While the play represents Richard as a spying villain, it also offers a subversive counter-narrative of Richard through his Page that facilitates observation of the audience.

Elizabethan England faced an ongoing crisis of faith. There was, of course, the crisis of religious faith: the tenuous Protestant establishment represented by the Elizabethan government was threatened by the Catholicism of living memory and an emergent radical Protestantism. But there was another, related crisis of faith concerning the Protestant, nationalist, and increasingly capitalist identity the Elizabethan government attempted to fashion in the provinces, which still remained largely autonomous and clung to their local memories and identities. Drama was a site of these conflicts over religion and identity. Puritans in London and around England gained traction by railing against the theatre in pamphlets and from the pulpit. Drama was one of the repositories of Catholic memory,

as local guilds and troupes of masterless, “vagabond” performers continued to perform popular, Catholic drama—the mystery and morality plays—throughout the provinces in the face of repeated efforts by the crown to criminalize and suppress it.¹ These plays, particularly the mysteries, resisted the state’s efforts to cultivate a national Protestant present and future by presenting local histories in which a Catholic past was conjoined with the temporal present.² Meanwhile, the “vagabond” players who performed much of this drama were perceived by the state as threats due to fluid identities and the untraceability of their movements and their speech.³

In 1574, the Elizabethan government began using theatre as part of the solution to its problems in the provinces. For the first time, it mandated that *all* playing companies ‘belong’ to a noble household, and began issuing patents that created its own authorized players bound to its service through noble and royal patronage. Leicester’s Men were awarded the first patent, and they established a model for other groups: they served their patron by carrying his name and livery throughout the country, favoring (and perhaps instructed to follow) routes where their patron’s name would carry greater weight or where their patron sought to publicize his power.⁴ Other companies followed, fanning across the countryside each year while bearing the names and wearing the livery of the Lord Admiral, the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Essex, and the Queen herself. The Queen’s Men functioned as an extension of the royal progress, often dividing in two to spread their influence as far and wide as

1 Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. and trans. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 98.

2 Weimann, 90.

3 Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (Houndmills: Basingstoke, 2003), 82-91.

4 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press, 1996), 185 and 187, and Siobhan Keenan, *Travelling Players in Shakespeare’s England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 9, quoting Sally-Beth MacLean, “Tour Routes: ‘Provincial Wanderings’ or Traditional Circuits?” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 6 (1993): 10.

possible.⁵ These companies also served as the eyes and ears for their patrons in their travels. Traveling players were members of an itinerant class, which also included servants, merchants, priests, and minstrels, whose status and mobility made them useful as spies going back at least to the Wars of the Roses.⁶ Walsingham, Leicester, Essex, and Salisbury helped form and patronized playing companies, and they possessed intelligence networks in which players could operate.⁷ Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean have detailed intelligence functions performed by companies such as Leicester's and the Queen's Men: they could act as messengers, glean information about recusants or foreign visitors, and give the impression of a watchful monarch whose men 'ranged' over the land, attending to the nation through her travelers. Even if they passed along no information, these companies could mask the actual size and constitution of the spy networks by attracting attention to the "wrong" travelers, allowing the real spies to operate more easily.⁸

What has yet to be considered is the role of the actual performances of liveried companies in these intelligence activities. These companies were part of a broader, essentially colonial project. In order to expand its power in the far-flung provinces, the royal government used liveried companies to not only increase its visibility, but to perform important ideological functions as well. The history play was featured prominently in the repertory of these companies, and they used it to attempt to fashion a nationalist, pro-Protestant, pro-Tudor identity in the provinces. Liveried players performed these plays in the same spaces in which local, often Catholic, drama was once performed by popular and 'vagabond' players. But the reception of liveried players and their plays by different audiences

5 Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44.

6 Ian Arthurson, "Espionage and Intelligence from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 35 (1991), 144.

7 Walsingham helped form the Queen's Men in consultation with Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels. See McMillin and MacLean, xiii-xv.

8 McMillin and MacLean, 27-9.

around the country would also be useful information for their patrons. The surveillance of audiences could hence be part of the intelligence activities of players. This surveillance was facilitated by the ambiguities of the plays these companies performed, and by the architecture of the places in which they performed them. A deeper understanding of the ideological and intelligence function of these traveling players will allow us to further explore the role of these companies in the formation of the nascent nation-state in England. It also adds to our understanding of why the plays of the period achieved the cultural importance that they maintain to this day, and how Shakespeare became “Shakespeare.”

Liveried companies were part of the royal government’s internal colonial project in the provinces. Walter D. Mignolo, writing of the role of Renaissance thought in European colonization of the Americas, argues that territorial colonization of the Americas was accomplished through the colonization of language, memory, and space, including by the imposition of discursive formations like history and maps.⁹ While there are important differences between the colonial processes in England and in the Americas, Mignolo nonetheless provides a useful framework for considering the activities of liveried players in the provinces. In place of the mysteries and moralities, which threatened national unity by conjoining the Catholic past with the temporal present of the region in which they were performed, liveried companies performed history plays based on the royally-sponsored chronicles.¹⁰ From stages and scaffolds in halls, churches, and marketplaces around the country they preached the truth of the nationalist, Protestant gospel, instructing their audiences to “sit and see, / Minding true things, by what their

9 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

10 In the wake of the dynastic struggles of the Wars of the Roses the Tudors sponsored official histories (such as Hall’s and Holinshed’s) to portray those wars in a favorable light. See Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3-4. History plays performed by liveried groups were hence part of an ongoing Tudor project of legitimizing their (questionable) claim to the throne through historical revisionism.

Mock'ries bee" (*Henry V* i2).¹¹ History plays, like the chronicles on which they were based, were imposed on audiences in an effort to replace the local histories contained in living memory, as well as in the chorographies.¹² History plays could also represent territory in ideologically useful ways. The Chorus for *Henry V*, for example, takes the audience to different localities around England and France, effectively turning the stage into a map; the play concludes with these territories united under Harry's rule. But liveried groups were also inserted into the physical and aural places once occupied by the popular players. Leicester's Men were apparently encouraged by their patron to perform in (formerly Catholic) churches and proselytize on behalf of the Reformed faith.¹³ Other companies often played in the potentially subversive space of the marketplace,¹⁴ often used for the Corpus Christi plays, and increasingly in town halls, which represented both whatever degree of autonomy and independence a town possessed from the crown and other authorities as well as the local civic oligarchy's power over the citizenry.¹⁵

Surveillance was part of this colonial project in the provinces, and theatrical performances presented perfect opportunities to conduct surveillance of populaces. The ambiguity of many history plays, as well as plays of other genres, could facilitate audience surveillance.

11 William Shakespeare, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, in *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies* (London: Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623), gg8v-k2.

12 Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 105-47 and especially 131-3. Helgerson argues that while the chronicle is a genre that is almost by definition the story of kings, in chorography loyalty to England means loyalty not to the monarch or the state but to the land, its counties, towns, villages, manors, and wards.

13 Keenan, 46-7. Keenan notes that almost half of the clear records of professional players performing in churches are by Leicester's Men.

14 For the marketplace during a fair (or perhaps, a play) as a transgressive, carnivalesque, and potentially subversive space, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "The Fair, the Pig, Authorship," in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 27-79.

15 Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

While history plays attempted to present the ‘truth’ of history in ways ideologically useful to the Elizabethan government, in performance they could take on alternative or unintended meanings. One reason for this, as Walter Cohen notes, was the internal contradictions that resided within the material basis of the theatre:

the public theaters constituted part of both the base and the superstructure, their function in one conflicting with their role in the other. However aristocratic the explicit message of a play, the conditions of its production introduced alternative effects. The total theatrical process meant more than, and something different from, what the dramatic text itself meant. The medium and the message were in contradiction, a contradiction that resulted above all from the popular contribution...any drama of state performed in the public theater automatically converted a heterogeneous and, it seems, largely popular audience into judges of national issues, a position from which most of its members were excluded in the world of political affairs.¹⁶

Liveried companies received little or no financial support from their patrons and depended on heterogeneous audiences of mixed class, religion, and ideology for their livelihoods. The temptation to “play to the audience” would always persist. Even if played “straight,” however, the history plays performed by these companies could elicit varied responses from audiences because they were often ambiguous or ambivalent in their meaning and presentation. A large reason for this, as Andrew Hadfield argues, is that literature intended to fashion a national identity was an emergent and inchoate form: “no one in the Tudor period was sure how to write such a literature or confident as to what it was supposed to do;” hence, “It is not always necessary—or possible—to insist on a definitely clear and distinct reading, aligning the text with one specific range of meanings.”¹⁷ And yet, as Phyllis Rackin argues, the discursive instabilities that made the theatre, playwright, and player ambivalent sources of subversive behavior could be used in the history play as an unequaled instrument of social control.¹⁸

16 Walter Cohen, *Drama of a Nation: Public Theater in Renaissance England and Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 183.

17 Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 19 and 10.

18 Rackin, 111.

Players could exploit these instabilities by scrutinizing audiences for signs that they were interpreting the performance in ways hostile to the nationalist, Protestant ideology being offered them, as a gauge of potential trouble in the region at a later date. Stagekeepers and players offstage could survey audience reactions from behind the scenes. But players onstage, like a preacher at a pulpit, also would be able to scan the audience to see the effect of their performance.

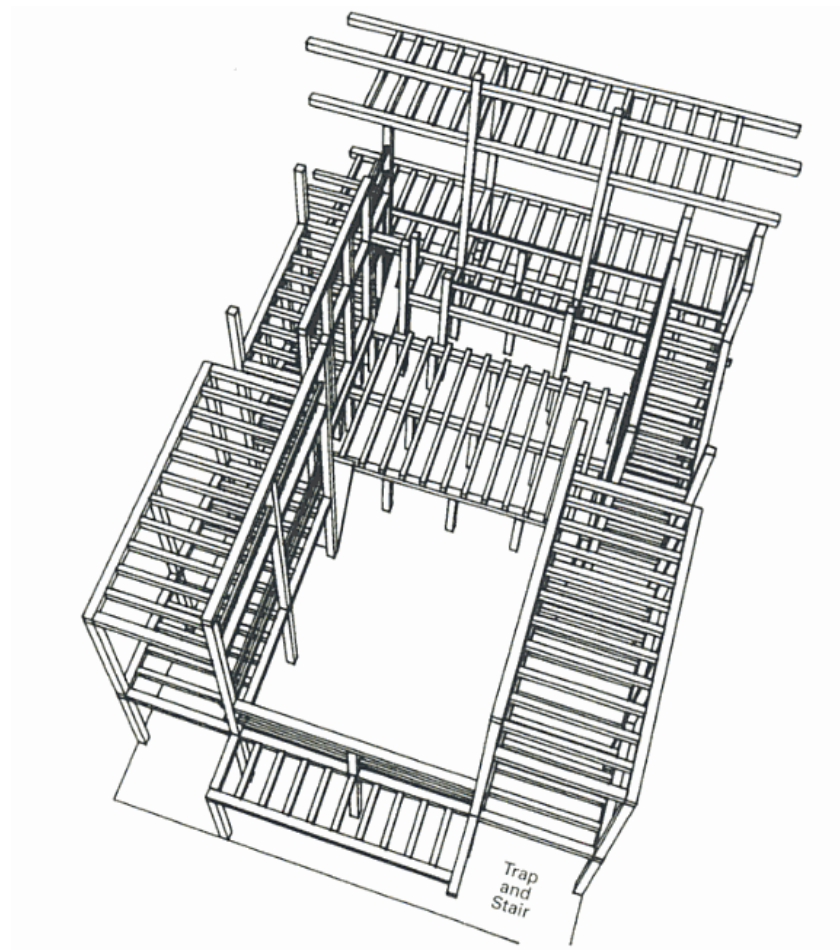
Furthermore, the very architecture in which these plays were staged facilitated surveillance of audiences. Montaigne recognized this in his essay “On educating children,” when he advocated plays “acted and represented in open view of all, and in the presence of the magistrates themselves...as a diverting of worse inconveniences, and secret actions.”¹⁹ Likewise, in 1572, Elizabeth’s Privy Council instructed the City of London to stage in “overt & open places, such playes... as maye tende to repress vye & extoll vertwe, for the recreation of the people, & thereby to drawe them from sundrye worser exercyses.”²⁰ Theatres, wherever they were built, were useful for assembling a large portion of the populace of a town in an open architecture with excellent sightlines for surveillance by rulers (or in the case of liveried players, their surrogates), as well as for their ideological and educative functions. By the later Elizabethan era, plays by traveling players were most often staged in town halls in which a temporary theatre was erected, most likely along the lines of those constructed in college dining halls at Cambridge [Figure 1].²¹ At one end of the hall was constructed a platform stage 5-6 feet in height, with stagehouses on either side for entrances and exits (and covert surveillance) during performances. Galleries

19 Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne, Knight of the noble Order of St. Michaell, and one of the gentlemen in Ordinary of the French king, Henry the third his chamber*, trans. John Florio (London: Val. Sims for Edward Blount dwelling in Paules churchyard, 1603), 12.

20 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 4:269.

21 The description that follows of the theatres constructed in college dining halls is largely taken from Alan H. Nelson, *Early Cambridge Theatres: College, University, and Town Stages, 1464-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 5. While civic records pertaining to theatrical performances are fragmentary, the evidence we do possess along with the architectural similarity between town halls and college dining halls suggests that it is likely that similar theatres were constructed in town halls as well. Some of this evidence is collected in McMillin and MacLean, 67-83, and Keenan, 21 and 29.

were constructed surrounding the stage along the walls, allowing for elevated seating on forms or benches for the mayor, aldermen, and other dignitaries. The rest of the audience was comprised of commoners standing on the floor in front of the stage and under the galleries. Hence, players were well positioned to observe responses of the audience positioned above and below them, while commoners were well positioned to be scrutinized by all others in attendance.



*Figure 1: Design of the theatre built in the dining hall at Queens' College, Cambridge.
From Alan Nelson, Early Cambridge Theatres, 31.*

To explore how a performance and architecture could combine to facilitate the surveillance of a potentially resistant audience, I will briefly consider two examples: Shakespeare's *I Henry IV*, performed by the Chamberlain's Men at the New Hall in Norwich, and the anonymous *True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, performed by the Queen's Men at the Common Hall in York. But first, a caveat to what follows. Civic records are fragmentary. An entry concerning a performance generally records a date, which may or may not correspond to the actual date of performance, as well as the name of the company, which occasionally may denote not the "real" company, but a company carrying a forged patent. Records only sporadically give the building used for performance, and rarely the play's title or subject matter. Hence, while we do know approximate dates of performances by these companies at these locations, we cannot know for certain that they ever staged these particular plays there. What follows, then, is a model that gives us one way of considering the plays staged by traveling players throughout England.

8 Mar 1600: *I Henry IV* at Norwich New Hall

The Norwich New or Common Hall, now St. Andrew's Hall, was designed as a great, open preaching hall with excellent sight lines and acoustics [Figures 2 and 3]. It occupies the nave of the former Dominican Blackfriar's Church; the present-day Blackfriar's Hall occupies the chancel. The Blackfriar's Church was acquired by the Mayor Augustine Steward in 1540 for the sum of 81 pounds and has remained a public hall ever since.²² The interior of the New Hall remains predominantly fifteenth-century and is grand and imposing in scale. It measures 126 feet long and nearly 35 feet across from pillar to pillar; seven arches on each side support a hammerbeam roof approximately 65 feet high. Aisles on the north and south sides each add an additional 15 ½ feet in width and have ceilings 45 feet high. It might have accommodated an audience of over 2000.²³

22 REED: *Norwich*, ed. David Galloway (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), vii.

23 The description of the Norwich New Hall is based on personal inspection as well as McMillin and MacLean, 71-5, who cite Helen Sutermeister, *The Norwich Blackfriars: An Historical Guide to the Friary and its Buildings up to the Present Day* (Norwich: Norwich Survey, 1977), esp. 8-9, and Nikolaus Pevsner, *North-East Norfolk and Norwich* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).



Figure 2: Exterior of Norwich New or Common Hall, today called St. Andrew's Hall.



Figure 3: Interior of Norwich New Hall.

This audience was part of a population that the Elizabethan government was keen to keep its eye on. Norwich was the second-largest city in the realm and served as a provincial capital for the region.²⁴ It was at the center of a religiously-divided region: while surrounding East Anglia had a large recusant population, especially among the landed gentry, Norwich itself had become a Puritan stronghold in Elizabeth's reign. Norwich's religious nonconformism was due in part to a large influx of Dutch, Flemish, and Walloon "Strangers" that were initially recruited to revive the region's flagging cloth industry, and whose numbers grew both because of their success, and due to religious persecution in their homeland by the Duke of Alva, growing to 6000 by 1579. The region as a whole was, if anything, closer allied to Flanders than to London, but it prided itself on its regional identity and autonomy. This held for Norwich too: "Norwich was a world in itself: urban unrest was limited, the city was capable of handling its own affairs, and communications to and from either Westminster or Whitehall were infrequent."²⁵ In part because of this autonomy, the royal government was caught off guard when unrest did break out in 1549 in the form of Kett's Rebellion. Incensed by moves by the aristocracy to enclose commons and convert them into sheep pasture to supply the region's cloth industry, insurgents spent weeks tearing down enclosures, slaughtering sheep, and occupying Norwich. While the primarily Protestant revolt aimed at restoring commoners' feudal rights was ultimately suppressed by royal forces, the tensions stemming from the economic inequalities in the wealthy region remained in Elizabeth's reign.²⁶

24 Tittler, 40.

25 Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 22, and *REED: Norwich*, xvi-xvii. The quotation comes from John T. Evans, *Seventeenth Century Norwich: Politics, Religion, and Government, 1620-1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 63-4, qtd. in *REED: Norwich*, xvii.

26 For Kett's Rebellion, see *REED: Norwich*, xvi-xvii; Barrett L. Beer, *Rebellion and Riot: Popular Disorder in England during the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2005); Julian Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977); Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, rev. 5th ed (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008); and Stephen K. Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549* (Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1977).

Due to its independence and its Puritan leanings, Norwich, like other cities in East Anglia, grew increasingly hostile to visiting players. In the fifteenth century, East Anglia had been one of most vibrant drama centers in England, and religious drama in Norwich persisted until 1564.²⁷ East Anglia was visited often by Leicester's Men from 1559-88, and was likely welcoming because of Dudley's strong associations in the region.²⁸ When the Chamberlain's Men came under royal patronage and were rechristened the King's Men in 1603, East Anglia joined the southeast and southwest as prominent destinations for the troupe. And yet, as early as 1584-5 Norwich began to pay players to leave without playing, and in 1588-9 it banned townspeople from attending performances, although it is unclear whether this was enforced. Norwich by no means closed its doors to outside players—over three quarters of players continued to be permitted to perform—but it did become among the most hostile cities to performers in England.²⁹ This hostility was not simply because of anti-theatricality amongst Puritans and civic authorities, but because of the threat to their regional identity and autonomy that these groups represented.

Against this backdrop, imagine the Chamberlain's Men coming to Norwich, as they are known to have on or about 8 March 1600, and performing in the New Hall *1 Henry IV*.³⁰ While a known crowd pleaser on the London stage, there is much in the tale of the truant Prince of Wales and his followers to which the Norwich audience would be resistant. One, as Phyllis Rackin notes, Hal

27 Gibson, 31-2, and Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25.

28 Alan Somerset, "'How Chances it they Travel?': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men," *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (1994): 52, citing MacLean.

29 Somerset, 50-1 and 53. Somerset includes minstrels, bearwards, jugglers, and other performers along with players in his survey.

30 *1 Henry IV* is believed to have been written c. 1597. There are records for the Chamberlain's Men in 1600 and as the King's Men in 1615, 1621, 1622, 1622-3, 1633, 1634, and 1636. Records for the troupe's appearances in Norwich can be found in *REED: Norwich*; their traveling records can be found in Chambers and Gurr.

embodies the language of an emergent capitalist economy.³¹ He sees his coming confrontation with Hotspur as an economic transaction in which he will “redeeme all...on Percies head” and “make this Northren youth exchange / His glorious deedes for my indignities” (G1^v). Hal’s economic language is an attempt to claim—or perhaps, colonize—the mercantile class. But by using such language, Hal might also inadvertently evoke and associate himself with anxieties amongst the Norwich audience about the economic inequalities and dispossession of common land that marked emergent capitalism in their town. Furthermore, the play raises the specter of an aristocracy that has lost its sense of obligation to the commoners, and instead spies on them in order to co-opt and exploit them. Hal leads a band of thieves who are also a band of intelligencers. Their primary spy is Gadshill, who bribes, interrogates, and eavesdrops on chamberlains, pilgrims, traders, and travelers in order to find targets to rob. Gadshill brags about the explicitly classist nature of the band’s enterprise:

I am ioyned with no footlande rakers, no long-staffe pennie strikers, none of these mad mustachio purplehewd maltworms, but with nobilitie, and tranquillitie, Burgomasters and great Oneyers...they pray continuallie to their Saint the Common-wealth, or rather not pray to her, but pray on her, for they ride vp and downe on her, and make her their booties. (C3)

Gadshill distinguishes his troupe from “footlande rakers,” “long-staffe pennie strikers,” and “purplehewd maltworms”—i.e., vagabonds, armed thieves, and drunkards, despite being themselves a band of, well, roving, drunken thieves. It is solely the group’s social standing that distinguishes them and largely protects them from the force of the law. His boast also suggests a deeper truth about the idea of the commonwealth: it exists merely so that royalty and the aristocracy can exploit it. The Chamberlain’s Men hence may expose class antagonisms not only between the commoners and the royal government they represent, but also between the commoners on the ground and the civic elites on the scaffolding above them.

The spy-thieves’ leader, Hal, spends his time amongst the commoners performing surveillance on them. But not, as is often supposed, to become a prince of the people, but simply so he may

31 Rackin, 77-9 and 136.

better rule them. Outside the Boar's Head Inn, he boasts to Poin:

I haue sounded the verie base string of humilitie. Sirrha, I am sworne brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dicke, and Francis, they take it already vpon their salvation, that though I be but prince of Wales, yet I am the king of Curtesie, and tel me flatly I am no proud lacke like Falstafte, but a Corinthian, a lad of metall, a good boy (by the Lord so they call me) and when I am king of England I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheape (D2).

Hal proceeds to exploit his superior position in the social system, first by drawing attention to the absurdity of the apprentice system to Francis, an apprentice tapster, and encouraging him to rebel against it: "Fiue yeare, berlady a long lease for the clinking of pewter; but Frances, darest thou be so valiant, as to play the cowarde with thy Indenture, and shewe it a faire paire of heeles, and run from it?" (D2^v). While many of the commoners in the Norwich audience may laugh, the joke turns dark later in the play. Should he heed Hal's advice, Francis later might be among the "discarded, vniust seruimgmen, yonger sonnes to yonger brothers, reuolted tapsters, and Ostlers, tradefalne" that comprise the cannon fodder "good inough to tosse" (H3) in Falstaff's army, fighting in Hal's and his father's war. But at this moment, Harry's exploitation of the social system takes the less sinister form of the prank in which he and Poin alternately call Francis, forcing him to bounce back and forth across the stage like a tennis ball saying, "anon," "my Lord," "sir." Hal draws the maliciously unfair conclusion that Francis' behavior is a product of his intelligence rather than his place in a social system that divides his obligations to his future sovereign and his master: "That euer this fellowe should haue fewer wordes then a Parrat, and yet the sonne of a woman" (D3). By degrading Francis as being of questionable humanity, Harry justifies their respective places in the social system, and their respective places later on the battlefield.

In comparison, Hotspur may emerge for many in the Norwich audience as a more sympathetic counterpart to Hal. Hotspur and his coconspirators feel themselves to be the targets of royal surveillance,

as may the Norwich audience. Hotspur charges that Henry has “Sought to intrap me by intelligence” (I1)—i.e., by intelligencers—while it is fear of Henry’s spies that later leads Worcester to hide from Hotspur “The liberal and kind offer of the king” (I3^v), and hence commit them all to a losing cause:

Supposition al our liues shall be stucke full of eyes,
For treason is but trusted like the Foxe,
Who neuer so tame, so cherisht and lockt vp,
Will haue a wilde trick of his ancesters,
Looke how we can, or sad or merely, Interpretation will misquote our
lookes,
And we shall feed like oxen at a stall,
The better cherisht still the nearer death. (I3^v)

Worcester justifiably feels that if they surrender they will be subject to Henry’s spies for the rest of their lives, which in his description take the form of disembodied eyes watching their every move, looking for the slightest pretence to eliminate them at a later date. But by hiding Henry’s offer, Worcester allows Hotspur to go to war and die under somewhat false pretences, and prevents his possible redemption from rebellion. Hotspur may also be sympathetic to the audience in other ways. While Hal embodies an emergent capitalist discourse, Hotspur embodies a residual chivalric discourse of feudal society³²—what Kett’s rebels sought to restore. More importantly, Hotspur shows a concern for commoners that Hal and his followers often lack. Hotspur rails against “a certaine Lord” who feels so superior to commoners that he calls soldiers bearing dead bodies “vntaught knaues, vnmanerlie,/To bring a slouely vnhandsome coarse/Betwixt the winde and his nobilitie” (B2^v).

All of which raises a question: in the final confrontation between Hotspur and Hal, where do the audience’s sympathies lay, even if the outcome is not in doubt? There is good reason to believe that the sympathies of the Norwich audience would be mixed, even divided along social lines. Despite the comedic tone of Hal and his followers’ exploits, the commoners on the floor of the New Hall

32 Rackin, 77-9 and 136.

have clear reasons for resenting Hal, and it is questionable whether Hal's effort to claim them is universally successful. The civic elites are placed in an even more isolated position: while they are suspicious of royal intrusions like the Chamberlain's Men, they have also been aligned with the royal figures onstage. What if, instead of the anticipated cheers and applause, Hotspur's death at Hal's hands initially meets with silence from the Norwich audience? What if this silence is pierced by an audible gasp from the commoners on the floor, which echoes through the cavernous interior of the New Hall? Such a moment would be telling for the Chamberlain's Men, and allow them to report back to their patron and the crown that the old social and economic anxieties were still present, and that if left unattended Norwich could one day rise up again.

24 July 1592: *The True Tragedie* at York Common Hall

Turn now to a performance of *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* by the Queen's Men at York Common Hall. The Common Hall dates from the fifteenth century and still stands, located off of St. Helen's Square, on the east bank of the River Ouse [Figures 4 and 5].³³ The hall was bombed during an air raid in World War II, demolishing the roof and interior and blowing out the windows, but a faithful restoration was opened in 1960. The hall is on a slightly less grand scale than the hall in Norwich: it measures 93 feet long by 43 feet wide, with the roof rising just over 31 feet.³⁴ It is divided into six bays on each side. Unusual for halls from this period, the roof is supported by ten large wooden octagonal pillars with stone bases, creating in effect a nave with aisles. It once had a screened passage with an upper gallery above the east end, a dais enclosed by

33 The description of the York Guildhall is based on personal inspection as well as McMillin and MacLean, 74-6; *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York. Volume 5: The Central Area* (London: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1981), 76-81; Herbert Cescinsky and Ernest R. Gribble, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork, Vol. 1* (London: The Waverly Book Company LTD, 1922), 61 and 64-5; and J. Halfpenny's portrait, "Inside of the Guild-Hall" (York Art Gallery, 1807).

34 The lower part of the hall's magnesian limestone walls survived the bombing, preserving the original dimensions. According to Cescinsky and Gribble, 61, the original roof's approximate height was 30 feet.

a wooden screen with doors at the west end, and an open fireplace in the middle. The hall had a central entrance through the east wall, entrances to the screens passage through corresponding doors at the east end of the north and south walls, doors on opposite ends of the west wall granting access to the medieval Committee Rooms, and a door on north wall on the second bay from the west end.³⁵ The hall has an additional intriguing feature: through the two-storey block at the west end of the hall is accessed Common Hall Lane, which opens to the staith on the Ouse at the west end of the hall, runs under the north aisle of the hall, and emerges at an entrance on the east face of the hall, the top of which is just visible above street level.³⁶



Figure 4: Exterior of York Common Hall, today called the Guildhall.

³⁵ The entrances to the hall have changed over time and are not the same as in the Elizabethan era. A description of the changes in the hall can be found in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York*.

³⁶ Today Common Hall Lane continues underground east of the Guildhall and emerges through steps to the yard behind the Mansion House.



*Figure 5: Interior of the York Guildhall
published by J. Halfpenny in 1807, York Art Gallery.*

York presented a potentially resistant audience because it had an active local dramatic tradition that had its roots in the popular Catholic drama suppressed by the Tudor government. It had a Corpus Christi play for almost two hundred years, one that survived the banning of the Corpus Christi festival in 1548 until its last performance in 1569. The town also put on a Creed Play, including before Richard himself in 1483.³⁷ There is possible evidence that in the time of Henry VIII, monks in York used mystery plays to advance a religious and political agenda contrary to Henry's own, drawing the attention of the monarch.³⁸ York also had an ambivalent relationship with liveried players. In 1582, the city limited performances by visiting players, at least those in the Common Hall, to two: "once before the Lord maior and aldermen

³⁷ *REED: York*, 1.xv-xvi.

³⁸ *REED: York*, 2.649-50, prints an apocryphal letter from Henry VIII to an unknown Justice of the Peace in York complaining of and seeking to suppress such practices. The letter, originally printed by James Orchard Halliwell, *Letters of the Kings of England* (London, H. Colburn, 1848), 1:354, is said to have been found in the MS collection of York Documents, Rawlinson's Collection in the Bodleian Library, although a search by the *REED: York* editors found no such manuscript.

&c. and thother before the commons.”³⁹ York maintained an active local dramatic tradition even after the suppression of the Corpus Christi play, to the extent that during the reign of James it was one of the few towns in England outside of London that attempted to establish a permanent playhouse of its own, in an apparent effort to foster a local dramatic culture while simultaneously allowing the city to turn away outsider companies.⁴⁰ Yet, it should be noted that given the number of ventures the Queen’s Men made to York, which were at least as lucrative as their stops elsewhere, the town as a whole was not *too* openly antagonist to their presence.

The True Tragedie follows the basic outline of Shakespeare’s later telling of the story—indeed, Shakespeare clearly borrowed from it. If the Queen’s Men performed *The True Tragedie* during one of their numerous visits to York and the Common Hall,⁴¹ they would have found an audience resistant to the play’s representation of Richard as a spying villain. Like Norwich, York had a large degree of autonomy from the royal government by virtue of its begin a large town and provincial capital with one of the most developed civic administrations in the country.⁴² It was also a northern bastion of recusancy that was resistant to intrusions of royal power from far away London, such as they may have viewed the Queen’s Men. York was historically friendly to Richard dating back to his days

39 REED: *York*, 1.399.

40 The records pertaining to the York playhouse, which may never have seen a play staged, can be found in REED: *York*, 1.530-1. The petitioners request permission “to erect A Theater or playhowse within this Citty wherin such as have bene borne and brought vpp therin should imploye ther laborious expenses for the maintenance therof *which* might be A meanes to restrayne the frequent Comminge thervnto of other Stage plaiers.” The playhouse seems a clear effort to redevelop the local dramatic tradition and satisfy the town’s appetite for drama while simultaneously allowing the city to turn away outsider companies.

41 The Queen’s Men visited York at least nine times in their career, and performed in the common Hall at least five times, in 1584, 1587, 1596, 1599, and 1602; they were paid not to play in August 1598, perhaps because of plague. The performance records for the Queen’s Men in York can be found in REED: *York*, 2 vols., eds. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); their travel records can be found in Chambers and Gurr.

42 Tittler, 40.

as his brother Edward IV's lieutenant in the north. The town was subsequently associated with three rebellions against the Tudors: the Lambert Simnel rebellion against Henry VII (the Richmond in the play, who kills Richard), the 1537 Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII's Reformation, and the 1569 Northern Rebellion aimed at replacing Elizabeth with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots.⁴³ So, it may not have gone over well when a figure called Truth in the prologue to a play by the Queen's Men instructs the audience how to view Richard: "A man ill shaped, crooked backed, lame armed, withall/Valiantly minded, but tyrannous in authoritie" (A3^v).⁴⁴

While Truth in the prologue gives the audience an initial portrait of Richard, the character most responsible for shaping the audience's perception of him is a seemingly insignificant character at its outset: the Page of Richard's Chamber. In his first scene, the Page initially appears to be nothing more than ordinary servant played by a stage extra, until he returns to privately confer with Richard when everyone else has left the stage:

Richard: What hearest thou about the Court?

Page: Ioy my Lord of your Protectorship for the most part, Some murmure, but my Lord they be of the baser sort.

Richard: A mightie arme wil sway the baser sort, authority doth terrifie. But what other newes hearest thou?

Page: This my Lord, they say the yong king is comming vp to his coronation, attended on by his two vnckles, Earle Riuer & Lord Gray, and the rest of the Queenes kindred.

Richard: A parlous bone to ground vpon, and a rush stifly knit, which if I could finde a knot, I would giue one halfe to the dogs and set fire on the other.

Page: It is reported my Lord, but I know not whether it be true or no, that the Duke of Buckingham is vp in the Marches of *Wales* with a band of men, and as they say, hee aimes at the Crowne.

⁴³ Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1956), 154-62, and REED: *York*, 1.ix-x.

⁴⁴ All quotations from the play are from *The True Tragedie of Richard the third: Wherein is showne the death of Edward the fourth, with the smothering of the two yoong Princes in the Tower: With a lamentable ende of Shores wife, an example for all wicked women. And lastly, the coniunction and ioyning of the two noble Houses, Lancaster and Yorke. As it was playd by the Queenes Maiesties Players* (London: Thomas Creede, 1594).

Richard: Tush a shadow without a substance, and a feare without a cause:
but yet if my neighbours house bee on fire, let me seeke to
saue mine owne, in trust is treason, time slipph, it is ill
iesting with edge tooles, or dallying with Princes matters,
Ile strike whillst the yron is hote, and Ile trust neuer a Duke
of Buckingham, no neuer a Duke in the world, further then
I see him. And sirrha, so follow me (C1^v).

Clearly, this is no ordinary page, but rather a capable spy. In a single briefing he has given Richard three vital pieces of intelligence which he uses to plot his rise to the throne. First, the Page tells Richard of possible dissent to his Protectorship amongst the “baser sort,” which inspires his later efforts to impose order upon them by using surveillance to terrorize them. The audience will see the fruition of this later when the Page is amongst Richard’s “priuie spies set in euerie corner of the Citie” watching every move of Shores’ wife, the former mistress of the deceased Edward IV (E1). In the process he helps reduce the entire populace of London to a state of paranoia, causing them to warn one another, “A neighbour, hedges haue eyes, and high-wayes haue eares” (E1- E3^v). The second piece of intelligence the Page gives at this initial briefing is of the progress and composition of Edward’s train as it moves towards London for the young king’s coronation, which Richard uses to formulate his plot to intercept and usurp Edward. Third, the Page relates rumors of Buckingham’s designs on the crown, from which comes Richard’s resolution to remove Buckingham when his usefulness in helping him to the crown is up.

But the Page is not only a spy for Richard, but he is also a double agent who spies on Richard for the audience. He assumes this role too in his first scene, when he briefly defies Richard’s order as he exits, “And sirrha, so follow me” (C1^v). Instead he lingers, watching Richard move offstage and out of eyesight and earshot before turning to the audience to privately confer with them. He marvels to them at the recent friendship between Richard and Buckingham, “who had wont to loue one another so well as the spider doth the flie,” before giving the audience information they would not otherwise know:

“but this I haue noted, since he hath had the charge of Protector, how many noble men hath fled the realme, first the Lord Marcus sonne to the Queene, the Earle of *Westmorland* and *Northumberland*, are secretly fled: how this geare will cotten I know not” (C1^v). Earlier in the scene the Page gave Richard information that allows him to plot his rise to the throne; here he gives the audience the first inklings of the dissent and conspiracy that will eventually topple Richard. In a later report, he confirms to the audience the truth of rumors that others can only infer:

all those of the Queens kinred that were committed to *Pomphret* Castle, hee hath caused them to be secretly put to death without iudgement: the like was neuer seen in England. He spares none whom he but mistrusteth to be a hinderer to his proceedings, he is straight chopt vp in prison. The valiant Earle of Oxford being but mistrusted, is kept close prisoner in *Hames* Castle ([D3^v]).

One function of the Page, then, is to help fill out the ‘true’ character of Richard promised in the play’s title and prologue, revealing the full extent of Richard’s tyranny that remains hidden from his rivals and the general populace. But the Page also builds up a rapport with the audience with his successive reports, particularly the commoners by employing slang phrases like “how this geare will cotten.” This rapport is strengthened because the Page exposes himself to danger to communicate to them. He ends his first report to the audience, “But what do I medling in such matters, that should medle with the vntying of my Lordes points, faith do euen as a great many do beside, medle with Princes matters so long, til they proue themselues beggars in the end. Therfore I for feare I should be taken nipping with any words, Ile set a locke on my lips, for feare my tongue grow too wide for my mouth” (C1^v-C2).

Later in the play, however, this rapport turns subversive of the historical narrative the play offers the audience, as the Page’s reports make Richard potentially sympathetic in the audience’s eyes. Along with access to Richard’s Privy or Secret Chamber, the Page has access to Richard’s private thoughts and moments, which he shares with the audience in lines that anticipate *Doctor Faustus*:

Where shall I finde a place to sigh my fill,
And waile the grieffe of our fore troubled King?
For now he hath obtained the Diademe,
But with such great discomfort to his minde,
That he had better liued a priuate man, his lookes are gastly,
Hidious to behold, and from the priuie sentire of his heart,
There comes such deepe fetcht sighes and fearefull cries,
That being with him in his chamber oft,
He mooues me weepe and sigh for company (G4)

As David Riggs argues, Richard becomes a variation on Marlowe's prototype: "If only for a moment, the hero sees beyond human history into eternity and discovers that he must measure the sweet fruition of an earthly crown against the Christian absolutes of sin and damnation."⁴⁵ The Page's reports allow Richard to take on this resonance, as well as one with something quite older: the Everyman of the Catholic morality plays. Later, the Page assigns part of the blame for Richard's downfall to the commoners in the play (and on the floor of the New Hall) when he perceives their desertion of him for Richmond (and the Tudors):

A Richard, now do my eyes wnesse that they end is at hand, For thy commons make no more account of thee then of a priuate man, yet will I as dutie bindes, giue thee aduertisements of their vniust proceedings. My maister hath lifted out many, and yet hath left one to lift him out of all, not onely of his Crowne, but also of his life (G4).

Particularly in York, a city already sympathetic to Richard, this image of ungrateful commoners turning against their benefactor undermines the rest of the play's portrait of Richard as a tyrant, and perhaps awakens suspicions that he is not only the victim of deserting commoners, but of his own play.

The rapport between the Page and the audience becomes most subversive in the Page's final scene, after the defeat of Richard at Bosworth Field. Richard enters into battle resolving to if necessary "keepe my Crowne and die a King," and vows to remain silent on his own behalf: "These are my last, what more I haue to say, ile make report among the damned soules" (H3). This move potentially

45 David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 87-90.

relinquishes control his memory to the Tudors historians. However, after the battle the Page is approached by a character called Report, a personification of the historical record who asks for the “true report” of the battle (H3). Loyal to his master to the bitter end, the Page describes Richard not as the malformed tyrant that Truth promised in the Prologue, but rather describes him in heroic terms:

knowe Report, that Richard came to fiede mounted on horsback, with as high resolute as fierce *Achillis* mongst the studie Greekes, whom to encounter worthie Richmond, came accompanied with many followers... worthie Richard that did neuer flie, but followed honour to the gates of death, straight spurd his horse to encounter with the Earle, in which encountrie Richmond did preuaile, & taking Richard at aduantage, then he threw his horse and him both to the ground, and there was woorthie Richard wounded, so that after that he nere recouered strength. But to be briefe, my maister would not yeeld, but with his losse of life he lost the field. Report farewell (H3-H3^v).

The Page’s poignant discourse is clearly not the words of someone who is happy to have just escaped a tyrant. He represents Richard as a noble anachronism who is, like Achilles (and Hotspur), brave, honorable, and undaunted, not so much defeated as struck down by an adversary when caught at a disadvantage. He also perhaps hints that Richmond’s victory was not entirely honorable. Not simply a spy and a double agent, the Page becomes the source of a subversive counter-narrative of Richard emerging out of Tudor historiography.

Because of the Page, an ambivalent air must fill the Common Hall as the play closes with the victorious Richmond proclaiming Richard a traitor and ordering his body be dragged naked through the streets of Leicester (I1-I1^v). The final scene turns into an epilogue, one that gives the subsequent history of the Tudor lineage inaugurated by Richmond, now Henry VII at play’s close, and demands the audience’s loyalty to his granddaughter Elizabeth. This appeal is based on her virtues, including her having “put proud Antichrist to flight” (I2)—specifically, Philip II of Spain and the Armada, but also Catholicism in general. In case it has been too subtle, the Epilogue concludes with a final warning to the audience:

if ere her life be tane away,
God grant her soule may liue in heauen for aye.
For if her Graces dayes be brought to end,
Your hope is gone, on whom did peace depend (I2).

With this direct address, the audience comes under the scrutinizing gaze of Elizabeth's own players, the Queen's Men. As the players scan the faces of the audience, they likely see glimmers of resistance to the reign of Elizabeth, whose legitimacy rests on the preceding narrative of Richard. This is particularly the case for the commoners, who have been in closest physical proximity to the Page throughout the play, and at times directly addressed by him. The players may see some of the commoners on the floor slink behind the hall pillars and scaffolding supports to evade the players' gaze. We might even imagine a lusty soul or two jeering, but that seems unlikely. The play and its concluding appeal might find a more favorable audience amongst the Protestants in the audience, who find themselves in a sea of recusants, both in the theatre and without, although they too may resent the intrusion from far-away London the performance represents. The town oligarchs on the scaffolding above the stage and surrounding the rest of the audience, particularly the mayor and aldermen, might also resent this appeal for national unity and loyalty to Elizabeth that undermines York's autonomy and their power, made as it is in the hall that symbolizes both. Most likely, the tense moment resolves, as most plays do, into applause. But this applause is thoroughly ambivalent: it is a public performance of assent to the play and to the reign of Elizabeth, an outward sign of conformity that conceals once more the secret thoughts of the audience, a moment after they have been tantalizingly glimpsed.

Or in all likelihood, this is how the performance concludes. But there is another possibility. The York civic records have an entry dated 24 July 1592 recording a payment to the Queen's Men for a performance.⁴⁶ The following, undated entry bans indefinitely future plays at the Common Hall:

46 REED: *York* 1.449. The record states "That the Quenes players shall haue iij li. vj s viij d given them forthe of the Common Chamber."

wheras the doores, lockes, keyes, wyndowes, bordes, benches & other buildinges of the Common Hall are greatlye impared and hurte and diverse of the same broken, shakne, Lowse & Ryven vp by people reparinge thither to se and heare plays.⁴⁷

We cannot know if the entries are connected. There is at least one thing to suggest that they are not: when the ban on playing in the Common Hall was lifted in July 1596, it was the Queen's Men who gave the first recorded performance. But we might like to think that they are connected, that *The True Tragedie* was performed on this occasion, and that rather than with ambivalent applause, the audience reacts rather differently: order dissolves into chaos, and doors broken, benches thrown, and windows smashed, sending the Queen's Men scurrying from the guildhall and the mayor and aldermen seeking the protective shelter of Common Hall Lane.

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47 REED: York, 1.449.

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Who Killed Lycidas?: *Lycidas* and *The Spanish Tragedy*

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In *Lycidas*, the protagonist searches for an explanation for why his virtuous friend has mysteriously died in a cultural-political landscape of unpunished, thriving, official corruption. Though Renaissance pastoral sometimes inveighed against corrupt authorities, pastoral elegy did not. What models, then, other than the Bible, would Milton have had for the swain's search? Milton's headnote calls his poem a monody, which within a literary context primarily is a speech in Greek tragedy. Milton then invites us to read the poem within a dramatic context. But which dramatic context? The Book of Revelation of course is one of these contexts. But contemporary drama also had generated a vital genre that spectacularly combines the theme of the unjust death of the virtuous with that of corrupt officials who are destined themselves to be destroyed: revenge tragedy. To dramatize his attack on the state church, Milton draws in particular on Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*: its gradual emergence of shadowy conspiracy among corrupt authorities, Classical-Christian tensions, work-within-a-work structure, frequent interchanges between this world and the next, representation of poet-as-revenger, and exploitation of the dramatic possibilities of the Book of Revelation to justify the vengeance executed upon corrupt political and/or religious authorities. Milton subtly evokes these dramatic shadows to suggest that King was killed, directly or indirectly, by the "corrupted clergy."

Little has been said about the dramatic contexts of *Lycidas*. This is surprising in light of the poem's characters, speeches, soliloquies, actions, songs, scenes, spectacle, and dialogue. The poem's headnote, in manuscript and in the 1645 *Poems*, actually calls it a "monody,"¹ which within a literary context primarily is a speech in Greek tragedy, usually a lament, recited (or sung) by one actor rather than by the chorus. Peter Sacks, however, has pointed out a significant connection between *Lycidas* and revenge tragedy:

1 John Milton: *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 243n. Citations, by line number, to *Lycidas* are from this volume and are included in the text.

King's death was an accident---there was no one to blame. And yet Milton, no doubt realizing that he needed some actual target for his anger chose to rage against the conspiracy of those "perfidious" forces that strike down the good while leaving the wicked in triumph. It is this channeling of wrath outward to revenge that contributes so fully to his resolution of the question of justice, and to his completion of the work of mourning. Our appreciation of this should be especially keen after the study of revenge tragedies²

Sacks had related the appearance of revenge tragedy to "the contemporary decline of the pastoral elegy" that was caused by the "loss of faith in the power of art's reply." Revenge drama embodies a violence that overwhelms language as the primary means to mediate the angry grief caused by an unjust death.³ *Lycidas* responds to these circumstances: "Milton was no doubt excited by the opportunity to reconquer the ground lost by the genre and to carry the genre onward to unprecedented greatness."⁴

The Spanish Tragedy, I will argue here, is especially important to this reclamation. Among the poem's numerous dramatic intersections with the play are the theme of the unjust death of the virtuous at the hands of corrupt authorities who will themselves be destroyed; the work-within-a-work structure; frequent interchanges between this world and the next, often with supernatural characters commenting on the justice of the victim's death; foregrounded fatal banquets; vivid evocations of the moral and political consequences of sensuality; the theme of the poet as revenger; and the exploitation of the dramatic possibilities of the Book of Revelation to represent the vengeance that is executed upon corrupt political authorities. Milton, I will argue, uses Kyd's popular, powerful drama to energize his (re)generation of pastoral as Puritan prophecy. Specifically, his

2 *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 93. Also see Stanley Fish's discussion of the poem's dramatic voices in "Lycidas: A Poem Finally Anonymous," *Glyph* 8 (1981): 1-18.

3 Sacks, 64-65.

4 Sacks, 90.

skillful appropriations and rewritings suggest that Edward King was killed, directly or indirectly, by a “corrupted clergy” (poem’s headnote). And the guilty, he tells us, will soon be hoisted by their own petards, though with greater justice and more positive outcomes than in Kyd’s play. This, I will conclude, reveals much about Milton’s ideas of poetry and politics in 1637.

Lycidas, like *The Spanish Tragedy*, begins with the problems created by an unburied body and an account of its recent past. But before the speaker begins to search for this body, Milton must establish why, if the state church was corrupt, 1) the pious King was thriving within it, and 2) John Milton’s poem appears in the strongly Anglican, and “generally Laudian” memorial volume, printed by the University of Cambridge.⁵ Revenge tragedy would have provided a sensational fictional explanation. The naïve and/or virtuous young thrive at court until they are victimized by the vicious, old and young, who themselves do not thrive much longer as a consequence. Where the other elegists “associate King closely with the church and the university he served,”⁶ Milton immediately begins suggesting this context. First, there is *Lycidas* the title and then “Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime” (8). The name Lycidas “derives from the Greek for wolf cub.”⁷ As Neil Forsyth points out, this name tends to destabilize any pastoral, especially one like *Lycidas*, in which the Pilot identifies wolves with predatory clergy.⁸ Yet the name is a brilliant choice to explain King’s success at Cambridge, locating it within the context of revenge tragedy in general and Kyd’s play in particular, where the virtuous young succumb amid the competing currents of power (laurel), love (myrtle), and licentiousness (ivy)

5 Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 99.

6 Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 71.

7 Alison Horton, “An Exploration into the Etymology of *Lycidas*,” *Milton Quarterly*, 32 (October 1998): 106. She adds that this has “been known for twenty years,” citing Harold Forster, “Lycidas,” *Notes and Queries* ns 25.6 (1978): 510.

8 “‘Lycidas’: A Wolf in Saint’s Clothing,” *Critical Inquiry* 35.3 (Spring 2009): 684-702.

(1-2).⁹ King was a young and good wolf, though naïvely loyal in his “strong royalist and Laudian sympathies.”¹⁰ And we hear of his death from an “uncouth swain” (186), whom Milton invests with the persona of supposedly the only virtuous poet who should appear in a Laudian volume: a naïve one, especially appropriate to pastoral (and Milton’s poem is the volume’s only pastoral, appearing only with Milton’s initials). This poet is very reluctant to entangle himself in the ivy, laurel, or myrtle.

Few contemporary readers would have interpreted this trepidation as signaling Milton’s insufficient preparation to write a poem. Those who knew Milton, and identified him with J.M. and his swain, would perhaps most readily have conjectured in the opposite direction. Milton’s elegies on Anglican dignitaries and poems on Gunpowder Plot (in 1637 unpublished but certainly not unread), his popular Bridgewater entertainment, and the other poems that had established the reputation that had helped to earn him the invitation to contribute to the volume—these productions were not generated by the poet’s endorsement of Caroline court culture. Instead, they had been as unpleasant an experience as this fresh appearance in official print, commemorating the death of one who had been flourishing under the watchful eye of the Anglican hierarchy at Cambridge. “Yet once more” he must “pluck . . . berries harsh and crude, / And with forced fingers rude, / Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year” (3-5). Why does the pastoralist engage in this uncongenial task? Is it to shame the other poets in a song contest (another implication of the name Lycidas)? Has Milton, overeager for an immortality of fame, sacrificed his Puritan scruples to appear in an Anglican volume (and to have composed, especially, his masques)? Far from it: “Bitter constraint”—and many readers,

9 Milton’s puzzling citation of these plants, to commemorate the death of a chaste and peaceful shepherd, has often been noted, as by J. Martin Evans, *The Road from Horton: Looking Backwards in “Lycidas,”* English Literary Series (Victoria B.C.: University of Victoria, 1983), 19-23.

10 Lewalski, 30.

especially Puritans, would have identified with “bitter constraint” — “and sad occasion dear, / Compels” his involvement in a disquieting Anglican event. And “who would not sing for Lycidas?” (6-10).¹¹

As indicated by *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago / Obsequies to the Memorie of Mr Edward King*, many would indeed sing for him. The volume was supervised by John Alsop, Dean of Christ’s College; and its thirty-six poems included contributions by at least six Fellows of the College.¹² But the swain’s question is quickly followed by the suggestion that no one is mourning Lycidas: “He must not float upon his watery bier / Unwept” (12-13). An utterly fictitious neglect isolates and even opposes King to the church establishment, especially to the volume’s clerical contributors. This opposition is enhanced by another fiction: the shepherd Lycidas “knew / Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme” and has “not left his peer” (9-11). King was a mediocre (and publishing) poet and much closer to those “of scrannel pipes” (124) than to Milton: “. . . of his ten published poems, seven were written to mark the birth of royal children.” These poems reveal him to be “conspicuously loyal to the royal family,” as perhaps one should be who had been appointed to the Cambridge fellowship by royal mandate.¹³ And, as the volume’s preface reminds us, King was from a powerful Anglo-Irish family whose members included several peers, a Chief Justice of Ireland, a lord deputy of Ireland, and a bishop for whom King was named. As we watch Milton’s fictions align King with himself, we should keep in mind that of Milton’s many well-documented non-fictional similarities to this celebrator of Personal Rule, one has been overlooked.¹⁴ In 1637, King’s literary politics, if one does

11 “Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse” (18) would seem to comment on Hieronimo’s initial “clinical case of denial” of death (David Bevington’s introduction to *The Spanish Tragedy* [New York: Manchester UP, 1996], 10).

12 Carey, 237; William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, ed. Gordon Campbell, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 2:811n.

13 Campbell and Corns, 96-97.

14 Milton, apparently, had a cordial respect for King. In 1645, when there was no obvious need, he calls him “a learned friend” (poem’s headnote). Yet Milton seems sensitive to his similarities rather than to his differences with King. For Milton’s ideological affinities with King, see Lawrence Lipking, “‘The Genius of the Shore’: *Lycidas*, Adamastor, and the Poetics of Nationalism,” *PMLA*, 111.2 (Mar. 1995): 209-10.

not look too closely, would not seem too distant from that of John Milton. King might have celebrated the births of the powerful, but Milton had privately commemorated their encounters with death and publicly celebrated their political and personal triumphs. This places the poet much closer to the King's court than to William Prynne's pillory.

For Milton in 1637 this proximity was disturbing, and his distancing of Lycidas and the speaker from their former associates is a distancing of himself from official Caroline cultural authority. Again this distancing could be made within few more effective contexts than a revenge tragedy such as *The Spanish Tragedy*. As the play begins, we learn that the betrayed hero Andrea could not receive judgment in the underworld because his body had been left unburied on the battlefield. Nevertheless, this fact is completely omitted from the official version of his death. Instead, the General reports to the Spanish King that the "brave man at arms" (1.2.72) was a sad victim of the "fortune of the war" (1.2.3).¹⁵ When his friend Horatio buries his body, Andrea is sent to Persephone because his complex identification with laurel and myrtle baffles his underworld judges as to which paradise (of warriors or lovers) he deserves (1.1.38-49). Persephone rewards the lover-soldier with the opportunity to witness Revenge punish his still-living antagonists. His death then shadowily emerges as having been a connived killing in a "world" that is a "mass of public wrongs, / Confus'd and fill'd with murder and misdeeds" (3.2.3-4).

Apparently he was considered too low-born, perhaps "uncouth,"¹⁶ to mate with the regal Bel-Imperia; and her brother Lorenzo, the play's Machiavel, implicitly arranges for him to be killed in battle by the Portuguese Prince Balthazar. And for similar reasons the duo later murders Andrea's close friend Horatio (Hieronimo's son) as he is amorously toying with Bel-Imperia, hanging Horatio's

15 Citations to *The Spanish Tragedy*, included in the text, refer to Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. Philip Edwards (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1959).

16 "Uncouth" here strongly connotes "being an outsider" (Annabel Patterson, *Reading Between the Lines* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993], 56).

corpse in a garden. Isabella, Hieronimo's wife, distraught by the unavenged death of her son, destroys the flora, and herself, in this garden, literally enacting the pathetic fallacy (4.2).¹⁷ She anticipates, as few if any of Milton's analogues so forcefully do, the swain's physical assault on the berries and shattering of the leaves, even injecting it with political importance, since this destruction, sourced in the Book of Daniel, anticipates Hieronimo's "'cutting off' the line of accession to the thrones of Spain and Portugal."¹⁸

Moreover, Horatio's death is lamented in a language of mourning that, though conventional, is shared by Milton. Hieronimo calls his murdered Horatio a "sweet lovely rose, ill-pluck'd before thy time" (2.5.46). Anticipating Milton's epigraph to his 1645 volume, Hieronimo declares, "The blust'ring winds, conspiring with my words, / At my lament have mov'd the leafless trees, / Disrob'd the meadows of their flower'd green" (3.7.5-7). Even the Viceroy grieves, when his son is reported to be killed: "My years were mellow, his but young and green, / My death were natural, but his was forc'd" (1.3.41-42), lines that linger throughout Milton's exposition.

The corpse of Milton's King is also missing and unexplained. And the swain will not merely mourn. He, avowedly alone, will like Kyd's Horatio search for a corpse and like old Hieronimo despairingly seek explanations from god and man for a horrible death: "How should we term your [Heaven's] dealings to be just / If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust?" (3.2.10-11). The swain even suggests that he risks a fateful, melancholy death ("destined urn . . . sable shroud" [20-22]), as do Kyd's protagonists (see especially 2.5.67-80), because of a commitment to the victim with whom he is closely identified. The swain recalls himself and Lycidas as shepherds innocently thriving in a corrupt milieu. Their shared art entertains fauns and satyrs before the approving eye of

17 Sacks, 70.

18 Frank Ardolino, *Apocalypse and Armada in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy"* (Kirkville, Mo: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1995), 28.

Damoetas (often alleged to be William Chappell or his great friend Meade). Few alert collegiate officials could have welcomed (and possibly fewer excluded Puritans not welcomed) this description, which aligns Cambridge with the licentious courts of revenge tragedy and the ungodly clergy of Puritan invective.

At this point, the memories of fauns and satyrs are joined by references to frolicking nymphs, Druids, maenads, bugs, and divine but decapitated poets. The play, as no other of Milton's analogues, provides an immediate context for the poem's much debated exchanges between Christianity and classicism. Kyd seems to mingle pagan furies, fortune, and fate, with Christian themes, especially that of providence, to the extent that it is impossible to determine whether the play's revenge ethos is pagan or Christian or neither or both. Milton much more carefully manages his Christian and classical elements, but still there is no consensus on whether the poem's classicism opposes or complements its Christianity. Nevertheless, the poem's darker moments seem primarily classical, and this classicism seems to owe something to Kyd. The swain here denounces a pagan "Fury" (75), a term essentially alien to pastoral elegy but which appears no less than nine times in the play. The swain concludes, as do many revengers, that to be virtuous is to be stupid and consequently that to be worldly, or even evil, generates success. The swain's primary motivation to remain virtuous is not a Christian religion but a platonic Fame:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
And slits the thin spun life (70-76).

Milton here suggests fatal conspiracy within a context of religious reform, even implying divine complicity. This slitting glances back to the fate of "King's mythic surrogate" Orpheus, closely identified with the classical underworld. The reforming prophet was

“murdered by the Bacchantes,” his own resistant religious cohorts, who severed his head.¹⁹ This is seconded by the transformation of blind Fortune into a “blind Fury,” whose purposeful malevolence is generated by a blindness that aligns it not with Fortune but with the shoving, designing, “blind mouths” (119) of the Anglican church. This not mere questioning but indictment of providence is antipathetic to pastoral, classical and Renaissance. But again it is central to Kyd’s revenge tragedy, in which the virtuous are early singled out for elimination.

Milton’s dialogue with Kyd is also apparent in the famous question that prefaces the swain’s despairing assessment:

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd’s trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless muse,
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera’s hair? (64-69).

With an eye on Horatio’s death in the garden, Milton would have known that it is *not* better to yield to youthful sensuality in a corrupted landscape. Milton’s diction points to this context. Milton uses “boots” (*Lycidas* 64) as a verb only one other time in his poetry (*Samson Agonistes* 560). Kyd uses the verb form twice in the play, each in negative contexts, including the construction “what boots complaint” (1.4.92).²⁰ Milton’s singular use of “guerdon” also echoes Kyd. Although a favorite word of Spenser, *guerdon* appears only once in *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (and once in *Virgil’s Gnat* and once in *Colin Clout’s Come Home Againe*). Kyd uses it four times in his play, including “that just guerdon” that the ill-fated Horatio is supposed to receive for his glorious capture of Prince Balthazar, who had killed Andrea (1.2.189). This affair soon generates Balthazar

¹⁹ Evans, 11.

²⁰ The phrase was not common. Shakespeare uses it (if at all) only once: *Titus Andronicus* 5.3.2546.

and Lorenzo's murder of Horatio in the erotically-charged scene in the garden/(guerdon?). Kyd's protagonists, much more than King, would seem readier sources for the passage's intense sense of fatal, frustrated sexuality.²¹ The final lines of Milton's passage (75-76) restate Horatio's description of Andrea's death, in the scene in which the death first appears to be the result of "murd'rous cowardice": "But wrathful Nemesis, that wicked power, / Envyng at Andrea's praise and worth, / Cut short his life to end his praise and worth" (1.4.73, 16-18).

Phoebus Apollo then speaks, the first of series of supernatural characters who respond, as they do in Kyd's underworld, to a recent death. Phoebus seems to respond to Horatio's assertion in his immediate and scornful statement that the Fury does not cut "the praise" (76). His "consolation" is indeed suspicious within the context of Kyd's play:

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil . . .
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed (78-84).

"Witness," "all-judging," the almost baffling "deed" — it is as if Jove has arrogated the authority of Minos, Aeacus, Rhadamanthus, Pluto, and Persephone in Kyd's play. And Apollo would seem to be viewing the situation from the supernatural perspective of Andrea and Revenge, who view the mortal soil where Andrea seems to have been forgotten. But Phoebus, unlike Kyd's Revenge, refuses to locate justice in this world, thus precluding the famous revenge, which springs from the infirmity of Hieronimo's noble mind. This refusal is especially suspect in light of Apollo's identification with wolves (and wolf-killing) and his status as the father of the murdered Orpheus.²² His response seems calculated to defend his failure to

21 For the sexual implications of this passage, see especially Evans, 48.

22 Horton explains Apollo's complex connections with wolves (106-07). Evans discusses Apollo as Orpheus's father (49).

avenge his son. And his offer of praise, freighted with an aloof otherworldliness, suggests that the swain should expect to die in circumstances similar to those in which Lycidas had died, just as Horatio is killed by those responsible for Andrea's death.

After a brief choric commentary (87-88), the swain's search continues to take on sinister legal overtones such as those that swirl about the King's Knight Marshal as he—through a maze of trials, writs, and petitions—attempts “either to purchase justice by entreats / Or tire them all [the Spanish court] with . . . avenging threats” (3.7.72-73).²³ As the swain “listens” (89; eavesdrops?), unsettling suspicions about foul play surface. A royal functionary (a “herald”) of the Sovereign of the Seas comes “in Neptune's plea” (89-90).²⁴ The herald then questions “the felon winds” about whatever “doomed” the “gentle swain” (91-92):

And sage Hippotades their answer brings
That not a blast from his dungeon strayed,
The air was calm, and on the level brine,
Sleek Panope with her sisters played [acted?] (96-99).

The god of wind would seem to be conspiring with the felons that he supervises, as Lorenzo notoriously does in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Hippotades, though possibly culpably credulous (again common in revenge tragedy), is more likely lying before a naïve swain. Over a third of the elegies, including brother Henry King's, mention or suggest a storm.²⁵ Even if Hippotades is supposed to be accurate, then Milton's poem apparently again plays loose with the facts in order to make the death as suspicious as possible.

23 A Knight Marshal was “a law officer whose authority was exercised in the English royal household, in hearing and determining all pleas of the crown . . . and in punishing transgressions committed within his area” (Edwards, 5n). Ardolino examines the motifs of prophetic lawsuit and resurrection in the play (20-23).

24 The mighty *Sovereign of the Seas*, built with the challenged ship money, had been launched in Fall 1637.

25 J. Karl Franson, “The Fatal Voyage of Edward King, Milton's Lycidas,” *Milton Studies* 25 (1989): 50.

In the play, Horatio apparently is not officially acknowledged as either dead or murdered until Hieronimo produces his corpse before the King in the bloody climax. And, at the play's outset, the betrayed Andrea is conveniently dismissed as a victim of an amoral fatality that camouflages mundane evil: he is "deceas'd by fortune of the war" (1.2.3). This cynical evasiveness recurs in the explanation of Lycidas' death: "It was that fatal and perfidious bark / Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark, / That sunk so low that sacred head of thine" (100-02). More down-to-earth explanations for fatal misadventures were as readily available in Milton's Britain as in Kyd's Spain. Contemporary sea journeys were perilous, especially along the northern coast of Wales, even without storms. The probable place of King's death was part of "a navigational nightmare for any shipmaster."²⁶ King, as travelers often did, made out his will immediately before departing to Ireland, possibly to visit his mentor William Chappell.²⁷ Surely more than the stars were amiss. What then went wrong?

Milton's complex rewriting of Kyd's Fate enables a powerful religious context to answer this question. Official guilt is suggested by the traditional metaphor of the church as a ship, which is delivered to the alert reader through the swain's naivety or the god of wind's ignorance. The perfidious ship in which "Lycidas is a young, minor officer," as David Berkeley has documented, is more precisely identified with the evil church captained by William Laud: meddling little hocus-pocus, protégée of the Duke of Buckingham, empowered (at least in the poem, if not by tavern gossip) by "curses" that seem to be derived from "the magic arts."²⁸ Berkeley cites *Of Reformation* for Milton's antipathy for Laud and his bishops as "Wizzards." I would add, first, *An Apology against a Pamphlet*,

²⁶ Franson, 50.

²⁷ Campbell and Corns, 97.

²⁸ David Berkeley, *Inwrought with Figures Dim: A Reading of Milton's "Lycidas"* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 147, 158. He adds that "eclipse" could very possibly been understood as a reference to Laud's influence (163-64).

where Milton reduces his adversary (“this wizzard”) to a fortune-teller who worships a bishopric; and second, *Reason of Church-Government*, where “inchantresses” and “sensual mistresses” are responsible for England’s failure to understand the clear principles of church government (CPW, 1:596, 928-29, 831).²⁹ Moreover, in *Eikonoklastes*, he transfers the title to the Presbyters, and pairs these “wizzards” with Iscariot (an archetypal schemer), to denounce their implied acceptance of the King’s pre-war ecclesiastical policies (CPW, 3:347) (and the pairing of Iscariot with Simon Magus occurs in *Readie and Easie Way*, Second Edition, CPW, 7:414-15). *Eikon Basilike* supposedly has “bewitch’d” them, and indeed the entire country, into “blinde and obstinate beleef.”

Laudianism as wizardry is also evident in the naïve swain’s admiring nod towards the “famous Druids,” who from their “wizard stream” overlook the site of the shipwreck (53, 55).³⁰ In his *History of Britain* Milton identified “a sort of Priests or Magicians call’d *Druides*” with learned paganism, occult/secret knowledge, popular superstition, and an illiterate populace (CPW, 5:60-61).³¹ Druids are attainted with the kind of culpable sensuality that in the poem culminates in the Pilot’s denunciation of the corrupted, negligent, self-serving clergy. The Druids are “men factious and ambitious” who preside over the “lew’d adulterous and incestuous life” of Britons before “the Gospel . . . abolish’t such impurities.”

“Rigged” makes these connections in *Lycidas*. On one hand it alludes to the popular shell game, which the English

29 Citations of Milton’s prose, included in the text, refer to *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don Wolfe, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82).

30 Significantly, this argument resurfaces in the tract’s last paragraph. The hopeless sheep, if not swine, are “begott’n to servility, and enchanted,” though some few might have been mere victims of “Sorcery” (CPW, 3:601).

31 In *Mansus* the Druids are identified (positively, with Apollo) as evidence of British intelligence (26-48). Milton also cites the Druids as masters of learned “pagan rites” in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (CPW, 2:231); he implicitly acknowledges their intellectual ability in *Areopagitica* (CPW, 2:551-52). Laud’s learning very possibly exceeded Milton’s in 1637.

called thimblery, and which was closely identified with the fraud perpetrated by magicians: what is supposed to be determined by chance is actually arranged by the powers of darkness. On the other hand, though apparently “rigged” had yet explicitly to denote a fraudulent setup, according to the *OED* it did mean “wanton and licentious”; and “rig” as verb meant “to play the wanton,” as the cavorting nymphs and festive shepherds do when King suffers the shipwreck of Laud’s wizardly, wanton boat.³²

The swain’s search for a corpse takes him to the Cam and Cambridge, location of authorities who were legally responsible for prosecuting justice for one of their pledges. Yet Milton suggests that the guilty are managing and manipulating the investigation, a circumstance common in revenge tragedies such as Kyd’s. Another victim’s father arrives, the father of Lycidas himself. Old Camus, a regal “sire” (103), is hardly old Hieronimo, the King of Spain’s Knight Marshal. Fading under his faded academic cap and gown, he is a dim beacon of justice indeed, seamlessly merging with the indifferent paganism that had preceded him. His regalia “suggests the mystical learning of a wizard, whose coat would be ‘Inwrought with figures dim.’”³³ Though his hands might be clean, either his academic gown or his cap (or both) seems to be spattered with blood. The edge of his attire is “like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe” (106). It is not Camus’ woe, or its color would be black. Instead the edge is blood red, a color that distinguished the Cambridge academic dress of Doctors of Divinity. This color is like the pagan flower sprung from yet another early death. Hyacinthus was the innocent victim of sexual in-fighting between Aeolus (Hippotades) and Apollo. Apollo and Aeolus of course had appeared in the swain’s quest for the corpse. Neither is actively consulted by the swain but mysteriously involves himself in the investigation, apparently (as in revenge tragedy) to subvert it, as each figure justifies the death within unsatisfactory

32 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s. v. “rigged.”

33 *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 104n.

and classical terms. This (intensified by Apollo's identification with wolves) aligns these outmoded figures with the corrupted clergy. Yet the decrepit Camus, in his "footing slow" (103; a vivid contrast with Hieronimo's and Milton's energetic verses), provides, unwittingly, one startling piece of evidence in his single line: "Ah; *who* [emphasis added] hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?" (107).³⁴

The swain's search for justice at this point parallels Andrea's and Hieronimo's. As David Bevington writes, searching "for signals of divine intent" in an early and tragic death, Kyd's revenger must experience "a long phase of growing doubt and despair before the answer is made clear," even as Kyd's subplot reveals that "appearances are deceiving, and villainy may flourish for a while, but ultimately heaven will provide deliverance to those who persevere in goodness."³⁵ Andrea watches in frustration as his courtly enemies triumphantly advance his killer's marriage to his former love, even murdering Andrea's best friend Horatio and apparently attaching Hieronimo to their scheme: "Nothing but league, and love, and banqueting!" (1.5.4). But "Revenge is not in fact dead but is practicing a ruse common to all revengers, that of biding his time."³⁶ Revenge assures Andrea of inevitable retribution. In the elegy, a Christian figure steps out of the pagan landscape to mourn the victim.³⁷ And this authentic mourning generates the assurance of a revenge that clearly is sanctioned and supervised by God.

In revenge play style, the Pilot-shepherd (a.k.a. St. Peter) is officially empowered by those whom he attacks, Laud's captains/

34 Lawrence Lipking remarks on the significance of "who": "The blight of King's death provokes his friend to look for revenge as well as redemption" (213).

35 Bevington, 10, 13.

36 Bevington, 6.

37 The Pilot is making "the essential equation of the revenger" in his angry contrast between a dead good man and thriving evil men. But where playwright-revenger Hieronimo petitions remote "gods in vain" in language that "loses its efficacy," Milton merges himself with the Pilot in triumphant prophecy (Sacks, 110-11).

crews/shepherds.³⁸ Just as Hieronimo's plotting is disguised by his status as the King's Knight Marshal, so the mitred (112) Pilot's threat is hidden by his status as a rock upon which the Anglican church is built (as subversive Milton's threat is by his inclusion in the Anglican volume in which the poet has mitred/metered the Pilot). But this Pilot-rock (another disguise) will, unlike the Laudian rock, destroy the guilty rather than the innocent (King's boat was reported to have struck a rock). And, in yet another disguise, this Pilot-Pilate is revealed to be neither the expedient politician who had sentenced Jesus nor his political heirs who were persecuting the saints. Instead, this pilot and his poet triumphantly appropriate Revenge's authorization of retribution.

Milton carefully distinguishes his Christian revenge from Kyd's quasi-pagan version.³⁹ But he also was alert to Kyd's vigorous Christian subtext(s). The vengeance described by the Pilot, takes place, as in the play, at a banquet that is sourced in Daniel and that subverts the Marriage of the Lamb in Revelation. As the ecclesiastical allegory thickens, the Pilot suggests that the Bishops see neither killers nor corpse because these powerful political figures, like those in revenge tragedy, are the killers of the corpse. These fleshly priests, not inscrutable Fate-Fortune, "shove away the worthy bidden guest" (118). *Shove* was not common: Kyd does not use it, Shakespeare only twice, and Milton once (here). But, according to the *OED*, "shove off" at this time was already a common nautical term that meant "to launch (a boat) by means of a steady push."⁴⁰

Milton then again deftly includes the clergy within the long, rich theological tradition of clergy as shipbuilders. The clergy have shoved away Lycidas into a boat constructed according to their own

38 As Campbell and Corns point out, Milton's allusion to St. Peter, founder of episcopacy, would seem to discourage reading the poem as anti-prelatical (99).

39 Sacks, 93.

40 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s. v. "shove."

evil designs. But the clergy will soon discover that their actions, like the nefarious activity in Kyd's *Babylon/Spain-Rome*, advances the destruction of the wicked, of themselves. The shoddy, sinister workmanship responsible for King's death-boat will precipitate the destruction of Laud's shoddy, sinister workmen: "But that two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more" (130-31). The tacit complications of the device, its two-edged nature (which will only strike once, though the brilliant reiteration of smite suggests its normal course of twice), its covert implications (is its wielder listening outside the door?), its banquet-revels setting, its unexpectedness, its sources in Revelation, and of course its use for revenge upon evil killers who have been shielded by their official status: all of these point to *The Spanish Tragedy* and its punishment of the crimes of powerful public officials.

Here it becomes clear, though only momentarily, that Lycidas' death is one, as in *The Spanish Tragedy*, to be avenged. Yet as the Pilot departs, his mighty prophecy is reduced to a "voice" of not the future but the "past" (before Thorough?) (132). The swain is momentarily disturbed by the warning; but he, purportedly as most of Milton's contemporaries, is skeptical that divine vengeance is at the door. He quickly returns to business as usual, pastoral, literary and (according to Milton) ecclesiastical. An environment disordered by death and sensual corruption returns as the swain searches for an explanation for a still missing corpse (132-54): "wanton winds" (not unlike those that courted the sails that were "rigged" with curses), "the glowing violet," "the pansy freaked with jet," a "swart star" that "sparely looks" on a "fresh lap," "tufted crow-toe" (yet another allusion to Hyacinthus), and "the rathe primrose that forsaken dies," which in an earlier version of Milton's passage points even more directly at the tragic lovers of Kyd's play than they do at Edward King (who was not preparing for marriage)—"the rathe primrose that unwedded dies / ~~eo~~ colouring the pale cheek of uninjoyd love."⁴¹

41 Flannagan, 105n.

The swain's "frail thoughts dally with false surmise" of official and neat but fraudulent versions of tragic events (e.g. the body of the victim of chance/fate/fortune cannot be recovered). Milton's poetic singular use of "dally" points to Kyd's play as his context for this folly.⁴² Kyd uses "dally" three times, twice in conjunction with "guerdon": "Lorenzo: Nay, if thou dally then I am thy foe . . . Yet speak the truth and I will guerdon thee . . . But if thou dally once again, thou diest" (2.1.67-75). Kyd's Andrea also seems to linger in the swain's speculation that Lycidas "perhaps under the whelming tide / Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world" or has attached himself to some other "fable" (157, 160).

No corpse, no revenge (and no prosecution). Kyd's play, and Andrea's revenge, begins when his body is recovered and receives justice, allowing him to meet the gods of the underworld. Hieronimo's revenge-play, Kyd's climax, concludes when Hieronimo produces the dead body of his "hapless son" before his own victims' fathers (4.4.84). The swain's poem concludes, and Milton's climax begins, when the "the hapless youth" (164) is resurrected in the vivid images of Milton's divine poetry. My argument supports, and to some extent depends, on Michael providing the last lines of the swain's poem. If the swain directly speaks the consolation, then "our sorrow" rather than "your sorrow" (166) would seem more appropriate. And there are deeper dissonances. The swain asking "shepherds" (165) to cease weeping would be at odds with his emphasis on the initial lack of tears as well as with his own reiterations of cultural isolation. And a swain's mystic, ecstatic utterance would not accord with the pedagogy of Milton and other Puritans whom Milton seems striving to reassure of his cultural integrity. Indeed, "the uncouth swain" (186) would seem to be a singularly inapt source here for direct, godly consolation, having reacted with docile naivety to the responses of pagan authority figures and with disbelieving shock to the Pilot. Moreover, if the swain is the speaker, and one closely

42 Milton in prose uses "dally" to denote foolish delay in reforming the church (*Of Reformation*, CPW, 1:602; *Reason of Church-Government*, CPW, 1:797).

identified with Milton, then this consolation could just as readily have been made anytime during the poem. Instead, in his most intense moment of despair, the swain actually seems to abandon his search for the corpse, at last invoking the mercy (rather than vengeance) of a Christian figure, who seems (like a revenger) to be alienated, if not exiled, from his native context: “Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth” (163; “And melt the Corsic rocks with ruthful tears” [3.13.72]).

Looking from Spain (and *The Spanish Tragedy*?) towards England, Michael’s triumphant, and rational, response enacts the startling reversal that is common in revenge tragedy.⁴³ The angel reveals that, as in the subplot of *The Spanish Tragedy*, one believed to be dead is alive. King’s body was never recovered, but Milton’s powerful poetry makes us forget that fact. Instead, we see (or think we see) Lycidas singing and dancing with Saints in a Christian Heaven that is pointedly different from the pagan afterlife through which Andrea, also literally unseen by the play’s humans, wanders with Revenge (though not too unlike the dramatic entertainments, including Milton’s, that had infuriated one saint, William Prynne).
Lycidas

hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There *entertain* [emphasis added] him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes (176-181).

This passage’s primary source is Revelation, which also generates the rewards for Kyd’s Horatio. Ascent, sweet singing of troop-choirs dancing in heaven, rewards and solace for the innocent victim, even a suggestion of physical healing—Milton’s “your sorrow” now “mounted high” (166, 172) resounds with Kyd’s description of celestial afterlife:

43 For the poem’s many reversals, see Evans, especially page 58.

—my soul hath silver wings [“with new spangled ore”? (*Lycidas* 170),
That mounts me up to the highest heavens,
To heaven, ay, there sits my Horatio,
Back’d with a troop of fiery cherubins,
Dancing about his newly-healed wounds,
Singing sweet hymns and chanting heavenly notes,
Rare harmony to greet his innocence . . . (3.8.15-21).

Similar to the play, the virtual recovery of not merely Lycidas’ body, but Lycidas, signals revenge. Though Milton’s climax emphasizes mercy rather than vengeance, providential reward implies providential punishment. If Lycidas, tearful victim driven from the pastoral feast and into the church’s ill-made and fatal boat, is participating in a Marriage of the Lamb, the terrible revenge to be taken on the whore of Babylon cannot be further off in England than it had been in Kyd’s Spain.⁴⁴ The two-handed engine was at the door, and there was much practical evidence in 1637 to support this statement (see below). This immediacy is enhanced by Milton’s transformation of Lycidas into a supernatural political figure: almost un-Miltonic, almost pagan, almost Catholic, a “genius” (183) of this world not unlike Kyd’s spirit of Revenge.

Revenge and the angelic Persephone help the dead Andrea to return to earth with Revenge to revolutionize Spanish politics (at least fictionally). We learn from the warrior-angel Michael that, when not dancing in Heaven, Lycidas locates to a shore where he can competently perform the maritime-ecclesiastical duties at which the Anglican clergy had failed. This, like the poem itself, initiates revenge because it prepares for the two-handed engine that will destroy the architects of the Laudian ship. This message offers hope to the presently “woeful” (165), and probably parishless, shepherds who should weep no more, unlike the dry-eyed and festive shepherds who had heard the isolated swain’s initial invocation and who probably now should begin their weeping.

44 Michael Wilding, discussing the Nativity Ode, writes that Milton provided “a vernacular glimpse of apocalypse at a historical moment when such visions were suppressed because of their radical Utopian political implications” (*Dragon’s Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987], 14). He adds that the commentaries on Revelation by Pareus and Meade were not published in English until after 1640.

The play here is an even more immediate analogue than *The Shepherd's Calendar*, in which the Book of Revelation can only be faintly discerned, if at all. Kyd's apparently "muddled . . . odd mixture of pagan and Christian concepts" coherently functions as "an apocalyptic revenge play which presents in a mysterious subtext the overthrow of the Antichrist, Babylon/Spain, by England in 1588": "Now I shall see the fall of Babylon, / Wrought by the heavens in this confusion" (4.1.195-96).⁴⁵ To represent this overthrow, the play adapts Protestant readings, such as those by Pareus and Meade, of Revelation as composed of seven four-act dramas.⁴⁶ Kyd's unusual four act structure represents this fall within "the context of the tour apocalypse, during which a select person or prophet undertakes a journey into the otherworld justice system, sees its operation, and returns to earth to deliver his visions," as he reassures true Christians "that the world which appears to be ruled by Fortune is predetermined, directed toward the destined fall of Antichrist." Like John the Evangelist, given his information by an Angel, this witness must be very careful to keep "the secret truths hidden from the uninitiated and revealing them to the initiated."⁴⁷ The work then generally adheres to "the pastoral mode" of political critique, through which "sharp criticisms could be made, and the key supplied to those in the know."⁴⁸

Similarly, Milton's radical Puritan pastoral, thick with pagan images, carefully proclaims the imminent and providential destruction

45 Ardolino, 15, xiv; For Milton's "irreverent" (and "unskillful") "combinations," see Samuel Johnson, "Milton," *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill (1905; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1967), 1:164.

46 To what I discuss in the body of the essay, one more of Kyd's uses of Revelation seems to have influenced Milton—Revelation as a source for Kyd's complex tense shifts: "The temporal pattern which emerges from the fulfillment of this destiny demonstrates that the past is repeated in the present, which in turn reveals more about the significance of the past and anticipates a future which is the inevitable result and sum of the past and present. This type of temporal progression requires synchronous scenes that create, through retrospection and anticipation, a cumulative vision leading to the awareness of how divine providence works in the universe" (Ardolino, 63).

47 Ardolino, 56, 58, 60.

48 Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1978), 50.

of the Laudian church in a markedly Laudian volume—a prophecy surely not intended to be understood by the Laudians themselves. This revelation clearly is influenced by David Pareus’s reading of Revelation as “a *Prophetical Drama*, show, or representation”:⁴⁹

And the Apocalyps of Saint *John* is the majestick image of a high and stately Tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn Scenes and Acts with a sevenfold *Chorus* of halleluja’s and harping symphonies: and this my opinion the grave authority of Pareus commenting that booke is sufficient to confirm (*Reason of Church-Government*, CPW, 1:815).

Milton here seems to respond to this passage in particular:

For as in humane Tragedies, diverse persons one after another come upon the Theater to represent things done, and to again depart; diverse Chores also or Companies of Musicians and Harpers distinguish the diversity of the *Acts*, and while the *Actors* hold up, do with musickall accord sweeten the wearinesse of the Spectators, and keepe them in attention.⁵⁰

The singing swain functions as the Chorus, but his monodic status enables him as an actor who encounters diverse persons who depart, allowing the swain to comment upon them before encountering more persons. Furthermore, though Barker’s three movements provide the poem’s fundamental organization, Milton lightly overlays it with a four act structure that seems to derive from his reading of Pareus (and Kyd).⁵¹ The swain’s expository prologue (1-14) and the narrator’s epilogue (186-93) frame four “solemn Scenes and Acts,” each ending with a different speaker. The four acts-movements replicate Pareus’ dramatic analysis of “*the first act of the universal Visions*” that reveals “the calamities” of the Church at the hands of

49 David Pareus, *A Commentary upon the Divine Revelation of the Apostle and Evangelist John*, trans. Elias Arnold (Amsterdam, 1644), 20. Accessed 10 May 2011 through Early English Books Online (<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>).

50 Pareus, 20.

51 Arthur E. Barker’s influential analysis divides the poem into an introduction (1-14), three parallel movements (15-84, 85-131, 132-185), and a conclusion (186-93) (“The Pattern of Milton’s *Nativity Ode*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 10 [1941]: 167-81).

Pagans and Heritickes. *The second* in way of parallel to the first, prefigureth comforts opposite to the calamities of the Godly. The third shadoweth out an amplification of calamities the fourth, parallel to the third, sheweth the *Catastrophe* of all evils, *viz.* the declining of Antichrists Kingdom and the casting of all adversaries into the lake of fire: and on the contrary, the Churches Victory and Eternall Glory.⁵²

In lines 15-84, the swain laments a seemingly senseless death and futilely searches for consolation, instead receiving a pagan god's sly repudiation of earthly justice, cloaked as a pious dismissal of earthly fame (1-84). Lines 85-132 present a series of voices to which the swain "listens" (89), climaxing in the Pilot's implicit assurance of comfort for the faithful (again, providential punishment implies providential reward). In the third movement-act (132-64), the swain's despair intensifies as he seems to endorse Apollo's assessment, abandoning his search for consolation in a landscape infected by sensual corruption and death. Finally (165-85), Michael echoes the Pilot in his correction of the errant swain. The angel, in a kind of *deus ex machina*, provides the definitive revelation that explicitly rewards Lycidas as it implicitly endorses the Pilot's prophecy concerning the corrupted clergy. History, as expositors of Revelation never tired of reminding their audience, is providential. And this entire sequence evokes the "tour apocalypse," with its motifs of prophetic lawsuit and resurrection.

The swain emerges from a cast of supernatural justice figures and then relates his experience to the John-figure, Milton himself. Otherwise, the solitary swain's experience would have remained secret. The poem's ultimate author and the swain's mediator then carefully prepares the poem for the Anglican volume, so carefully that its content still eludes definitive interpretation. Nevertheless, Milton, for the learned and virtuous, foretells the destruction of the corrupted clergy, who, because of their ignorance, fail to understand Milton's apocalyptic message. Once again, the Laudians are

⁵² Pareus, 27.

hoisted by their own petards. And for those Laudians who could decode Milton's message, the poem's the thing to catch the King's: "The volume's compilers, the clerical contributors, and Milton's Cambridge audience might have been uneasy with" some passages, "but they could hardly protest without seeming to identify themselves as likely objects of Peter's denunciation."⁵³

After the location of Lycidas' body (and spirit), we immediately learn that the poem is not related in first person. Milton, finished with the main body of the poem, suddenly distances himself from it as it ends its journey into the Anglican memorial. "A work that began as drama has ended as narrative," a radical "generic transformation" that "cannot be found in the eclogues of Virgil, or in the eclogues of any other poet."⁵⁴ Yet it characterizes Kyd's drama, which concludes with Revenge and Andrea discussing the results of what they have just seen acted on the stage, which concludes with the survivors discussing the results of what they have just seen acted in Hieronimo's entertainment.

As Kyd does, Milton, emerging from a welter of voices and tense-shifts, creates a work within a work. This framing tends to cast Lycidas and the Angel in the roles of Andrea and of Revenge, supernaturally viewing the British political situation. It also adroitly aligns the reader with Revenge and Andrea: we, with the narrator, have been listening to (and viewing) the mourning friend's encounter with the guilty forces of official corruption. This tends to create a sense of urgent community action or at least to encourage the reader with a sense of power such as wielded by the glamorous revenger.⁵⁵ Assured by the Pilot of divine retribution, and instructed in heavenly rewards for active "saints" (178) by the vigilant angel, the reader

53 Lewalski, 71.

54 Evans, 67.

55 "Kyd shows that we are to see ourselves as not just passive watchers but as critical evaluators, that our status as members of the elect audience aware of the mysteries depends on our ability to interpret the play correctly" (Ardolino, 64). Lipking discusses the poem as a call to national purpose.

is encouraged to follow, at least mentally, the blue-clad “uncouth swain” as he temporarily withdraws, as revengers often did, from the corrupt landscape. The swain seeks “pastures new” (193), probably first Presbyterian and then sectarian, fields that, whatever their purportedly inactive state in 1637, will generate the bloodiest war in English history.

In conclusion, I want to relate Milton’s engagement with *The Spanish Tragedy* to his reclamation of authorial authority for himself as a Christian/classical/Spenserian pastoralist. In Kyd’s popular play, *Revenge*, authorized by a pagan underworld, functions as “author and stage manager The shape of *Revenge*’s revenge is the shape of Kyd’s tragedy.”⁵⁶ *Revenge*’s playwright is the quasi-pagan Hieronimo, whose desired reward in the afterlife is to be united with the “Thracian poet” (3.13.116; “Thracian Bard” [*PL* 7.34]).⁵⁷ Because of his skill in “fruitless poetry” (4.1.72), especially his prior success in writing a masque celebrating Spanish political might, Hieronimo is asked by his intended victims to compose a play for the marriage revels of the prince who has secretly murdered his son Horatio. Amid numerous echoes of Revelation, Hieronimo, father of the revels, writes, directs, and acts in a masterpiece of revenge, its subject “the fall of Babylon” (4.1.195), its purpose to overwhelm his court antagonists. Hieronimo merges with apocalyptic warrior, prophecy with play, revenge with justice, art with fictional reality, and the admiring princely actors are destroyed amid applause and festivity.⁵⁸ Hieronimo, even exceeding the reluctance of Milton’s “forced fingers,” then bites out his tongue (“bitter constraint” indeed in this repudiation of language) rather than further to explain his revenge to the mystified King of Spain. Under threat of torture, he indicates his willingness to write an explanation and obtains a knife to sharpen his pencil. This gives us “Kyd’s equation of the knife and

⁵⁶ Bevington, 6-7.

⁵⁷ Flannagan, 538.

⁵⁸ Ardolino, 62, 66.

pen” which “derives from the Reformation topos of the ‘sword and the book’” (composing another two-handed engine) functioning as “the sharp sword of divine vengeance.” It is the knife rather than the pen that dominates. “The apocalyptic warrior,” securing himself with a key (like the Pilot’s) sourced in Revelation 3.7-8, deploys his “weapons against the representatives of Babylon,” the Spanish court, using the knife to kill the King’s brother and then himself.⁵⁹

Milton, as Sacks points out, would have been profoundly dissatisfied with the play’s spectacular endorsement of violence over language as the more effective vent for grief and as the primary vehicle for social justice. In addition to further corrupting Christianity with a pagan mentality (confounding more than Hell with Elysium), Hieronimo embodies one of Milton’s fiercest antipathies: the aristocrat for whom literature is a pastime or, occasionally, an effective means to advance a political scheme that is based upon violence. And, consciously or instinctively, the poet John Milton himself reconfigures the fictional Hieronimo. The vengeful fusion of art and reality that occurs on Kyd’s stage becomes the historical event of Milton publishing his poem. Revenge, rather than being represented in the poem, is the poem; and the poet is the revenger.

The author of the much applauded Bridgewater entertainment is asked to write by Cambridge churchmen who perhaps had denied the scrivener’s son a fellowship but, on royal orders, favored King (and so perhaps the poet’s not too upset [in the authorities’ view] by the circumstances of King’s death?). Emerging either fortuitously or perhaps at the poet’s request at the end of the solemn volume, Milton’s poem functions as the book’s climax and catastrophe, exploding the solemnity of the “sad occasion dear” (6). He denounces the corruption of the church, even suggesting its responsibility for King’s death (and those initiated, at least into the mysteries of gossip and rumor, are usually extremely alert to suggestion). He even prophesies its

59 Ardolino, 72, 74-75.

eventual chastisement, carefully eliminating the distance between Christian justice and pagan vengeance that unsettles Kyd's play.

In contrast to Hieronimo's final bloody and possibly senseless act, Milton's "two-handed engine" (130) functions as a sanctified (though not exclusively) literary revenge, suggesting the printing presses that were soon to churn out thousands of religious pamphlets that will atone for the "nothing said" (129) of 1637.⁶⁰ Milton's poem anticipates this activity as it advances the spiritual regeneration that must precede national liberation and without which justice and "liberty" become the "licence" that generates the "waste of wealth, and loss of blood" that can mar not merely a stage but a country (Sonnet XII, 11, 14). As this violence later recedes, the poet will step forward onto the international stage to justify executing a king who supposedly was responsible for the deaths of so many godly, innocent Englishmen. Here was enacted an authorial authority far beyond anything imagined by Kyd.

Finally, Milton's rewriting of Kyd tells us something about Milton's sense of the British political situation in 1637. On the one hand, not simply the swain, but Milton himself was imperiled by the swain's search for answers. Of course, his masque indicates his great skill in cloaking his sharp criticisms before powerful officials. But Laud's churchmen could be not only careful but willful readers.⁶¹ To dare Laud's wrath, Milton would seem to have been sincerely grieved. On the other hand, Milton seems particularly anxious to distance himself from the volume in order to avoid sending the wrong message to his increasingly malcontent countrymen. The

60 James Kelly and Catherine Bray, "The Keys to Milton's 'Two-Handed Engine' in *Lycidas* (1637)," *Milton Quarterly* 44.2 (2010 May): 122-142. But, as Hill points out, "Preaching [like the pursuit of printed truth] is surely a cumulative activity" and is at odds with the "smite no more" (51).

61 Yet one wonders how careful in light of the volume's epigraph, from Petronius, favorite and victim at Nero's court: "If you reckon rightly, shipwreck is everywhere" (Carey, 237n). This line is as open to a church-as-ship reading as Milton's poem. Of course, as Milton would have been instructed by revenge dramatists, subversion often is facilitated by official status.

1645 addition to the poem of the headnote (and, at last, Milton's name) is another revealing fiction that tends to confirm this anxiety.

Laud's clergy in November 1637 were certainly not at their height of power.⁶² In June 1637, a mob had demonstrated open public support for the Puritan martyrs Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne (past critic of masques, future critic of divorce pamphlets). The Prayer Book riots had begun in July 1637 and were intensifying throughout the Fall. The Covenant was published (February 1638) and even signed by a nation (May 1638) before Milton's blue-clad swain had appeared in *Justa Edouardo King / Obsequies*. Milton's distancing himself from the volume does not seem to be strictly one of conscience. He was, among other things, anticipating questions about his Puritan integrity in the aftermath of Thorough (when, as the prophet seems to have had anticipated, he is indeed traced to an unpuritan tenure at Cambridge, from which he is "vomited" into "the Play-Houses, or the Bordelli," accusations to which he replies at length in *Apology Against a Pamphlet* [CPW, 1:884, 885n]).⁶³

62 "Unfortunately" in the headnote would seem to work against my argument or at least to indicate that Milton later decided foul play had not been involved in the death. But, when we remember that the poem, if anything, justifies the death as the work of Christian providence rather than of pagan(istic) fortune, "unfortunately" tends further to muddy the poem's silences.

63 But the primary prose context for this perspective is the preface to the Second Book of *Reason of Church-Government*: "So lest it should be still imputed to me, as I have found it hath bin, that some self-pleasing humor of vain-glory hath incited me to contest with men of high estimation, now while green yeers are upon my head, from this needlesse surmisall I shall hope to dissuade the intelligent" (CPW, 1:806). The complexities of this preface in relation to *Lycidas* can only be glanced at here. But Milton seems to have been still sensitive to objections to his credibility in 1642, having actively "found" these objections. His apology for using his "left hand" restates his defense of using his right hand in *Lycidas*: he was engaging in an uncongenial subject for a youth of unripe years, whose voice was threatened by the flashy songs of established writers. Milton then provides his famous argument for poets as priests, teachers, and prophets, even arguing for a national theatre (and citing Pareus in support). His defense of himself as a poet cites work that had convinced his teachers that "the stile by certain vital signes it had, was likely to live" (CPW, 1:809). This evidence is seconded by Italians' praise for verses that Milton had "compos'd at under twenty or thereabout." Milton's summary of his achievements, omits his three publications: "On Shakespeare," *A Masque*, and *Lycidas*.

If the poem's forecast of Laud's destruction confirms himself as a prophet, Milton had much evidence for characterizing England as a potential "Nation of Prophets" in *Areopagitica* (CPW, 2:554). He was far from alone in expecting an explosion of political discontent. Much of this explosion was aimed at Laud, the veiled villain of Milton's poem. And here we have perhaps the most interesting implication of my argument. William Laud was a devout Christian and a conscientious Archbishop who was perhaps even more ready than Milton to rid the church of clerical corruption. No sane scholar would now attaint him with either engaging in the murderous politics of revenge tragedy or participating in the black arts. Why then did Milton, a devout and conscientious Christian himself? Milton's use of the spectacular, popular genre of revenge tragedy suggests that the answer perhaps resides in the unwritten history of gossip, slander, and innuendo.⁶⁴

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64 In his *First Defense*, Milton states as fact that Laud's patron Buckingham poisoned James I (CPW, 4:372). There is evidence to support this. But he also connects Charles with the crime, adding that he was an epicure, coward and lecher, even implying his sexual relations with Buckingham (CPW, 4:372, 408-09, 430). No reliable evidence even suggests these libels. Where did he get his information? Finally, it would be interesting to know what Milton had heard about Laud's predecessor, George Abbot, whose effectiveness was severely impaired when he unfortunately killed a man during a hunt, becoming the only Archbishop of Canterbury officially to be guilty of homicide.

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John Milton

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Jessica Winston is Professor of English at Idaho State University. Her research focuses on the literary culture of the early English legal societies, the Inns of Court, and the Elizabethan reception of the tragedies of the ancient Roman statesman, philosopher, and playwright Seneca. She is the author of numerous articles on the Inns of Court, and with James Ker, she has recently published an edition of early English translations of Seneca, Elizabethan Seneca: Three Tragedies (Published by Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012).

NOTE

**“Rise Up, Lord, Scatter Your Enemies (*Please*)”:
Faith and Doubt in the Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Hoard¹**

Thomas Klein

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As is now well known, in July of 2009, an unemployed metal “detectorist” named Terry Herbert was plying his device in the recently plowed field of a friend in the farmland outside of Lichfield, in Staffordshire, in the English West Midlands, and came upon a remarkable find.² Over the course of several days, he uncovered hundreds of items of what turned out to be early Anglo-Saxon gold and silver metalwork. The find was subsequently reported to the British Portable Antiquities Scheme, which took over the site, and eventually some 1300 distinct objects (and many more pieces) were recovered. The news of the discovery, now popularly known as the Staffordshire Hoard, spread quickly. The scope of the hoard was unprecedented with respect to its valuation (3 million pounds equally divided, thanks to Britain’s treasure laws, between Mr.

1 This article was presented as a paper at the themed 2011 RMMRA conference in Salt Lake City, “Faith and Doubt in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.” It is a shortened version of an article forthcoming in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*. The author appreciates the assistance and encouragement of Prof. James Forse, the editor of *Quidditas*, and Prof. Helena Hamerow, the editor of *ASSAH*, as well as the support of the College of Arts and Letters at Idaho State University.

2 Caroline Alexander, “Magical Mystery Treasure,” *National Geographic* 220, no. 5 (2011): 38-60.

Herbert and the landowner), its weight (over ten pounds of gold), and the light it sheds on Mercian culture and power, an era of Anglo-Saxon England about which relatively little is known. Indeed, much of the current dating of Anglo-Saxon artistic styles and metalwork may ultimately need to be revised as a result of the discovery.

As was initially observed by Kevin Leahy, National Finds Advisor for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the contents of the hoard are largely military—inlaid hilts and filigreed sword caps, parts of shields and helmets, as well as several crumpled gold crosses, dating apparently from the sixth to the seventh centuries.³ The hoard was buried on a ridge just off the Roman Watling Street in a marginal, little inhabited zone of “open woodland and heath.”⁴ Hidden far from habitation but close to a getaway road, the hoard might have been the spoils of battle or of a colossal robbery, and buried with the intention of being recovered later. But the fact that it seems to be a “non-random selection” of very particular objects is suggestive; Leslie Webster thought the hoard might be “essentially precious scrap put together for recycling,” which evidently went astray on its way to the recycling center (if so, the way the crosses have been bent to fit into the burial space gives evidence of a surprisingly blasé attitude toward the sacred objects), but Patrick Périn thought it more likely that “the collection was amassed as ritual deposition in a pagan sanctuary.”⁵ We may thus well wonder whether the faith evidenced by the identifiably Christian objects in the hoard yielded to doubt, as their bearers were overcome in battle.

Among the many remarkable objects in the hoard, one that has attracted much comment is a thin strip of gold with a double line

3 Kevin Leahy, “The Staffordshire Hoard: Discovery and Initial Assessment,” *Portable Antiquities Scheme*, <http://www.finds.org.uk/staffshoard/artefacts/>, accessed 23 June 2010.

4 Kevin Leahy et al., “The Staffordshire (Ogley Hay) Hoard: Recovery of a Treasure,” *Antiquity* 85 (2011): 205-8. See also Stephen Dean, Della Hooke, and Alex Jones, “The ‘Staffordshire Hoard’: The Fieldwork,” *Antiquaries Journal* 90 (2010): 139-52.

5 Leslie Webster et al., “The Staffordshire (Ogley Hay) Hoard: Problems of Interpretation,” *Antiquity* 85 (2011): 222, 226.

of letters, inscribed in Insular script. The strip is around three and a half inches long, half an inch wide, and a tenth of an inch thick (roughly the dimensions of a packet of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum), and weighs about three ounces (the general equivalent of fourteen U.S. quarters). It is now folded more or less in half, but if unfolded would be around six inches long (Fig. 1).⁶



Fig. 1

Of the 1300 objects, it alone is inscribed with writing. Letters appear on both sides; on the outer side, the letters are inlaid with niello and are fairly distinctive (Figs. 2-3), while on the inner side, which is obscured both by the fold and by scratches, the letters are only inscribed and are more difficult to make out (Figs. 4-5). Included are both color and black-and-white images (which better show the inscriptions). At one end of the strip, there is a rivet and a setting for a jewel, and at the other end, there is an engraved animal head, its mouth open and tongue sticking out. The presence of two other holes, one in the middle and one at the far end, suggests that the strip was attached to something else, and that one side was supposed to face outward. Many theories have been advanced regarding the function of the gold strip: it might have been the arm of a cross; part of a shield or a sword belt; the nose guard or some other part

⁶ More precisely, 89.5 x 15.8 x 2.1 mm, 80 g, with an unfolded length of 179 mm. See Leahy et al., 215.

of a helmet; or even (appealingly but perhaps implausibly) the outer binding of a book.⁷

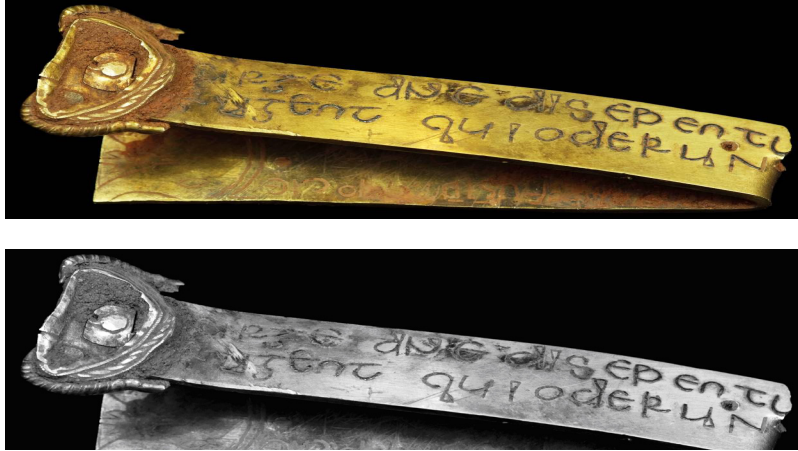


Fig. 2. Gold Strip: outer side, first half⁸



Fig. 3. Outer Side, second half

⁷ Andrew West, "The Staffordshire Hoard: Anglo-Saxon Epigraphy and the Manuscript Tradition," *Babelstone*, <http://babelstone.blogspot.com/>, accessed 2 June 2010.

⁸ Images of Staffordshire gold strip are by courtesy Staffordshire Hoard Official Website, under a Creative Commons Generic 2.0 license [attribution – noncommercial]; photos are by Dave Rowan and Daniel Buxton under the aegis of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.



Fig. 4. Inner side, first half

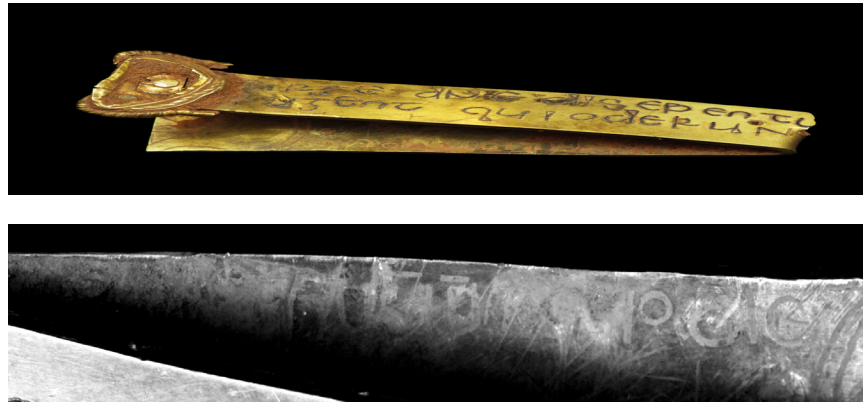


Fig. 5. Inner side, second half

The gold strip is extraordinary in many regards. The form of the letters, which (I argue elsewhere⁹) calls to mind the scripts of late seventh century manuscripts, is unusual in an inscription. It is likewise unusual to find niello—the black silver oxide that makes the letters stand out—being used in Anglo-Saxon metalwork from between the early seventh to the late eighth centuries (and this may indeed be evidence of an earlier date of manufacture for the strip, generally thought to have been made in the late seventh century). It

⁹ Thomas Klein, “The Inscribed Gold Strip in the Staffordshire Hoard: The Text and Script of an early Anglo-Saxon Biblical Inscription,” *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, forthcoming.

is also unusual for words to be separated by spaces in an inscription, as at least sporadically appears here.¹⁰ Finally, few if any Anglo-Saxon inscribed Roman letters or runic texts have been ever been found in the West Midlands before, the area corresponding to Anglo-Saxon Mercia.¹¹ In this article, I would like to concentrate chiefly on what the text suggests about the inscriber's Latin literacy and familiarity with the Old Testament. And I would like to outline what I see as a moment of doubt in the form of the inscription—the initial inscription on the inner side which was then revised on the opposite side—and what this might suggest about the inscriber and his (or her) faith. Does this brief passage represent a particularly poignant appeal for assistance, which ultimately was not answered?

The transcription of the passage below is based upon the high-resolution digital images made available online, and supplemented by images made after the strip had been more thoroughly cleaned. For the transcription, I have used Elisabeth Okasha's system of transcribing the letters as capitals, underlining letters which are damaged but whose restoration is fairly certain, underlining and bracketing letters whose restoration is uncertain, and indicating ligatures with '/'. Double slashes indicate the fold in the strip. I have also attempted to represent the relative spacing between letters in the transcription, which reads thus:

SURGE DNE DISEPENTU//R INIMI CITUI E/T
EUGENT QUI ODERUN//TTE AFACIE TUA

While the spacing between words is somewhat inconsistent, it frequently reflects word separation, and with the standard expansion of 'DNE', the text can be easily read as "Surge, *Domine*, disepentur inimici tui et fugent qui oderunt a facie tua."

10 See Elisabeth Okasha, "Spaces Between Words: Word Separation in Anglo-Saxon Inscriptions," in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge and Rochester, New York: York Medieval Press, 2003), 339-49.

11 See the maps in Elisabeth Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 140-1, and in R. I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge and Rochester, New York: Boydell, 1999), 26.

The letters on the reverse side, obscured by scratches and by the fold of the strip, are upside down in relation to those on the front side, but repeat the same sentence.¹² They read as follows:

S URGE DNE DISE PINTUR ... // ...[N]IMICITU[E]/TFUGIŪTQUI O
DE RUNT TE A FA CIE TU... // ...[A]DIU.E N O S ... [D S]

The letters are smaller, more compressed, and somewhat malformed relative to the outer side. The two letters after ‘-NIMI-’ are bent over and almost resemble an Insular ‘A’ (which appears as a double ‘CC’). The letters after ‘FUGI-’ are likewise unusual in form, but there does seem to be a ‘U’ with a superscript line indicating an abbreviation for ‘N’ followed by a ‘T’. The ‘O’ at the end of the first line is quite small and attached to ‘QUI’. The letters on the fourth half line are particularly intriguing, as well as being difficult to make out. After ‘ADIU’, Okasha, who examined the text microscopically, reports an ‘I’, whereas Michelle Brown sees a ‘T’; to my eye, admittedly working at a disadvantage, whatever is there is difficult to distinguish from one of the many scratches on this part of the inscription.¹³ Then, the following ‘E’, with a long, continued horizontal bar, bears a strong resemblance to the ligatured ‘ET’ elsewhere, though the final diagonal “stroke” that would complete the ‘T’ is only hinted at. Then, after a definite ‘NOS’, resolving the text is difficult, given a heavy series of cross-hatched scratches, apparently deliberate. Brown discerns the letters ‘DS’ with a horizontal bar to indicate the abbreviation “*deus*,” whereas Okasha suggests an ‘R.’ Upon very close examination, there seems to be the rounded lower left part of an Insular ‘D’ followed by an ‘S’, though there may be some following letters. Brown suggests the reading of that final line as “*adiute nos deus*”; Okasha reminds us that these could either be practice letters or be a formulaic filler such as “*dei nostri*” or “*dme nostri*.”

12 The images included in Elisabeth Okasha’s web-posted paper (“The Staffordshire Hoard Inscription,” *Portable Antiquities Scheme*, “Papers from the Staffordshire Hoard Symposium,” 2010, updated 2011, <http://finds.org.uk/staffshoardsymposium>, accessed 4 February 2012), are indispensable here. See also Michelle Brown’s paper (“The Manuscript Context for the Inscription”), posted there as well.

13 Okasha, “Staffordshire Hoard Inscription”; Brown, “Manuscript Context.”

For the purposes of our focus on faith and doubt, I suggest that these continued letters may indeed be significant, rather than mere filler. While this side's inscription does give the impression of being less artfully rendered, and perhaps was not meant to be viewed, it is not necessarily the case that its message was unmeaningful. I would like to propose two further possibilities for the fourth half line: they might be read (using Brown's final letters), "Surge, Domine, disepintur [i]nimici tui et fugiunt qui oderunt te a facie tua diu e[t] nos [deus]," or (using Okasha's letters), "diu e[t] nos[tris]."

It was quickly recognized that the text of both inscriptions closely follows Numbers 10:35 of the Latin Vulgate, and also echoes Psalm 67:2, although the final half line on the inner side does not match either context. A number of commentators have argued that the inscriber was thinking of the Psalm, rather than the passage from Numbers; as Okasha says, "the Psalms might have been better known to [the inscriber] since the Psalms were chanted daily throughout the year in the monastic liturgy."¹⁴ It is indeed true that the Psalms were well known to the Anglo-Saxons, and that psalters account for about a quarter of all biblical materials found in manuscripts; however, the manuscript record makes clear that they also knew other parts of the Old Testament, and this inscription may be further evidence of that.¹⁵

The text of the gold strip differs from Psalm 67 in a number of significant aspects. This is especially true when we compare the inscription to the version of the Psalter most widely used in England during this time: the Roman version, based on Jerome's initial

14 Okasha, "Staffordshire Hoard Inscription."

15 For a survey of the variety of biblical materials known to the Anglo-Saxons, see Helmut Gneuss, "A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100," *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981): 1-60. See also Richard Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Brandon Hawk ("Staffordshire Hoard Item Number 550: A Ward Against Evil," *Notes and Queries* 58, no.1: 1-3) argues that deviations from the official Vulgate text appearing various manuscripts in "the Latin West" make it possible that the inscriber was indeed quoting the Psalm; however, the examples he cites are from manuscripts written quite far from Anglo-Saxon England.

revision of the Old Latin Bible. As we have seen, the front side of our text reads,

Surge, Domine, dissepentur inimici tui et fugent qui oderunt te a facie tua,

which I translate,

Rise up, Lord, scatter your enemies and banish those who hate you from your face.

The Roman Psalter, which is first witnessed in England by the eighth century Vespasian Psalter (the earliest surviving copy of that version anywhere), reads,

Exsurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant a facie eius qui oderunt eum,¹⁶

which Sherman Kuhn translates,

May God arise and scatter his enemies and let them that hate him flee from his face.

As can be seen, the forms of address are different (the Psalm refers to God in the third person, rather than directly); additionally, the Roman Psalter uses the words *exsurgo* instead of *surgo* (both mean effectively *rise* or *arise*), *dominus* instead of *deus*, and the phrase “qui oderunt...” appears in a different place as well.¹⁷ By contrast, Numbers 10:35, which is first witnessed in England by the early eighth century Codex Amiatinus, reads,

Surge, Domine, et dissipentur inimici tui et fugiant qui oderunt te a facie tua.¹⁸

16 Sherman Kuhn, ed., *The Vespasian Psalter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965).

17 In the Gallican version of the Psalter, based on Jerome’s later revision and which replaced the Roman version in the tenth century, the “a facie eius” phrase comes at the end of the sentence.

18 Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, 4th corr. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

The Douay Rheims translation renders this as:

*Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee, flee from before thy face.*¹⁹

In this case, the only differences between the gold strip and the standard Vulgate are the omission of the first “et,” writing “disepentur” for “dissipentur,” and writing “fugent” for “fugiant.” The quotation on the gold strip must certainly derive from Numbers.

There are a few differences between the gold strip and the authorized Vulgate text of Numbers, but they are generally minor, and in fact suggest that the writer was at least fairly competent in Latin and might even have been experimenting with the original text to make it more appropriate for the context of the inscription. To begin, omitting “et” between “Domine” and “disepentur” does not affect the sense of the sentence; it simply becomes more staccato. Next, writing “disepentur” (or “disepintur” on the opposite side) for “dissipentur,” while it may make classicists wince, is a substitution any non-native speaker might make who was working from auditory memory. Likewise, writing “fugent” for “fugiant” is not incorrect as a grammatical form, though it does not make literal sense: it is simply the present active subjunctive of the verb *fugo*, meaning ‘to cause to flee,’ rather than the verb *fugio*, meaning simply ‘to flee’—a simple error revealing that the writer was familiar with grammatical forms and their uses, but occasionally mixed them up.²⁰ Likewise, writing “fugiunt” on the opposite side shows that the writer knew the various forms, but was struggling to slot in the correct one.

From our perspective, the continued text is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the inscription. Brandon Hawk argued

19 *The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version*, rev. Bp. Richard Challoner, 1749-52 (Rockford, Ill: TAN Books and Publishers, 1989).

20 Other aspects of the inscription suggest that the writer, if not the actual inscriber, was familiar with manuscript writing traditions: for instance, the word-spacing (especially on the first side) is at least moderately consistent; the variation between Insular uncial and minuscule letter forms is reflective of late seventh century scripts; and abbreviations of “domine” and “fugiunt” likely derive from manuscript practice.

that the entire text should be seen as “a written ward against evil,”²¹ and we can perhaps extend this, remembering what Northrop Frye said about charms, which, after all, seek to bring about a certain result—here, evidently, success over one’s opponents in battle. The charm may work by “the reciting of powerful names,” and by setting up “a pattern of sound so complex and repetitive that the ordinary processes of response are short-circuited.”²² Already, in the Biblical passage, we have a powerful name, “Domine,” and a pattern of alliterative sound, “*Domine disepentur*” and “*fugent ... a facie.*” What is missing, of course, is an extension of the Biblical tag to the particular situation, making one’s personal enemies God’s enemies. It is possible then to consider Brown’s suggested reading, “*adiute nos Deus,*” which personalizes the appeal as “Help us, God” (and extends the alliteration), or one of the two readings I have proposed: either “*diu e[t] nos [deus],*” where grammar and usage fails but alliteration carries, “Ever and us, God,” or “*diu e[t] nos[tris],*” which would particularize the entire message thus:

*Rise up, Lord, scatter your enemies and long banish those who hate you
from your face—and ours.*

This message, possibly hidden on the inner side of the inscribed strip, would function talismanically, extending the reach of the already powerful Biblical text.

Interestingly, while Numbers 10:35 appears rarely in other Anglo-Saxon works, the corresponding passage in Psalm 67 is better attested and appears, as Hawk has pointed out,²³ in the early eighth century *Vita Guthlaci* of Felix, wherein Guthlac, assailed by devilish spirits, is able to dispel them by reciting the verse:

²¹ Hawk, 3.

²² Northrop Frye, “Charms and Riddles,” *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 125-6.

²³ Hawk, 2.

Tum vero vir Dei ... sexagimi septimi psalmi primum versum psallebat:
“Exsurgat Deus,” et reliqua; quo audito ... omnes daemoniorum turmae
velut fumus a facie eius evanuerunt.²⁴

We may read this as:

Then at length the man of God ... sang the first verse of the sixty-seventh psalm..., “Let God arise” etc.: when they had heard this, ... all the hosts of demons vanished like smoke from his presence.

Perhaps some similar effect was hoped for with regard to the gold strip. Similar passages appear elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon texts, but given where the hoard was discovered, Guthlac’s Mercian background was especially evocative to many commentators on the hoard, including one who suggested that the hoard might be the very treasure that Guthlac won as a warrior and then discarded upon entering holy life.²⁵ Such a connection is impossible to prove, and it is more important to recognize that the message of the gold strip, in the words of Hawk, “point[s] to a warrior’s need for a protective charm,”²⁶ and is thus wholly appropriate given the martial context of the rest of the hoard.

We are left, then, with the curious puzzle of the scratched out letters in the final half-line of the inner side. These do appear to be deliberate, and it seems that we have two options for their interpretation. Either the inscriber was aware of having hopelessly erred in the writing down of the Biblical passage and / or its personalized extension (the variations between the two sides suggest the inscriber was working directly from memory, rather than from a written exemplar) and was trying to erase it; or perhaps someone else, having obtained the strip and the rest of the hoard, was trying to diminish its power in some way (if so, that person evidently could make out some of the message).

24 Bertram Colgrave, ed. and tr., *Felix’s Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 110-11.

25 J. J. Cohen, “Did Guthlac of Mercia Bury the Staffordshire Hoard?” *In The Middle*, 28 September 2009, <http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/>, accessed 5 February 2012.

26 Hawk, 3.

In any case, given how the treasure was stripped and hurriedly buried (apparently in a small bag or box), it appears that, at least on one unfortunate occasion, God did not act in response to the plea—though it is likely that we will never know, in the words of *Beowulf*, “hwa þæm hlæst onfeng,” “who received that cargo,”²⁷ nor indeed why they later failed to retrieve it.

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Selected items from the Staffordshire Hoard

Texts and Teaching:
Books Recommended for Courses

Capturing the Imagination of a Distracted Audience

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We compete for students' attention. Surrounded by smart phones, tablets, and laptops, we compete for their attention, sometimes in the classroom but definitely outside of it. To combat this deluge of distractions, assigned readings must contain attractive content. The challenge can be particularly acute in pre-modern history classes, partly because the language and the content of primary sources, even when translated into clear, modern prose, is often unfathomable to readers accustomed to reading *Sparknotes* or *Wikipedia*. One potential solution to this challenge is Maurice Keen's *Outlaws of Medieval Legend* (rev. ed. New York: Routledge, 2001).

In its fourth edition, Keen's book has proven to be a perennial favorite in the classroom. The reasons for this enduring popularity are fairly transparent. Certainly outlaws constitute an inviting topic for most students. Keen's prose is mostly clear and unassuming. The book also contains both the redacted tales that students crave with the analysis that instructors require. Therefore, Keen's book has remained a standard partly because of its accessible yet informative approach to a wide spectrum of outlaw legends from the very well-known Robin Hood ballads to the lesser known legends of Hereward the Wake, Eustace the Monk, Fulk Fitzwarin, and Gamelyn. William Wallace is even there to demonstrate that one reader's outlaw is another's patriot.

In many respects Keen's book was a seminal work when it first appeared in 1961. It inspired several other works that ultimately undermined his central thesis, namely that the Robin Hood legend emerged from peasant origins. Keen himself recognized the flaws in his initial argument in his introduction to the second edition (1977), noting, "In 1961 I argued, emphatically, that the Robin Hood story rose to popularity in the later middle ages because it gave expression to the social grievances of the 'common people', and I equated the 'common people'—over-exclusively, I think—with rural peasantry. The arguments with which I supported this view, in particular Chapters XI and XIV, do not now seem to be satisfactory."¹ Keen originally believed that the Robin Hood ballads, as they survive today, were written forms of popular stories. In fact, they were meant for recitation, often in the great halls of the gentry. Storytellers likely compiled them from an array of sources and various forms of the legends. Thus, they entertained a wide swath of society, not merely the peasantry. Therefore, the intent of the stories was not merely to communicate the plight of the impoverished members of medieval English society, but rather to amuse diverse audiences by articulating common grievances related to secular government and to a lesser extent ecclesiastical practices.

Keen's introduction to the second edition provides one of the first challenges for students reading the monograph. Some ask, "Why are we reading a book when the author has changed his mind?" It is a question that is worth looking forward to on the first day that the book has been assigned. It has so many answers that prompt numerous questions and debates in return. "What exactly did the author change his mind about?" "What made him change his mind?" "What else is the book about?" "Why does the book remain in print?" "Why do historians continue to rewrite history?" In short, Keen's book is well suited to stimulating discussion, not only about the content of the outlaw legends but also about issues related to historiography.

1 Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), xiii.

Before going any further into how the book has been useful in the classroom, it is worth saying something about the historiography that has surrounded the book in the past half century. In the revised introductions, Keen claimed that he was “no longer inclined to argue for an exclusively popular appeal for the Robin Hood ballads,” and was instead more likely to follow James Holt’s claim “that the original focal centre for the dissemination of Robin’s legend was the gentleman’s household, ‘not in the chamber but in the hall, where the entertainment was aimed not only at the master but also at the members (of the household) and the staff.’”² Keen had initially assumed that the hostility toward government and ecclesiastical officials came only from the peasantry and echoed the frustrations evident in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. However, later scholarship revealed that “hostility towards grasping ecclesiastics and corrupt officials was not in any degree exclusive to the peasant class: for high and low alike they were two stock targets for complaint throughout the whole medieval period,” or at least from the Norman Conquest until well into the Tudor period.³

Addressing the early end of the chronological expanse, Cyril Hart has emphasized that Hereward and his gang in East Anglia had maintained substantial landholdings in that region, further suggesting that Keen’s original argument concerning the appeal of the outlaw legends only to impoverished people was flawed.⁴ Because they stood to lose a great deal to the Normans, they resisted what they viewed as a grasping dispossession by the Conqueror. At the other end of the period, Sean Field’s article “Devotion, Discontent, and the Henrician Reformation: The Evidence of the Robin Hood Stories” has suggested that Robin Hood tales in their various forms reflected

2 Keen, *Outlaws*, xiv. The work to which Keen is here referring is James Holt, *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1999).

3 Keen, *Outlaws*, xv.

4 Cyril Hart, “Hereward the Wake and his Companions,” in *The Danelaw* ed. C. R. Hart (London: Hambledon Press, 1992).

contemporary attitudes toward the Reformation.⁵ He notes that those familiar with the stories included the broadest possible range in society, from King Henry VIII to the peasantry. Views on such topics as the competence or ineptitude of the clergy and the details of Robin Hood's religion (Protestant or Catholic), as expressed in the stories, varied just as dramatically as did the audience. The outlaw legends have therefore yielded fertile material for an array of historical research. And although this scholarship often varies in terms of its conclusions, it continues to reveal a great deal about life in medieval and early modern England.

Because of this breadth of more recent scholarship, one may reasonably ask, "Why choose Keen's book?" After all, fine collections of outlaw legends exist in various forms, such as Thomas Ohlgren's *Medieval Outlaws*.⁶ In short, Keen's work allows instructors to expose students to the process of writing history while also teaching them the history itself. Keen's admission to the alteration of his original conclusions reveals that historians continue to reexamine the sources and further develop the story of the past, something which students new to the discipline may not realize. In addition, the book is fully competent in its recitation of historical fact. Keen provides students with both secondary historical research and summations of the outlaw legends. He therefore introduces students to the work of professional historians and regales them with tales of medieval banditry. Keen himself recognizes the attractiveness of such legends across generations, noting, "the appeal of Robin Hood's story owes much more than I once thought to the glamour that so easily attaches, in any age, to the activities of the 'gentleman bandit' whose misdoings are redeemed by the courage and generosity of his nature and of the manner of his robbing, and have nothing much to do with specifically class tensions, such as those which

5 Sean Field, "Devotion, Discontent, and the Henrician Reformation: The Evidence of the Robin Hood Stories" *Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 1 (January 2002): 6-22.

6 *Medieval Outlaws: Ten Tales in Modern Verse*, ed. Thomas Ohlgren (Sutton Publishing, 1998).

surfaced in the course of the Peasants' Revolt."⁷ The outlaw legends were stories for every man, not bound by class or chronology. The topic has inspired numerous major motion pictures and television series, including the recent movie *Robin Hood* (2010) and the *Robin Hood* series which ran for three seasons on BBC, beginning in 2006. However, the entertainment industry does not hold a monopoly on this fascinating topic, and Keen's work allows for academics to take full advantage of its appeal while also exposing students to historical fact and methodology.

In the classroom *Outlaws of Medieval Legend* contains material appropriate for both lower and upper division courses. In the lower level and lecture courses, it enlivens the staples of High Medieval English History: Hereward resisted the Norman Conquest; Fulk opposed the tyranny of King John; William Wallace battled the minions of Edward I. By conveying and explaining stories about heroic figures who participated in these events, the book encourages students to ask how much of the legends is true. Once the students are curious, the book has done a large part of its job. They can come to lecture to learn more details, but if they show up for lecture wanting to know those details, half of the battle is already won. Once they are interested, we can do some heavier lifting.

One of the objectives of our introductory courses is the development of critical thinking skills. Along these lines Keen's book works well, particularly as it challenges students to recognize that the lines between fact and fiction are sometimes blurry, especially during the Middle Ages. Keen provides some insight into the historical evidence surrounding the legends. For example, Hereward the Wake appears as a landholder of some substance in the *Domesday Book*. And while we must be careful to avoid acceptance of all the feats associated with Hereward's resistance to William the Conqueror and the Earl Warrene, we must be equally careful to avoid dismissing all evidence presented in the *Gesta Herewardi*. In

7 Keen, *Outlaws*, xv.

other words, it is okay to be uncertain about the historicity of certain elements of the legend. This grey area is, after all, a matter for some speculation, conjecture, and perhaps even research. By encouraging students to keep an open mind until decisive evidence appears, we presumably promote critical thinking skills.

Beyond the historicity of the legends, we also consider the utility of the fictions within the work. Of course we do not always know what constitutes fiction in a legend; however, Keen is particularly adept at helping his reader identify recurring literary devices inherent in outlaw legends. Disguises, cunning, and an ability to live off of the land often accompany the outlaws' superhuman strength. These literary figures embodied the heroic archetypes of the society that perpetuated them. Hereward, Eustace, Fulk, Gamelyn, Wallace, and Robin all possessed the equivalent of street smarts, another attractive element of these stories, not only for medieval audiences, but also for students of the twenty-first century.

Keen's book is also useful for more advanced courses, such as seminars, where considerations of historical methods are more commonly considered. How, for example, does Keen date the emergence of the Robin Hood legend in oral form? The question seems straightforward enough, but many students fail to distinguish the emergence of the legends in print during the early 1500s from the ballads' fourteenth-century roots in oral tradition. The key piece of evidence here is the reference to "the rymes of Robin Hood" in the B-text of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1377). By indicating that Robin's story was more familiar to a parish priest than the Lord's Prayer, Langland suggests that the stories enjoyed some popularity by the end of Edward III's reign (1327-1377). Other pieces of evidence within the ballads also suggest their formation earlier in the reign: the idealization of the yeoman archers, who became war heroes in the decades leading up to the Treaty of Bretigny (1360); the references to "good" King Edward, likely a reference to Edward III; and mentions of livery and maintenance, common plagues on the judicial system of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

This evidence is somewhat inconclusive and imprecise in terms of dating the initial emergence of the oral legends of Robin. For example, Keen suggests that Edward I (1272-1307) might have qualified as “good King Edward” though Edward II (1307-1327) probably did not. Why? By asking students to explain Keen’s argument for dating the emergence of Robin’s legend to the reign of Edward III, we give them an opportunity to understand not only how to construct an argument based on evidence but also how to recognize that the argument, though persuasive, is somewhat less than conclusive. In other words, we explore how the reconstruction of the past often involves arranging diverse pieces of evidence into an insightful conceptual framework. Keen’s book offers an opportunity to demonstrate to students in fairly simple and entertaining terms how historical interpretations follow from honest and creative interpretations of evidence and how they can remain open to later criticism and reformulation. It provides a window into the processes of argumentation and revision associated with historiography.

Whether it is part of introductory lecture classes or of more advanced seminars, Keen’s book also illuminates topics related to British political and social history. More specifically it addresses the relationship between law and justice particularly as they pertain to property. Aristocratic outlaws, such as Fulk and Eustace, portrayed the nobility’s enduring and pervasive concerns with inheritance and wardship. These baronial outlaws shared these property concerns with knights (Gamelyn) and yeomen (Robin) to produce a common sense of justice that transcended class, language, and culture. Whether the grasping lord was King John or the local sheriff, outlaws shared a common opposition to tyranny and injustice. Whether the legend was a chivalric metrical Romance in French or a more humble ballad in English, composers of these tales recognized that audiences craved stories about successful opposition to greedy and corrupt administrators of the common law.

This focus of Keen's analysis provides us with opportunities to explain the development and corruption of the common law. We explore how the longing for justice, particularly in matters of property, inspired the development of early common law writs of *Morte D'ancestor* and *Novel Disseisin* during the twelfth century. We also explore how the successful implementation of common law brought enormous power to the crown. Although this power could intoxicate the monarch (John), the legends typically portray the legal corruption of lesser royal officials. Therefore, the legends exposed how sheriffs, the gentry, and retainers of lords could manipulate the legal system to confiscate property unjustly. This property could vary in size from Gamelyn's humble holdings in an unnamed shire to Fulk's estates in Shropshire. However, the methods were often the same. Gamelyn's tale tells us of bribed jurors and corrupt sheriffs; the Robin Hood ballads make reference to problems associated with livery and maintenance.

Throughout this discussion Keen explains that the outlaw legends did not represent a desire to undermine the hierarchy that perpetuated this corruption. Instead they reflected a determination to replace corrupt officials in the hierarchy with more righteous men. According to Keen, this limited objective indicated the inherently conservative character of high and late medieval political and social discontent. Outlaws of medieval legends created their own hierarchies and often revered the king (with the exception of John), as a just figure whose noble rule was thwarted by corrupt officials. The outlaws and Robin Hood in particular sought to correct injustice partly in order to preserve the dignity of the crown. They attacked corrupt officials while maintaining respect for social and political hierarchy. The outlaws' attitudes toward religion and the ecclesiastical hierarchy provide other opportunities for discussion. First it is worth noting how secular even the early legends were, though clerics typically wrote them in a very religious age. In addition, the outlaws' use of magic seems to have received approbation from these authors. Both Fulk and Eustace relied on magic to overcome their enemies.

Indeed, Eustace the Monk studied magic from Mephistopheles in Toledo. How can we explain this apparently benign treatment of magic by medieval Christian authors? The question can stimulate interesting conversations or papers.

Perhaps a more comfortable topic of discussion for many students is the legends' treatment of ecclesiastical figures. Monks and abbots were conspicuously corrupt in the Robin Hood ballads. Robin's most formidable enemy may have been the Abbot of St. Mary's York. This animus toward greedy clergy in the ballads corresponded with the decline of ecclesiastical prestige in general and with the emergence of Lollardy in particular. Keen points out that Robin's piety was conventional and that he maintained a special relationship with the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, it is worth asking what characteristics Robin may have shared with Lollards, if only to ascertain that elements of anticlericalism were not confined to those groups designated as heretics during the Late Middle Ages.

If you are seeking a work that is laden with historical facts that students can memorize and repeat on tests, this book is not for you. Ultimately, it is a work that requires some guidance from an instructor who is familiar with the details of the Conquest, the emergence of common law, the tyrannies of John and of Edward I, and ultimately of the successes of good King Edward III. Keen's references to historical artifacts, such as the longbow, can launch discussions about the Hundred Years War, but the book is not going to explain English victories at Halidon Hill or Crécy. Instead, it raises awareness about life in a very different era and encourages its readers to want to know more. Nevertheless, it is possible to test students on the outlaws' spheres of operations, on their methods of resistance, and on the languages and sources that either contain their legends or attest to their historicity. Keen makes this information available for the readers' consideration.

The appeal of these legends both in the past and in the present is one of the main strengths of Keen's book in the classroom. Clearly more scholarly and thorough treatments of the subject have occurred since Keen first published his work in 1961. However, in many ways these later works provide opportunities for students interested in the subject to deepen their knowledge, not only of British history but also of historical methods, perhaps while developing a taste for the pleasures that history has to offer.

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**A Fascinating but Frustrating Study of Marlowe's Drama
and its Historical Context**

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Clayton MacKenzie's *Deathly Experiments; A Study of Icons and Emblems of Mortality in Christopher Marlowe's Plays*¹ is a fascinating, but equally frustrating, study of Marlowe's drama and its historical context. The basic premise, to enrich our reading of Marlowe's plays through resonance with widely available printed emblems and similar iconic art, is a worthy endeavor, one that follows the impulse to illuminate drama by examining contemporary visual art, and foregrounding the presence of theater as visual communications and enriching sensitivity to the communicative power of image and icon.

This certainly also resonates with the basic New Historicist desire to reach beyond texts to a more comprehensive cultural hermeneutics. In this respect, the aligning of popularly available emblem books with the popular theater is a significant service to the student and scholar alike. Moreover, MacKenzie's attempts to place the plays into possible socio-political contexts, with an eye to the popular reception of Marlowe's drama for contemporary audiences, goes far in enriching the understanding of Marlowe's more critically acclaimed plays, such as the *Tamburlaine* plays and *Dr. Faustus*, and, more importantly, works toward a rehabilitated view of some of his less regarded works, especially *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*.

However, this monograph contains enough misreadings, uncritical assumptions, historical-cultural mistakes, and hyperbolic declamations to somewhat tarnish an otherwise worthy endeavor.

1 Clayton G. MacKenzie, *Deathly Experiments; A Study of Icons and Emblems of Mortality in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New York: AMS, 2010).

Gleaning material for lectures from this book might well serve the teaching of Renaissance drama, and Marlowe in particular, especially with the goal to help students understand the theatricality of tableau, central to Early British drama, but assigning it as a course-text would undoubtedly require much critical correction.

It is fitting that this study found publication through AMS Press, a publisher that has contributed much to the study of visual communication through its monograph series, *Studies in Emblemism*, and also through publishing significant works by scholars such as Clifford Davidson, a pioneer in the use of the visual arts in the critical understanding of Early British drama.² Though the movement to incorporate the visual artifacts of culture into the study of texts has made great gains in recent decades, this necessary part of the study of literature, especially as concerns early drama, still represents a significant gap in the scholarly reception and teaching of Early Modern literature. Indeed, a truly rigorous understanding of the noetic function of representation in the consciousness of earlier times is still in its infancy, and to the extent that theatricality maps figurational performativity, any scholarship that turns our attention to the visual rhetoric of the 16th century cannot help but contribute to a significant refashioning of the inheritance of meaning.

Any scholar at all sensitive to these issues will be instantly struck by the value of this program upon turning to the first of the fourteen figures published in this monograph, “Figure 1. ‘The Dangers of love.’ Guillaume de la Perrière’s *Le Theatre des bon engins* (Paris: Denis Janot, 1544), fol L4” (6). From the provocative subject matter, “[t]he alembic distillation of human love” (6) to the ornate multiple framing, this reproduction is in itself a day’s lesson in the essentiality of icon and image for a period for which, in Owen

2 Davidson’s seminal work in this area, *Drama and Art; An Introduction to the Use of Evidence from the Visual Arts for the Study of Early Drama* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1977), was not published by AMS, but much of his work has been brought forth by AMS, such as *From Creation to Doom; The York Cycle of Mystery Plays* (New York: AMS, 1984) and *Selected Studies in Drama and Renaissance Literature* (New York: AMS, 2006). Davidson has also reviewed MacKenzie’s book; see *Comparative Drama* 45.3 (2011), 289-91.

Barfield's terminology, a remnant of participation is still present in the common figurations of consciousness.³ MacKenzie's use of this figure, and others described but not reproduced, to explicate two lines of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (3.4.22-3) as key to the characterizations of Aeneas and Dido, is brilliant and does much to illuminate Marlowe's artistry and give insight into the contexts of meaning through which an Elizabethan audience would receive this play (3-7). Similarly, Figure 8, a woodcut from "Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna: Or A Garden of Heroical Devices* (London: William Dight, 1612)" enriches the reading of *Edward II* in ways that offer fine insight into the play and allow significant teaching moments about the socio-political contexts of Renaissance history plays (59). Indeed, MacKenzie's reading of the political context of Marlowe's play might even serve to introduce a course or unit on Shakespeare's tetralogies.

Similar examples of the use of emblemism and other contemporary visual representations, some given as figures, others described and carefully referenced, occur throughout the monograph and represent the greatest strength of this scholarly offering. Yet, at times MacKenzie seems to misunderstand the long-standing theatricality of tableau in which Marlowe worked and to misconstrue the rich visual rhetoric of the age. MacKenzie presents Marlowe as uniquely perceptive to the visual nature of his society and attributes his popularity to his ability to create "visual tableaux on stage" and a perceptive reliance on the "rich array of visual knowledge" available to his audience (xiv-xvii).

While no-one familiar with Marlowe's work would doubt the genius of his handling of dramatic tableaux, to imply that this theatricality was either revolutionary or unique to Marlowe ignores the fact that Renaissance playwrights inherited dramatic forms

3 For Barfield's theories, see especially: Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances; A Study in Idolatry*, 2nd ed. (Middletown CT: Wesleyan UP, 1988) and *History, Guilt and Habit* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan UP, 1981). New editions of *Saving the Appearances* and much of the Barfield catalog are now available through the Barfield Literary Estate at <http://www.owenbarfield.org/>.

from the preceding centuries that were in their most essential characteristics a theatricality of dramatized tableaux. Similarly, the implication that popular emblem books created the visual communications which Marlowe then made use of in his plays would seem to ignore the ubiquitous visual communications of the day to which MacKenzie himself often refers. The cultural knowledge communicated by the emblem books did not originate with them; rather, they are a manifestation and reinforcement of long-standing iconic communications. However, the existence of emblem books as marketable products drawing on centuries of visual communication is extremely significant, and it is interesting to suggest that Marlowe's theatricality might have purposely sought resonance with particular widely published emblems. Even more interesting is the suggestion that Marlowe's theatricality of tableau may have been significantly impacted by the nuances of visual rhetoric arising from the emergence of emblem books, though it would seem that MacKenzie's analysis does not adequately address that possibility.

More specifically there are readings in this monograph that misconstrue foundational iconography or ascribe differences between British and Continental culture that would seem to miss the essentials of a cultural superdialect of symbols that span much time and space in Western Europe. Much of the analysis of death symbolism in the chapters on the *Tamburlaine* plays, *Edward II* and *The Massacre at Paris*, inadequately considers the ubiquity of these symbols across several centuries and much territory. To ascribe "an explosion of artistic interest in the iconic image of cadaverous death" (74) to the legacy of the *danse macabre* plays of late medieval France, ignores the great ubiquity of skeletal and transi motifs. The *danse macabre* plays are a striking example of the motif of figured death, and the resonance with *The Massacre at Paris* that MacKenzie notes is apt, but the source of these motifs is much deeper and interpenetrated in Western culture that this ascription would suggest. Similarly, to contextualize these motifs by describing "Medieval Catholic

Europe” as “riddled with crime and war, and stalked by the specter of the Black Death” (74), smacks of historical and cultural stereotypes that have long been laid aside by serious scholars of the period. The implied juxtaposition between medieval Catholics for whom “death was unknown, its territory incomprehensible, its advent a clarion call of terror” (75) and the enlightened English playwright betrays a tenor that seems more ideological than scholarly. A much deeper understanding of medieval culture and its figurational meanings would serve this analysis much better.

Similarly, MacKenzie’s analysis of *Fortuna* in *The Jew of Malta* emphasizes resonance with several interesting visual artifacts but ignores completely the Boethian foundation of the Fortuna motif. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that in his article “Fortuna in Shakespeare’s Plays” published in 2001, MacKenzie reductively misreads Boethius in order to dismiss Boethian influence on Shakespeare.⁴ The presentation in Chapter 3 of Jan Van der Noot’s excellent “Fortuna” woodcut in which “one ship fares well while a second sinks,” (Figure 7) and drawing attention to its resonance with “Barabas’s argosies, lost and saved at sea” (40), is another example of the striking power of MacKenzie’s program. Yet, the claim that this icon of flourishing and foundering ships is “the late sixteenth century’s most common representation of Fortuna’s fickle powers” (40) is presented without adequate evidence and ignores the ubiquitous Boethian representations of Fortuna that flourished as much if not more in the 16th century as they had in the preceding medieval centuries. Indeed, MacKenzie does a few pages later reference the more common Wheel of Fortune as a widespread motif (44), but instead of referencing a relatively obscure cathedral painting and tarot cards, one could more easily reference the ubiquitous influence of Boethian imagery.

Indeed, there is much contextualization in this study that will undoubtedly prove problematic for scholars with good grounding

4 Clayton G. MacKenzie, “Fortuna in Shakespeare’s Plays,” *Orbis Litterarum* 56.6 (2001), 355-66.

in the milieu of late medieval culture. Renaissance scholars, too, might object to some of the characterizations of the Elizabethan age, and, indeed, to Elizabeth herself. Though it is perhaps intriguing to suggest that *Dido, Queen of Carthage* serves as a warning to Elizabeth not to entangle herself with a foreign prince (7-8), namely the Duke of Anjou, and MacKenzie is not the only critic to suggest this, we should perhaps give Marlowe—and Elizabeth—more creditable political acumen than this argument implies. Despite Elizabeth's lyrical lament, "On Monsieur's Departure," on the exit of her last legitimate suitor in 1581, it is likely that her dalliance with the young Duke had more to do with European power politics and religious alliances than a serious consideration of marriage in her late forties.

Indeed, to match Elizabeth with Dido is potentially problematic when one considers that the Tudor mythos invested much in the claim that as descendants of Welsh nobility, the Tudor monarchs were the true inheritors of Felix Brutus and therefore natural descendants of Aeneas. We might well read Elizabeth as Aeneas, the agent of destiny toying with a foreign youth for fleeting pleasure and shrewd politics, and surely the gender-switch necessary for such a reading would not be uncharacteristic of Marlowe, Elizabeth or the age in general. To even make the argument of the play as a warning to Elizabeth, rather than a subtle flattering of her political acumen, one must push speculation on the dating of the composition to the early extreme.

Even harder to accept is the hint in Chapter 5 that *The Massacre at Paris* might resonate with the fear of Elizabeth marrying a Catholic Frenchman (86). A 1593 date for this play is fairly certain. Elizabeth was by then 60, and it had been 12 years since she had dismissed Anjou (who, after all, was himself involved in Protestant rebellions in France). A more obvious context for this 1593 play is Elizabeth's extreme reaction to Henry of Navarre's renunciation of Huguenot Protestantism in that very year in order to secure the throne of France. From that perspective, there might well be a note of political intrigue in this macabre but popular production—an attack

on Henry, who had so disappointed his friend Elizabeth. Indeed, the index to this monograph seems to confuse Henry III of Navarre, who later became Henry IV of France, with Henry III of France (146), who was briefly considered as a husband for Elizabeth (in 1570), had some involvement in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and was himself notoriously murdered in 1589 by a fanatical Dominican friar, as is depicted, somewhat unhistorically, in this very play.

Nonetheless, the rehabilitation of *The Massacre of Paris* through reading it as a reflex of the medieval *danse macabre* genre is worth the effort, and the fear of religious violence inherent in the play is inescapable. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 was certainly in the living memory of many, and the great agitation of the Armada in 1588 was only five years before the play. Inevitably we must grant that the fear of Catholic violence was certainly more than a theatrical motif. Still, when MacKenzie argues that "none among an Elizabethan audience would have been unduly surprised by the Catholic propensity for extermination" (85), we must pause and consider a rhetorical frame that is at best uncritical and at worst seems to label Catholicism as inherently vicious. Whether or not this is an overt intention, the presence of such statements in this volume is uncomfortably problematic and certainly a simplistic view of 16th century religious conflict.

Other examples include the afore mentioned "Medieval Catholic Europe, riddled with crime and war, and stalked by the specter of the Black Death . . . " (75) and "a salutary reminder of genocidal antipathies of Continental Catholics" (86). Whatever the intentions, such overblown statements, at the very least, assume a strictly religious motivation for the political violence of the day and mistakenly assume that Marlowe's audience would have been firmly, even zealously, Protestant. When MacKenzie suggests that "no Elizabethan audience would have accepted for a moment the thesis that a murderous Catholic cabal could be acting at the behest of God" (87), he is characterizing *The Massacre of Paris* in strict religious terms that even his own analysis at times subverts;

moreover, this assumes a thoroughly Protestantized England in 1593, which is certainly a false assumption. Religious politics in this era were much more complicated than this text at times over-zealously assumes.

The best strength of this study lies in its program to use emblems and icons to enrich our understanding of Marlowe's theatricality of tableau, and though the connections made are sometimes tenuous, even sometimes mistaken, there are enough legitimate resonances drawn to make the monograph a worthwhile contribution to Marlowe scholarship, and, indeed, part of the movement to awaken our understanding of the essentiality of visual representation in the period. In addition, the text could well help stimulate greater interest in Marlowe's plays, both those more well known, such as the *Tamburlaine* plays, *Edward II* and *Dr. Faustus*, and those most ignored, such as *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*. The weaknesses perhaps arise from argument overextensions that either fail to adequately contextualize the inheritance of meaning or make uncritical assumptions about the social and political complexities of the period. As such, the scholar and instructor might well make good use of both the strengths and weaknesses of MacKenzie's study to stimulate a richer and more complex exploration of Marlowe's dramatic corpus and the period in which it was produced.

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