



Proceedings of the 16th Annual Northern Plains
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Edited by Adam H. Kitzes

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Table of Contents

Conference Program	iii
“No more but e’en a woman’ A Brave Tale of Toils and Triumphs: Women Directing the Bard in Twentieth Century Britain” Keynote Address Presented By Dr. Margaret Groome, University of Manitoba	1
Teaching Beowulf Using Film: Exploring the Best Visual Aids to Help Students Understand Early English Language And Culture Dominique Hoche, Northern State University	52
The Rhetoric of Desire & Lesbian Space in <i>The Assembly Of Ladies</i> and <i>The Floure and the Leafe</i> Michelle M. Sauer, University of North Dakota	57
“Seeming Wealth”: Wyatt’s “My Mother’s Maids” as Critique of Horace’s <i>Satire</i> 2.6 Kevin Brock, North Carolina State University	72
Toward a Feminist View of the Passion of Christ: A Comparison of the Poetic Visions of Aemilia Lanyer and John Donne Jennifer Christoffersen, St. Cloud State University	107
“Swift Re-Fashioning:” Private Women in the Masculinist Public Sphere Kathleen Tamayo, College of St. Benedict – St. John’s University	123
Disruptions of Gender: Clerval as Androgynous Soul-mate in <i>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein</i> Michele R. Willman, North Dakota State University	131
“Who Is It We’re Crying For?” Union, Nationalism, and the Loss of Identity in <i>Castle Rackrent</i> Matthias P. Rudolf, University of Nevada Reno	142

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
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Northern Plains Conference on Earlier British Literature
At the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

“No more but e’en a woman’
A Brave Tale of Toils and Triumphs: Women Directing the Bard in
Twentieth Century Britain”

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The University of Manitoba

Ever since I began my research on women directors of Shakespeare the question I've encountered most frequently is "But are there women who directed Shakespeare's plays before the 1980s?" The answer is a resounding "yes"! Indeed, the history of women directing Shakespeare's works in Britain can be traced back approximately 150 years. To be sure, the greatest part of that activity has taken place since the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, there has been a wide-ranging and significant history of women directing the Bard at venues as varied as the Western Front in WWI, converted music halls, major subsidized repertory theatres and at such "established" theatres as the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and the Old Vic. In this talk I will first discuss the range of this activity, with sketches of the work of both "representative" women and some wonderfully individualistic directors. I will then outline the highlights of two particularly significant case studies, the work of Joan Littlewood with her own theatre company in the 1950s and the career of Buzz Goodbody at the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1970s.*

There are three questions that have provided the framework for my research. First, what is the discourse of production with regard to the ways women directors work with theatrical space, Shakespearean texts and actors and how is this work mediated by institutional practices and the material conditions of production. Second, what is the discourse of reception to the work of women directors of Shakespeare, including the response of the critical community? The third question is crucial in the case of anyone directing Shakespeare: to what ends has a specific director or set of directors appropriated Shakespeare's texts? In the case of women directors this question may be qualified by Toril Moi's understanding of appropriation as more than proprietorial

reclamation: “it is the creative transformation of some patriarchal space, object or ideology” (118).

This brings me to an important qualifier. I’m not suggesting that women directors necessarily engage in a form of theatre practice that is fundamentally different from that of male directors. This would be to fall into the trap identified by Jane Moore & Catherine Belsey “of misreading culture as nature:” “The danger here is that the emphasis on difference tends either to have the effect of leaving things exactly as they are...or to lead to a politics of separatism, which despairs of changing patriarchy and settles instead for an alternative space on the edges of it” (10) This is not to ignore that the subject position of women in theatre is quite different from that of men. However, on the basis of my research thus far, I don’t think it can be argued that the theatre techniques employed by women directors are always unique to them alone.

First of all, then, a sampling from the herstory of the work of women directors. When I began my research I identified the turn of the 20th century as my starting point but, the more I did the more I uncovered significant work by women going back into the early years of the 19th century.

Much has been written about the remarkable career of Eliza Vestris who worked as a manager, actor, singer and director in the first half of the 19th century, most notably managing and directing a theatre company operating out of Covent Garden, which was then the nation’s pre-eminent theatre company.¹ Since Vestris’s company did not have a tragic leading actor, Vestris turned to Shakespeare’s ensemble plays and plays which privileged women characters. Perhaps her most significant achievement is that she was the first person to produce

Shakespeare's full text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in over 200 years. Elizabeth Schafer has noted that by playing Oberon herself and presenting several major characters as female – Puck was played by a young woman – “Vestris helped nurture a tradition which increased the number of roles for women in nineteenth-century Shakespeare” (199). And yet both in her own time and in most of the subsequent critical commentary, Vestris's work has been consistently undervalued, marginalized, even belittled, and the commentary fails to engage with the concepts underlying her interpretations. Instead she has been praised for the “domestic” comforts of her theatre company or credit for her work is shifted to the men with which she worked.²

Sadly, I've found that such treatment dominates the discourse of reception concerning the work of women directors and it has taken considerable probing to determine what women directors “really” achieved. Fortunately we have memoirs and diaries of actors from the time and histories of the theatres in which they worked. Such is the case with Sarah Thorne.

Sarah Thorne worked as manager and director of her own company at the Theatre Royal in the town of Margate, Kent, from 1867 until 1899, with the exception of a six year period. Shakespeare's works were frequently performed under Thorne's management and she both directed and acted in these productions. At the same time Thorne also ran a touring company that travelled throughout the south of England, performing in small towns that had no regular theatre and so her company provided their own “fit-up'...scenery and sometimes their own stage and lighting apparatus” (Vanbrugh, 28). Beginning in 1885 Thorne ran a school of acting in addition to her theatre company. Thorne's work may be taken as representative of a set of women who, on the one hand, ran successful theatre companies and staged Shakespeare for a number of years in the “provinces,” that is, outside of major urban centres and also engaged in

an active, significant program of teaching and actor training. On the other hand, the work of these women has been marginalized or dismissed for these very reasons.³ I would suggest that this work warrants our attention and admiration for providing access to Shakespeare's works for generations of non-urban playgoers of every class and for her exacting training of any number of actors who would go on to work not only as actors but also as directors and scholars. In the case of Sarah Thorne this list includes such notable figures as Irene and Violet Vanbrugh and Harley Granville-Barker. In Violet Vanbrugh's words, Thorne

was a good producer and stage-manager, and she never tried to teach parrot intonations or gestures, nor did she ever impose her reading or conception of a part. She would watch and listen carefully...and then she would pull one up, often sharply, point out what was wrong, and insist peremptorily on one thinking for oneself. She was exacting, and she set a high standard...(Vanbrugh, 31).

This practice of women directors being encouraging and constructive in working with actors, and in particular insisting that their actors "think for themselves" seems to be a recurring theme in the 19th century. Violet Vanbrugh's account of being directed by Dame Madge

[Margaret] Kendal is revealing:

It was a wonderful experience for me to work under such a fine producer as Mrs. Kendal, so keen, sympathetic, encouraging, helpful and exacting...in nothing did she differ so much from a certain type of producer as in her constant encouragement and constructive building up of one's self-confidence...her method was to make one think for oneself and use one's own brains and to work with one's own method and personality, and herein, I am sure, lies the genius of the really great producer. I remember that when once...I was unconsciously giving a faint imitation of her... she stopped me abruptly: "Can't you see, can't you understand?" she cried: "we are different types, you and I...Don't imitate me; look to your own feelings, your own emotions, and imagine for yourself what you would do in such a situation." And she dismissed rehearsal and sent me home to think (Vanbrugh, 50-52).

Such a rehearsal process is in distinct contrast to the prevailing practice of actor-managers in the 19th century who would not rehearse the actors in supporting roles, but simply ask that they repeat a role as previously performed and leave centre-stage free for the leading actor.

This brings me to the remarkable story of Millicent Bandmann-Palmer. As I've acknowledged, it would be misleading to suggest that there's a simple continuity in the work of women directors and that they all share the same working methods. At the turn of the 20th century, Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer operated, in the words of J.C. Trewin, one of the "touring stock companies that divided the kingdom...from the major theatres to the tarnished gaffs" (11) and she enjoyed a fine reputation for her acting as the "darling of the provinces...the 'Lancashire Tragedienne'" (Kane, 59). Though she was described as "relentless as a director" she was highly respected by her acting company (Trewin, 14). Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer played the role of Hamlet over 400 times while touring with her company, even as she approached her 60s and "had difficulty rising from her knees on account of her rheumatism" (Kane, 64). It is clear that she ran her theatre company in the grand tradition of the actor-manager. Touring the "dark circuits of the manufacturing North" in a set of railway compartments with the name Bandmann-Palmer blazoned on the windows, she ruled her company with an iron fist, "less demanding about her plays than about the duty of the limelight man to keep his beam upon her" (Trewin, 14). According to Whitford Kane, the chief comedian in her company,

she was a great show woman and a careful manager. She could wring dry the hearts of an audience...and at the same time, keep her astute eyes on the lookout for any errors among her company. She was the star and knew it...Her qualities as an overseer were often evident...(Kane, 61-2)

and if she thought the company was performing “shoddily” she “would threaten the entire company with fines...or with a nine o’clock rehearsal call” (62).

While some may smile at this account we should not dismiss Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer as simply one more in a long line of eccentrics who have graced the English stage.⁴ Like Sarah Thorne, Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer enjoyed a reputation as a serious actress, one who never failed to move her audience. Nonetheless, both Thorne and Bandmann-Palmer felt that their personal appearance was such that they would not be successful in London. Thorne went so far as to acknowledge that she was “very plain”: “I don’t look the parts; that is why I shall never be a leading London actress” (qtd. in Vanbrugh, 30-31). We should therefore respect the determination of both women to make their way in the theatre in spite of the odds, to become entrepreneurs and lead their own companies in both artistic and business matters.

Indeed, one of the major themes that underlies the work of women as directors in the 19th century and first decades of the 20th century is that in order to direct the works of Shakespeare women had to “make it happen for themselves” and run their own companies – no-one was going to hire them or offer them the opportunity to direct, otherwise.

This was certainly the case with Lillie Langtry, the same Lillie Langtry whose affair with a future King of England [Edward VII] is thought to have played a role “in launching her stage career” (Schafer, 191). Ironically, Langtry’s renown as one of the era’s great beauties drew an audience to her productions but also worked against her being taken seriously when she set out to direct herself in Shakespeare’s works.⁵ When she presented *As You Like It* on a tour to New York City in the 1880’s. *The New York Times* dismissed her as a “pretty elocutionist” (qtd. in

Brough, 255). It was after this experience that Langtry severed connections with her drama coach, Henrietta Labouchiere, and on her return to England took charge of her own acting company, proving to be an astute and exacting businesswoman, paying close attention to all production details – costumes, scenery, make-up & contracts (Brough, 275). When she directed and starred in *As You Like It*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in the heart of London in the 1890s the standard critical reaction was to focus on the visual splendour and expensive sumptuousness of her productions. And yet there is considerable evidence in both her autobiography and in some of the contemporary reviews that Langtry should be credited as a serious artist for her focus on character development and textual interpretation – at least for the characters she herself performed. Consider her account of Rosalind’s second forest scene with Orlando:

This later scene is the antithesis of the former one, where she simulates “the saucy lackey” with gusto. Here, though still disguised, she is indeed the coquette, the woman revelling in the whimsical courtship and lingering over the mock marriage, often on the verge of revealing herself and just recovering her self-control in time (Langtry, 231).

But while Langtry gave considerable care to the conception and rehearsing of her own role, there are some suggestions that she was remiss on at least one occasion in directing her company. When *As You Like It* was under preparation for its performance in 1890, she is reported as seeing “no necessity for rehearsing with the company until shortly before the opening” since she had acted Rosalind before (Marshall, 13). She went off on a holiday to Paris, leaving Lewis Wingfield to direct the production, but the company apparently resented Wingfield and his “new-fangled” ideas about Shakespeare (Marshall, 14). Langtry had to be recalled from Paris and, in her own words, “I had to put in a tremendous lot of time to replace

the scenes in the sequence familiar to Shakespeare and myself” (Langtry, 228). Moreover, the careful thought she had given to Rosalind was not evident in her thinking about the other characters. In her writings on the second forest scene she asks if Orlando is “really unsuspecting by now?” and answers her own question with “I have never analysed his character, I thought it better not” (231).

By the time Langtry played Cleopatra in November 1890 *The Times* of London was willing to acknowledge her work as “dazzling” and *The Telegraph* called her “the finest Cleopatra of our time.” Langtry’s career in Shakespeare demonstrates once again a determination to take on the Bard – although in this case Langtry might be seen as an exemplar of those actor-managers – male and female – who were motivated not simply by the desire to perform Shakespeare’s works, but also sought to validate themselves as serious artists by these performances – respectability by association, as it were.

In Rosina Filippi we find a woman director who could not have been a stronger contrast to the glamour and star-driven ambitions of Lillie Langtry. In 1914 when Filippi was taken on by Lilian Baylis at London’s Old Vic Theatre to direct Shakespeare’s plays she already had a considerable reputation as an actress, playwright and teacher. However from the onset Filippi and Baylis were at odds as Baylis would only finance “two changes of scenery and two hired orange trees” for Filippi’s productions and seemed to see Filippi as a threat to her own opera programme (Findlater, 105). Filippi’s avowed interest was to develop a “People’s Theatre,” which would bring the classics to a working class audience which would never venture into the West End world of Lillie Langtry (Findlater, 104). Filippi also had a social agenda in producing Shakespeare, hoping to replicate in working class London the effects claimed by a people’s

theatre in Milan, the Societa Umanitaria, “to reduce not only crime, but Socialism, to improve the intelligence of the people and to serve as a bridge between primary education and the responsible duties of the voter” (qtd. in Findlater, 104). Even though Filippi lasted only a month at the Old Vic and only directed two plays by Shakespeare in that time – *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* – her project to produce Shakespeare “for the people” did take hold with the Theatre’s Board of Governors and within less than a decade the Old Vic would become the most highly regarded producer of Shakespeare in Britain, a reputation that would endure for several decades of the 20th century. Moreover, Elizabeth Schafer suggests that Filippi is also significant “since four other women followed Filippi’s lead and directed productions at the Old Vic during the First World War” (211). Two of these women – Huton Britton and Estelle Stead – directed productions of Shakespeare’s works, accounting for *Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venics*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As You Like It* between them. But, unlike Filippi, both shared these directing responsibilities with a male partner.

After her short time at the Old Vic, Filippi returned to teaching actors. This had long been a serious concern for her; in 1911 she had published a wide-ranging book, *Hints to Speakers and Players*, in which she offered much specific, technical advice for delivering Shakespeare’s verse, and performing his characters. She even analysed specific plays, including *The Merchant of Venice*. Filippi’s book thus offers considerable insight into the values she privileged as a director and teacher of Shakespeare:

I think Shakespeare can be treated as modern problem plays are treated today – quite naturally, without any mouthing, ranting or fluting of the voice – all the characters are human beings. (Even Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are perfect characterizations but I have never yet seen these two played as a couple of Danish gentlemen.) (*Hints*, 20)

And on *The Merchant of Venice*:

The centre of “The Merchant of Venice” is ‘Antonio,’ not ‘Shylock,’ and an imaginative producer, giving Antonio the place he ought to occupy, would give a reality to the play it lacks when produced with Shylock as the star-part. The principal star-part is of no more importance than the small ones, and when a small character has an important moment in a play, that part ought to have the important place on the stage at that particular moment....All the parts in a play, great or small, are like pieces on a chessboard. A pawn can often capture a queen.... It is no use her usurping the centre of the board....No matter what the part, it is only a bit, a fragment, of a whole, and requires as careful adjustment as the smallest (99-100).

Filippi also discussed lighting:

Limelight, plenty of it, and the centre of the stage exclusively belong to Pantomime, musical-comedy and melodrama. Don't descend to employ those means when you are acting the fine emotional plays....

To see Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Lady Macbeth...and others persistently followed about by Tinka [sic] Bell is simply laughable (106).

What is most striking about Filippi's book is how very modern her ideas are, whether she is discussing vocal delivery, *The Merchant of Venice*, how actors should work as an ensemble or how lighting should be used. Indeed, Filippi's work is representative of a major shift in Shakespearean production, from the star-system of the actor-managers to work that was more ensemble-sensitive. This was a shift that seemed to be taking place in a number of English acting companies at this time. I would suggest, provisionally, that this was especially true in those companies led by women, such as The Lena Ashwell Players, and the Old Vic under the guidance of Lilian Baylis as producer (even though she did not direct Shakespeare's plays). One of the features that would distinguish the Old Vic's productions of Shakespeare throughout the 1920s and 30s was the strength of its ensemble playing (Findlater).

During WWI the majority of England's actors and actor-managers enlisted in the armed forces and women quickly took their place at the head of theatre companies. In some instances,

women whose husbands were actor managers took over the running of the theatre company, which remained in the husbands' names. In other instances, women simply founded theatre companies in their own name, as was the case with Lena Ashwell (Ashwell, *Modern Troubadours*; Thorndike and Thorndike).

At the outbreak of WWI Lena Ashwell worked with the suffragette organization, the Actresses Franchise League to establish 50 travelling companies to play at Army bases in England. When the troops crossed to France, Ashwell organized "concert parties" to entertain them at the front including her own company, The Lena Ashwell Players. By 1917 these "touring parties" were composed only of women. When the Armistice was declared there were still 25 companies working in France.⁶ Ashwell was not the only woman to direct the Lena Ashwell Players: others she hired included Penelope Wheeler, Cicely Hamilton and Rosemary Rees. But the most exceptional aspect of Ashwell's endeavour is that in addition to the expected set of songs and recitations, she also took on the remarkable challenge of staging productions of Shakespeare's plays for the troops throughout the war and after the Armistice. For example, at Abbeville, with Cicely Hamilton in charge, Ashwell's Company performed a range of material, including *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. In one of her several memoirs Ashwell recounts her practice of responding to requests for specific scenes and plays of Shakespeare: in Rouen, Havre & Rouelles, *Macbeth* was requested and several scenes were duly performed before audiences as large as 1500 men "drawn from all ranks, all grades of society, all parts of the Empire" (*Modern Troubadours*, 50). Ashwell certainly took the precept of "taking Shakespeare" to the people to a new level! Every

time *Macbeth* was performed it was a great hit: In *Modern Troubadours* Ashwell reported on a performance in Rouen: “The theatre..was packed...the silence was intense...one major said that he had been in many battles...but nothing had given him the cold horror that he had experienced at the murder of Duncan” (48-9).

Following the war the Lena Ashwell Players continued for ten years with their project of popularising Shakespeare and other theatre “classics” among people who would ordinarily have little or no access to these works. Ashwell made arrangements with the mayors of several outer Boroughs of London to perform in various venues, such as church and town halls. Ashwell directed most of these productions as well as administering the Players. John Masefield saw her company do *Twelfth Night*: “I think I have never seen or heard anything more poetical throughout. The play was the thing with them; the bare boards and the poet’s passion were all that they needed for their effects” (qtd. in Ashwell, *Myself a Player*, 246). At one point after the War Ashwell was operating three theatre companies simultaneously and so, as she had done in France, she gave several women performers the opportunity to direct for her, thus facilitating their development as directors.⁷ Two of her protégés would go on to major, if occasional, directing assignments in the 30s and 40s – Irene Hentschel at the Stratford Memorial Theatre and Esme Church at the Old Vic. The fact that several women directors gave opportunities to other women in the early part of the 20th century is a significant trope in the herstory of women directing Shakespeare.

This thumbnail sketch makes it clear that Ashwell was utterly fearless in her passion to promote and direct Shakespeare, and that this was not due to any desire for self-promotion but because she saw theatre as an essential to life: “my whole object from the beginning had been

the demonstrating that the arts were essentially and vitally necessary to human beings, as necessary as the Red Cross” (*Modern Troubadours*, 132). We will see that Ashwell’s project to provide Shakespeare “for the people” was a concern shared by both Joan Littlewood and Buzz Goodbody, but whereas Ashwell appropriated Shakespeare in order to bring beauty, poetry and an uplifting experience to the people, we will see that Littlewood and Goodbody appropriated Shakespeare for purposes of social transformation.⁸

Before moving on to my two case studies I want to say a few words about the women who directed Shakespeare in the 1930s & 40s. It was in these years that we see a shift from women mostly having to be entrepreneurial and form their own theatre companies in order to direct, to women being hired by established theatre companies. However, for the most part, the women directing in these years only worked sporadically for established companies and could not rely on directing Shakespeare alone to make a living. Nor has their work received more than passing attention in the records of theatre historians. What is also striking about these years is that among those women who were offered directing assignments, several had gained an entry into directing when another woman had employed them. This was the case with both Esme Church and Irene Hentschel whose first directing experiences were with The Lena Ashwell Players.

Church worked for eight years with Ashwell’s company in the 1920s as both an actor and director before moving on to the Old Vic as an actor. It was not until 1936 that Church joined the staff of the Old Vic as head of the Vic’s School of Acting and in that same year directed *As You Like It* with Edith Evans and Michael Redgrave in the lead roles. While this production has become well-known, it is rarely linked to Church and it did not immediately lead to her directing

more of Shakespeare's works: in fact, her next production was not until *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1942, followed by *The Merchant of Venice* in 1943. In the meantime Church had been joint-director with Lewis Casson of an Old Vic tour to the Mediterranean, and had directed non-Shakespearean works (*The Devil's Disciple*, *Saint Joan*, *The Rivals*). When the Old Vic became involved in tours sponsored by the Council for Entertainment, Music and the Arts, Church was one of the figures who led the tours to mining towns in Wales and County Durham. It was under these circumstances that she next directed Shakespeare in 1942 and 1943 with the productions only being viewed in London for a very short run. Church viewed this activity of introducing Shakespeare, indeed live theatre, to remote areas of the country as significant work: "Shakespeare's plays supply drama, colour, poetry, swift action, and, of course, the philosophy which thoughtful people are wanting in these days" (qtd. in Downs). And yet the obituaries of Church give scant attention to her achievements as a director, citing instead her work as an administrator, teacher and actress. For example: "She was an accomplished actress, but playgoers' appreciation of her performances was outshone by the high esteem she won from actors and actresses by her influence in theatrical administration. She did much to encourage younger players" (*Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1972).

Elizabeth Schafer has noted that, as with WWI, the outbreak of World War II brought opportunities for women to direct Shakespeare (216-17). This is the context for the directing assignments given to Irene Hentschel and Dorothy Green at the Stratford-upon-Avon Memorial Theatre. Hentschel was known as a director of modern plays and her 1939 production of *Twelfth Night* – the first directing assignment ever for a woman at Stratford – was her only foray into

Shakespeare. Dorothy Green had been a leading actress in both contemporary and Shakespearean roles since her debut in 1901. By the 1940s she had an extensive list of Shakespearean acting credits at both the Old Vic and Stratford. Following her two directing assignments at Stratford – *The Winter's Tale* in 1943 and *Henry V* in 1946 – she returned to acting and never again directed Shakespeare.

I have not found any clear account as to why Hentschel and Green did not continue to direct Shakespeare: was this their choice, or were they not offered any further opportunities? Critical reaction to their productions was mixed and the terms are revealing. Hentschel's production decisions, from the design to casting to interpretation, all aroused controversy. When the production opened the majority response was that it "shrieks at the conventions, flouts all the traditions" (*Birmingham Mail*, 13 April 1939). Several articles disparaged the production and Hentschel herself in relation to her gender. For example, the *News Chronicle* noted that she paid "no attention to the masculine tradition that the new boy should show modesty and respect" (14 April 1939). Worse, the *Stratford-Upon-Avon Herald* criticized the production as "a demonstration in which (as always when ladies kick up their heels) there was much to fix and fascinate the gaze" (21 April 1939). Green's 1943 production of *The Winter's Tale* received little attention in a press that was reporting extensively on the war, so it is difficult to assess its reception. Reviews of her 1946 production of *Henry V* reveal an interpretation deliberately in contrast to the heroics of Olivier's Henry. Green's Henry was played by Paul Scofield in a way that "humanises" the character and "tends to nullify the glory of a dubious war" (*Stage*, 16 May 1946). Schafer has noted that while most reviewers were positive about the production, those who were negative were very negative indeed (218). The influential *Times* review lay the

(perceived) failings of the production at Green's feet: "the warrior King suffers more than anyone else from Miss Green's unwillingness to let her actors suit the action to the word" (13 May 1946). These are but a few representative samples of the critical reception to the work of Hentschel and Green. It seems to me that a provisional conclusion would have to be that there was an insufficient positive response to their work to have carried them on to further offers to direct, especially once men were more available after the war. As women – both actors and directors – would report four decades later, the perceived failure of a woman director could curtail the development of not only that woman's career, but also limit the opportunities offered to other women (Rutter).

In contrast to the abbreviated directing careers of Hentschel and Green, there is the "success" story of Clare Harris. Harris enjoyed an estimable career playing several of Shakespeare's character roles in productions in the West End before moving on to the Memorial Theatre in Stratford in 1937. What her biography in *Who Was Who in the Theatre* does not reveal is that for six years, beginning in 1943, Harris directed one or more Shakespeare productions every six months for the Wilson Barrett Company in their seasons at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh and the Alhambra Theatre, Glasgow. In these six years her directing credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet* and *Henry V*, among others (See the books by Jerrams and Barrett). Harris's work with the Wilson Barrett Company is remarkable. And yet the only directing work for which she is credited in *Who Was Who in the Theatre* is the *Romeo and Juliet* that ran at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith (a suburb of London) in March 1946. Harris may be taken as one of the most striking representatives of an important set of women whose work outside of London and in the less-

respected category of “weekly rep” has been overlooked or marginalized. I will certainly be attempting to rectify

this neglect in my projected book. As with the early years of women directing Shakespeare’s works, I have uncovered a wealth of further information that I will have to leave aside today so that I may move on to the case histories of Joan Littlewood and Buzz Goodbody.

Joan Littlewood⁹

Joan Littlewood first began directing in 1934, working with contemporary material. In the 1950’s she founded a theatre company, Theatre Workshop, which worked out of a former music hall, the Theatre Royal in Stratford-Atte-Bowe in the heart of East End London. It was in this theatre in the mid and late 50s that Littlewood directed a series of productions of the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Throughout her career Littlewood was known as an iconoclast, a combative woman with an “aggressive disbelief in ‘great art’” (*The Observer Profile Theatre Worker*,” 15 March 1959). Whether she was directing the work of new British authors or the works of Shakespeare Littlewood’s aim was the same: “believing that theatre at its best is classless in its appeal, she wants to create in Britain a people’s theatre that would supercede the West End drama of middle-class diversion” (*The Observer Profile...*,” 15 March 1959). More pointedly, she wrote that “the technique and content of...art must be directed toward the reform of society itself” (qtd. in Callaghan, “The Aesthetics of Marginality...,” 264). When Littlewood prepared the Manifesto of Theatre Workshop, she stated in point seven that she wanted “a theatre which is not afraid of the sound of its own voice and which will comment as fearlessly on Society as did Ben Jonson & Aristophanes” (qtd. in Melvin, 31). In order to do

this Littlewood believed that theatre must not “merely...express political content but also...find a new theatrical form” (qtd. in “*The Observer Profile...*,” 15 March 1959).

When Littlewood directed Shakespeare’s works she found, in her words, that “the critics can’t stand it because we’re playing in what they call a vulgar fashion – we’re playing it for action and dynamic rather than for decoration” (qtd. in “*The Observer Profile...*,” 15 March 1959). Closer study of the staging practices and interpretive choices in Littlewood’s controversial productions reveals that she was offering the 1950s a “rigorously oppositional theater practice” (Callaghan, “Shakespeare At the Fun Palace...,” 109). Dympna Callaghan has laid the groundwork for evaluating Littlewood’s contribution, arguing convincingly that Littlewood “made the revolutionary recognition that bourgeois Shakespeare was devoid of vitality precisely because it reproduced the values of the dominant class, and that using Shakespeare as a catalyst of social transformation would revitalize the community in which his works were performed as well as the plays themselves” (Callaghan, “Fun Palace...,” 111).¹⁰ In effect, Littlewood’s Shakespeare productions were part of her larger “agenda for a theatre of social transformation” (Callaghan, “Fun Palace...,” 109). Littlewood’s oppositional politics were manifested in specific production decisions that, cumulatively, formed a distinctive style, a style that was richly informed by European dramatic theory and practices, especially those of Stanislavski and Bertolt Brecht. These European practices were inextricably bound up with Littlewood’s avowed intent to revitalise and popularise Shakespeare’s works and foreground their social content. In fact, these practices were ideally suited to her view of Shakespeare’s works as the supreme example of a politically and socially engaged theatre that should speak “in the present tense” (Littlewood,

“Plays for the People,” 286). Critical reception of Littlewood’s productions demonstrates just how unique these productions were and how little they were understood in the England of the 1950s.

From the time Littlewood first began directing in 1934, through her series of Elizabethan works at Theatre Royal, the by-words of her production style were “fresh” and “immediate.” It has been said that Littlewood expected an actor to explore his character “in Stanislavskyan depth and yet perform it with Brechtian ease” (Nightingale, n.p.).¹¹ To better understand such comments it is necessary to examine Littlewood’s then revolutionary rehearsal practices. Rehearsals began with the actors analysing every characters’ text, breaking it into units and finding the “active” verbs. Littlewood would then abandon the script for weeks while the actors undertook extensive improvisations to help them find what she called contemporary “parallels” so that when the original scene was played again “it was almost always (emotionally) deeper and more secure” (Wells, 46). The effect of these improvisations carried through into performance: in the manner of Brecht, Littlewood refused to accept the proscenium arch as an absolute divide and her actors often engaged directly with the audience, coming downstage onto a forestage in close proximity to their audiences, thereby establishing a rapport unseen in centuries of Shakespearean performances (Nightingale, n.p.). Littlewood was also adamant that her actors immerse themselves in the socio-economic circumstances surrounding a particular text. It was in this respect that she manifested her own materialist commitment to popular theatre that would be “at one and the same time socialist, classical and subversive” (Stokes, n.p.). In addition to tending to the emotional and intellectual aspects of a production, Littlewood also insisted on a systematic approach to physical acting, based on the theories of Rudolph Laban, resulting in

performances of extraordinary vigour, energy and visual impact. Indeed, Littlewood's actors and several scholars have commented how she was responsible for pioneering and privileging the use of physical expression in roles, over the use of the voice in British theatre (Callaghan, "Fun Palace," 113; Melvin; Goorney).

It was only very late in the rehearsal process that Littlewood "blocked" the production, determining where and when actors would move in relation to the script and how crowd scenes would be staged. Her ultimate aim was that all moves and all lines should seem completely spontaneous, "equally inevitable, equally true," a lesson learned from Stanislavski (Wells, 46). Stanislavski and his actors had achieved their reputation for complete truth of representation by rehearsing for nine months. Constantly plagued by financial difficulties, Littlewood's company could not enjoy the luxury of such rehearsal time. Nonetheless, they achieved a similar depth of characterization. John Wells, a company member has commented: "By the time the show opened, the actors were so soaked in the play that they could turn upstage and the audience could smell their emotions" (46). Littlewood was characteristically blunt about her intentions: "There's so much shit on Will; we've got to scrape it off" (qtd. in *The Independent Magazine*, 26 March 1994, 18). Her Stanislavskian determination that her actors should be utterly convincing as human beings was in direct response to the "decorative," sentimental acting which she felt had come to dominate the British theatre by the early 1950s. According to director Peter Hall "She swept away the genteel charm that was so prevalent on the West End stage. She showed that if you expressed people's faults and all the warts of their characters, audiences loved them as much as if they were lacquered. Her theatre had such vigour and energy; it was never boring. She

could be terribly bad – although most of the time she was brilliant – but she was never boring” (qtd. in *The Independent Magazine*, 26 March 1994, 18).

Central to Littlewood’s rejection of “decorative,” posed and dishonest acting was her demand that her actors use their own, “natural,” accents. She believed that when actors assume a trained, “standard,” accent “all the virility of language” is lost, the language of Shakespeare’s texts is “defiled and any chance of connecting with the average, working class person is lost. (“*The Observer Profile...*,” 15 March 1959; Stokes; Callaghan, “Fun Palace,” 115). Clarity and connecting with her audience were crucial to Joan. In rehearsals she would “spend hours on Shakespeare’s verse and its rhythms”; but she would not allow the dreaded “decoration.” As soon as the actors started to spout “poetry” they were stopped. Littlewood felt that it was “the hard, driving rhythms which elucidate the meaning – and sometimes are the meaning – which are all important” (Goodwin and Milne, 395). Littlewood’s decision to have her actors perform Shakespeare’s works in their “natural” accents and in a “non-poetic” style would become one of her most contentious and ill-received decisions.

Theatre Workshop’s performances of Shakespeare in the 1950s offered Londoners a clear alternative to the commercial productions of Shakespeare at the Old Vic. A direct rivalry developed between the two when they both produced *Richard II*, opening within weeks of each other, in 1955. The interpretations could not have been more different: the Old Vic production was dubbed, in the words of one reviewer, “royalist,” “all pomp and ceremony” offering not so much an interpretation of

the play as a whole, but a single, bravura performance, a mellifluously-spoken King of such “unblemished virtue” that “we feel that what Bolingbroke is snatching from his head is not a crown but a halo” (Shulman, “Now we have a case of split personality,” n.p.). Littlewood’s production was given a “stark setting, conceived to emphasise fear and oppression. We aimed to bring out the hatred and cruelty of the period...there was no pause for spectacle. Our concern always was for the inner action behind the lines – what they meant, rather than the poetry of the words” (Goorney, 101). Some found Littlewood’s production “of the two, it is the more interesting, controversial, and subtle” as it presented Richard as a psychopath, a disgrace to any throne (Hobson, n.p.). One reviewer asked if this was, “perhaps, taking the political line too far” (Hope-Wallace, n.p.). Another was more blunt, stating that Littlewood had distorted the play to prove that “the rebels had a good case” and derisively labelled her production a “Marxist interpretation” (Shulman, “Now...split personality,” n.p.). Yet another reviewer objected that Littlewood’s “team was eager to show the mediaeval ‘lords of England’ as a peculiarly unpleasant set of weaklings and thugs” (*Illustrated London News*, 29 August 1955, n.p.). This same reviewer and several others were distressed by Littlewood’s presentation of Richard as homosexual; by the 1970s this would, of course, become a frequent performance interpretation.

Reviews of how the text was handled by Littlewood’s Richard were extremely mixed. On the one hand we find: “...in making the text sound convincing, line by line, and in carving and highlighting the outlines of character performances...she scores at the expense of the better known theatre in Waterloo” [the Old Vic] (Hope-Wallace, n.p.). On the other hand: “the verse was mangled and minced, and I have seldom been more embarrassed in a theatre....It was all a thing of wild and whirling words” (*Illustrated London News*, 29 August 1955, n.p.). The general

opinion, even among those who admired Littlewood's interpretations, was that in key speeches Littlewood's King had again gone "too far" and presented the "uncontrolled, racing, fluent fancies of a lunatic" (*Sunday Times*, 23 August 1955, n.p.).

What we find here is a disdain for an interpretation that challenged received opinions about the character and the play. The general evaluation that the speaking of Richard's key speeches was remiss failed to register the integrity of Littlewood's interpretation. The majority of reviews rejected the production with the damning dismissive: "it is not, all in all, an interpretation of *Richard II* in which we can recognize the play that Shakespeare wrote" ("Theatre Royal, Stratford 'Richard II'," 18 August 1955, n.p.). Invoking the name and authority of Shakespeare, presumed to be incontestable, in order to validate one interpretation and deny others has, of course, been a common strategy as long as his works have been reviewed. In the case of Joan Littlewood's productions this invocation had a particularly pernicious effect.

The hue and cry that Littlewood was not producing "recognizable Shakespeare" was never stronger than in the critical reaction to her 1957 production of a "modern dress" *Macbeth*, though it was actually set as "Macbeth 1914." Typical of the negative, dismissive response was the following: "the Theatre Royal has not been content with merely a costume gimmick. It has given Shakespeare not only a facial but hormone treatment designed to bring him up-to-date as well" (Shulman, "Macbeth gets a Hormone Treatment," 7). There was a striking refusal among reviewers to engage seriously with the ideas Littlewood had made very clear in her Program

Notes:

In presenting *Macbeth* in modern dress we are not trying to be clever nor experimental... When we play the classics in our people's theatre we try to wipe away the dust of 300 years, to strip off the "poetical" interpretations...

which are still current today.

The poetry of Shakespeare's day was a muscular, active, forward-moving poetry, in this it was like the people to whom it belonged. If Shakespeare has any significance for today, a production...must not be regarded as an historical reconstruction but as an instrument still sharp enough to provoke thought, to extend man's awareness of his problems and to strengthen his belief in his kind. ("Producer's Note," n.p.)

In the 1950s this was certainly an oppositional statement with Littlewood directly positioning her work as an alternative to "mainstream" Shakespeare.

Aside from the "modern dress," Littlewood's *Macbeth* had followed the same precepts and production practices that had already served her well. For example, in rehearsing *Macbeth* she had the actors improvise "the scene which Shakespeare never wrote, when Macbeth actually meets the murderers for the first time – in a pub; the murderers, two ex-R.A.F. types; Macbeth saying 'How would you boys like to do a job for me?'" The purpose of this Brechtian exercise was to bring the actors "up against the problem, not of phrasing a line, pitching the voice, or finding a gesture but of how you act a person who is really trying to beg a favour" (Goodwin and Milne, 392-93). By such exercises Littlewood sought not only to enrich the background to a scene but also to integrate all the actors into the "movement" of the production. She viewed each actor as a "unit of vital importance in himself but ultimately only important in so far as he can be welded into the ensemble" (Goodwin and Milne, 396). This privileging of the ensemble, though now commonplace, was in clear opposition to the valorization of the heroic, star-driven, presentation of classical roles oft found in mainstream productions of the 1950s. I would suggest that it was this very difference that, in part, accounts for the vilification of Littlewood's *Richard II & Macbeth* as "unpoetic."

As in her production of *Richard II*, the nobility of Macbeth the King, in spirit and in social station, was downplayed. Instead, Glyn Edwards' Macbeth was described as "four-square" and that he failed to rise to "majestic despair" ("Macbeth in Not-so Modern Dress...", n.p.; Shulman, "Macbeth gets a Hormone Treatment," 7). Reviewers were alternately baffled or outraged when Littlewood presented scenes in which "staff officers could chat to old men in the rain" ("A Life-size Macbeth...", n.p.). In effect, reviewers were reacting to the completeness of Littlewood's interpretation, her portrayal of a coherent society in which she examined the situation of the common man, was impatient with "aristocratic maunderings" and wished to do away with "time's miracle of incrustation upon a work of art...Patina" (Schafer, 15; Brahms, 75). Moreover, this production did not look like the standard Old Vic Shakespeare production. It had none of the sumptuousness of the Old Vic; instead, *Macbeth* was starkly simple, staged on a bare platform surrounded by scaffolding. One critic deemed it "an unlovely permanent setting – a long gallery supported by rough-hewn props which give the recess the appearance of a coal mine" ("A Life-Size Macbeth," n.p.). The Brechtian austerity of Littlewood's *Macbeth* was in clear violation of the predominant production aesthetic of the day that privileged, indeed relied upon, spectacle and effect – in Theodor Adorno's words "the conspicuous display of material wealth and sensuous stimuli at the expense of the meaningfulness of the work" ("Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture," 475).

The majority of critics also found the production to be "unpoetic": they were mostly aghast at the way Littlewood had cut and rearranged the text and one called this "savage."¹² And they found the speaking of the verse wholly inadequate: phrases such as "her cast shows just as little relish for the play's language which has been sacrificed" and "if Shakespeare's poetry is

really all she so kindly says, the thing to do would be to play it. What she does instead is murder it, deliberately” were common (“A Life-Size Macbeth,” n.p.; Eric Keown, “At the Play..., n.p.). The word “deliberately” is revealing. Each of these criticisms linked the treatment of the text directly to Littlewood’s decision to give the production a modern setting. Each critic demonstrated either an implicit or explicit resentment of Littlewood’s mandate to find a way for performances of Shakespeare’s works to play a role in political praxis. The common theme was that Littlewood had “tarnished the glory of Shakespearean verse” and done “little credit to the name of Shakespeare” (*Illustrated London News*, 21 September 1957, n.p.; *Sketch*, 25 September 1957, n.p.). Invocations of Shakespeare and the unproblematized notion of his intentions was consistent: Littlewood was chastised repeatedly for her “clumsy attempts to make these [Shakespeare’s lines] mean something quite different from the author’s purpose. Here was the sin against the dead, indeed” (Brahms, 76). The terms of this chastisement are significant, typified in the words of Caryl Brahms: “I myself have always gone to Shakespeare for, among other things, the indefinable poetry of the years and centuries...For do what you will to Will, his poetry keeps breaking through and in his poetry, his understanding, his humanity and his heart” (Brahms, 75-6). This is the classic position of essentialist humanism, the willed affirmation of a *humanitas*, universal in that it is everywhere and always the same. Brahm’s criticism of Littlewood is based on an unproblematized understanding that Shakespeare’s works are an unambiguous source for affirmative cultural experience – that experience which offers an apparent, if false, resolution or catharsis of conflict and social inequality and so affirms existing social relations.¹³ What is crucial, is that this position takes refuge in the poetic patina of Shakespeare’s works and thereby

denies the possibility that the texts may speak in specific, transgressive ways for the political and social transformation of the present day.

Joan Littlewood believed that theatre must be contemporary and vital and, above all, fulfil a social purpose. And so she worked to present productions of Shakespeare's works that would challenge those dominant social values that maintained a class system she despised. The vigour, austerity, depth and coherence of her production style intrigued, challenged and alarmed the theatre audience of the 50's. But in the end she undoubtedly achieved her aim for a theatre that, in her own words, would be "grand, vulgar, simple, pathetic – but not genteel, not poetical," a theatre very much "in the present tense" (Goodwin and Milne, 390).

Buzz Goodbody

It was not until the mid-80s that the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain began to hire women directors on more than an occasional basis – with the notable exception of Buzz (Mary Ann) Goodbody's career at the RSC in the early 1970s.

Buzz Goodbody – she chose the name Buzz for its ambiguity – came from an upper middle-class background. Raised in North London, she was sent to Roedean, one of the country's most exclusive school for girls, and then attended Sussex University where she first identified herself as a feminist and joined the communist party. As a student she directed in small spaces as Sussex didn't then have a "proper" theatre. When her adaptation of Dostoyevsky's "Notes from the Underground" won a National Union of Students' Drama Festival Award she came to the notice of directors at the RSC. Goodbody was also a founding member of the feminist theatre group, Women's Street Theatre in London. In 1967 Goodbody was invited to join the RSC as a personal assistant to

director John Barton. Colin Chambers has recounted that when Goodbody joined the RSC, for the first eighteen months “she put up with the shopping, the paper work, parking his car, getting his pills, and ironing his shirts....he made it clear – he was not going to promote her as a protégée” (*Other Spaces...*, 27). Simultaneous with her work as an assistant with the RSC, and when there were gaps between RSC contracts, she continued to work with feminist groups in the fringe theatre scene. Goodbody worked with the RSC for four years before she was given the chance to direct a touring production, and it was another three years before she was offered another directorial assignment.¹⁴

This brief biography raises several issues, beginning with how young women directors “get their start” or find their way into the various cultural institutions with the resources to produce the works of Shakespeare. In 1970 Ms Goodbody commented that she supposed “there are only five women directors in Britain and there isn’t one of my age” (qtd. in *The Sunday Times* (London), 25 January 1970, n.p.). She believed this would change “as more women come into the theatre from the universities (*The Observer*, 26 January 1970, n.p.).

The length of time Buzz Goodbody served as an assistant and her reaction to this are significant. Colin Chambers has indicated that “No-one else below leadership level had stayed as long as her, but despite advice from many inside and outside the RSC to leave and work in a regional theatre or in the ‘fringe,’ she wanted to stay and scale the heights – to show that ‘it could be done’” (Chambers, 11). Throughout her career she felt a “strong sense of internal competition’ and was anxious that she wouldn’t “make it” with the RSC and would let other aspiring women directors down, taken as proof that “a woman could not be as good a director as a man” (Chambers, 11). Chambers noted in 1980: “it still takes five times as long for a woman to

get the same experience as a man and the power structure of the theatre has stayed the same as far as women are concerned” (Chambers, 12).

Buzz Goodbody was the first woman employed to direct more than a single production at either the RSC or the National Theatre of Great Britain. The two most striking features of her work with the RSC is in regard to the theatre venues in which she was assigned to work, theatres which seat less than 250 people, and her preference for staging uncut Shakespearean texts. In fact, my research indicates that we frequently find these same characteristics in the work of women directors who have followed Goodbody, especially at the RSC.¹⁵ Both of these staging practices raise significant issues.

Small-scale or studio spaces used by the RSC have included The Other Place, a converted storage shed of corrugated iron seating 140 people located 200 yards down the road from the Memorial Theatre in Stratford on Avon, The Place and The Roundhouse Downstairs, small-scale spaces used in London by the RSC in the 70s, the Swan, built in Stratford in 1986 and The Pit, the small-scale space in The Barbican, London home of the RSC from 1981 to the late 1990s. In addition to productions in these spaces, women at the RSC have been assigned to direct the company’s small-scale touring productions. The institutional politics of assigning Buzz Goodbody and the women who have followed her to small, studio spaces is an important and highly-charged issue which I’ll return to later. Right now I’d like to consider the relationship of space to Goodbody’s use of the dramatic text and development of a production style.

Buzz Goodbody had worked as an Assistant to John Barton for seven years before being asked, at the end of 1973, to be the director of the RSC’s first small theatre, The Other Place. “Other” certainly seems to be apt! In the preceding seven years the majority of Goodbody’s

assistant directing assignments, and one directing assignment (*King John* in 1970) had been with the RSC's touring company, Theatre-Go-Round, which required shows to be performed in small-scale spaces.

King John was conceived as a small-scale touring show, to be performed on a portable wooden platform with a single screen as a backdrop. A common theme among reviews was that the production was to be praised for staging “for once disembarassed of historical pageantry and patriotic fervour” (Spurling, 827). Buzz Goodbody's next Shakespeare assignment was *As You Like It*, which she directed for the Main Stage, then a bastion of patriarchy, the Stratford Memorial Theatre. According to Colin Chambers, this experience convinced her “that she was working in the wrong space....She was resorting to spectacle, to rhetoric, to pastiche” and this “only obscured and confirmed the mystique of the proscenium relationship between actor and audience” (Chambers, 33).¹⁶ She concluded that the proscenium theatre was now out of date. The relationship of the stage space to the audience and the kind of audiences attending touring and small-scale productions raises numerous questions. While most reviews had acknowledged that the limited resources available for *King John* had been used with great inventiveness, at least one reviewer decried the production as a “wretched version” of the play, “heavily cut and emasculated” and the production style as one that was “no good for state subsidized Shakespeare....It is grimly reminiscent of...’Pop Shakespeare’...designed to woo non-playgoers for Shakespeare in provincial town halls” (D.A.N. Jones, 839).

Certainly when Buzz Goodbody was appointed Artistic Director of the Other Place she entrenched an egalitarian treatment of the audience – all paid the same admission price and all sat on backless benches. Indeed, when the Other Place was in the planning stages, Goodbody

was invited to make recommendations on the use of the space. She suggested shoestring budgets for each show and that this second, studio-type space should be aimed at the development of a wider audience for Shakespeare: “We have to broaden that audience for artistic as well as social reasons. We know it’ll take years. Unless we make the attempt – classical theatre will become like Glyndebourne” (qtd. in Chambers, 34). Goodbody also recommended that this second space have an explicitly educational purpose: “The theatre has got to become much more of an education centre than it is at the moment.

There should be talk-ins and teach-ins with the actors and producers for anyone who wants to come” (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 June 1974).

It has only recently been acknowledged that Goodbody “became the catalyst for change” within the RSC (Chambers, 7). Dennis Kennedy has argued that in her 1974 production of *King Lear* she realized a “drastically remodeled style imposed by the small space” and the success of the production drew attention to the effectiveness of “small-scale” Shakespeare, leading to an invitation for her to direct *Hamlet* the following year (Kennedy, 253-54). Goodbody’s *Hamlet* was again lauded for the effective use of a small space as a “village hall” performance. When Buzz Goodbody killed herself, at age 28, three days after the first preview Trevor Nunn took over the final rehearsals. It’s been suggested that in becoming so closely involved with the production Nunn came to appreciate the power of small-scale venues for Shakespeare and that “studio work” thereafter became a policy of the RSC.¹⁷

It is no longer unusual for Buzz Goodbody’s small-scale work to be acknowledged as the foundation for an increasingly significant production practice – staging Shakespeare’s works in small spaces. Reviews and discussions of how she actually used small theatre spaces suggest

further issues for research. With the exception of her 1973 Main Stage production of *As You Like It*, Goodbody's productions of Shakespeare are repeatedly characterized as establishing an intense, intimate, direct physical relationship with the audience. This was an expression of her disdain for pageantry and spectacle, which she replaced with a spareness of staging and a minimum of set pieces and props. It was her customary practice to annexe the auditorium itself as a performing space, deliberately playing with the proximity or distance between actors and audiences in order to engage them as active participants rather than passive spectators. In a Program Note Goodbody explained her use of space in directing *King Lear*, linking this to its conception as a production for a school audience:

The staging of the production was also determined by the nature of the audiences we expected. Most school parties sit in the back of large theatres. However good the acting or the production may be, the experience can often be remote simply because of distance. Without expecting the audience to participate in the play I wanted them to be inside it. We therefore played in a three-sided auditorium with various acting areas. Finally, after every performance, we also spent half-an-hour with the audience...discussing the play. (Quoted in Callaghan, "Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change," 173.)

Reviews of Goodbody's work suggest that small-scale staging resulted in close attention to the inter-relationships between characters and to subtle, psychological portrayals by the actors. For example, her production of *Hamlet* is cited for its "intense, concentrated focus on character interaction," using minimal means – Spartan staging and modern dress costumes "to achieve complex effects by underscoring the power of social relationships both personal and political, and by extending them to involve the audience in the sense of danger, confrontation, surveillance and the impossibility of escape." Goodbody was working specifically with the

physical proximity of actors and audience “to convey Hamlet as something other than the transcendent hero” (Callaghan, “Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 173-74).

In evaluating work done at the RSC’s Swan Theatre, Ronnie Mulryne and Margaret Shewring identified a further, decisive effect of working in small spaces as “making the potential for a living theatre, with its emphasis firmly rooted in language and character, not in spectacle” (34). This emphasis on language is one that can be traced throughout the work of Buzz Goodbody and on into the work of women directors in the 1980s and 90s. Notably, this emphasis is found in both the discourses of production and reception. At the level of production the attention to language – and the implicit respect for the dramatic text – is most strikingly manifested in the decision of Goodbody and her successors to work, in the majority of their productions, with an uncut text. That decision is not unproblematic. It immediately suggests the question – are women directors accepting a hierarchy which gives the dramatic text precedence over the performance text or do they see the two as reciprocally constraining each other, as is now generally accepted by semiotic theorists?¹⁸

Buzz Goodbody’s work again proves instructive. In her first production, *King John*, she cut the text considerably but, as we have seen, this did not signal a disregard for the language of the play in favour of physical staging. Critical reception to the production acknowledged that the cuts provided “clarity” and “through respect for the text [she] made the issues crystal clear” (Chambers, 29). Her 1974 production of *King Lear* aroused some controversy for its cuts (Albany, Cornwall, Oswald and his subplot were all excised) but the majority of the critical community acknowledged that the cuts meant the play’s “sweep of language was...distilled and presented as if in close-up” and that she had captured “the essential themes of the play”

(Callaghan, "Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change," 172; Peter, 33). It was also argued that she had produced an admirably clear production: "Shakespeare's thought is in a sense clearer, because instantly the audience realises it is not watching the fall of an emperor...but men facing old age, betrayal" (Barnes, n.p.; also qtd. in Callaghan, "Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change," 172). Interestingly, Goodbody anticipated criticism in her Program Notes stating that the 140 minutes of cuts weakened the production but they were undertaken for the practical purpose of accommodating the bus and train schedules of those for whom the production was conceived. In her production of *Hamlet* Goodbody decided the text would be performed almost uncut. As with *Lear*, the production was reviewed as "exceptionally clear," characterized by "crispness and pointedness" (David, 70; see also Barber, 13). One reviewer made a direct link between her "cut-down" production of *King Lear* and "less cut-down" *Hamlet*, saying that it was "just as metaphysical and intense, both brooding and razor sharp upon the meaning of every word" with careful "line by line shaping of scene after scene" (Crick, n.p.).

The inescapable issue, of course, is the implicit reverence for Shakespeare. This in turn raises the issues of why women (or in fact men and women) choose to direct Shakespeare and how they position him in relation to "Culture" and the English-speaking dramatic tradition. Investing such respect in the text and in the notion of capturing the "essential" quality of the play that will speak for the author's "real" intentions reflects a presupposition that the plays may be presented as direct sources of Shakespeare's wisdom. This would suggest that at least some women directors position Shakespeare as the emblem of the English-speaking dramatic tradition and "Culture" writ large, with all the patriarchal baggage this implies. At this point one of the major questions

driving my research is to consider the various ways in which women directors of Shakespeare have positioned Shakespeare and to ask whether they implicitly accept Shakespeare's work as an unambiguous source for affirmative cultural experience – identified above as the classic position of essentialist humanism - which maintains existing social relations rather than challenging them.

Buzz Goodbody identified herself as a Marxist/feminist even though her work relied on the humanist assumptions that culture and Shakespeare are “sources of enlightenment for the masses” (Callaghan, “Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 165). Dymphna Callaghan has argued that Goodbody's work seems to have put into practice the notion:

That while the uses of Shakespeare have been conservative, the texts themselves, especially perhaps the species of ‘great man’ tragedy of which *King Lear* is a prime example, are intrinsically quite radical and only rendered reactionary by dint of energetic ideological manoeuvring and devious fast footwork on the part of the dominant class. (“Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 173.)

I would argue that in the case of both Goodbody and Littlewood their respect for Shakespeare was motivated by the belief that Shakespeare's texts are actually anti-patriarchal. In their theatre practice, Shakespeare's works were appropriated on behalf of other subjects and other sorts of power than “the hegemonic power of a universalised male liberal human subject” – the dominant version of Shakespeare in our culture.¹⁹ That position raises a series of related questions about women directors and the way they position Shakespeare. How is this reflected in their theatre praxis that includes not only their directorial practices but also the institutional practices that are the settings for their work? To what extent have the theatre practices of women directors of Shakespeare been used as “instruments of a cultural politics which altered the representation of [sic] plays’ power

relations (including and especially those of gender) and...aimed at instigating oppositional consciousness” (Callaghan, “Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 177).

We can gain some insight into this question by examining the ways in which directors work with actors as there is frequently a direct relationship between methods of work and the director’s positioning of the dramatic text. Buzz Goodbody was always forthright about her ideological positioning and her complex appropriation of Shakespeare. When she directed Eileen Atkins as Rosalind in *As You Like It*, their divergent ideologies, including their presuppositions about theatre itself, resulted in considerable tension (Chambers, 33). Atkins was cast as Rosalind in Goodbody’s production. It’s been openly acknowledged that the two did not get along – in interview Atkins stated “directors should not have ideas above their station” and “I don’t believe in productions having an ‘overall conception’ or a ‘line of attack’ ...I just take a part and do it. The most important thing a director can do is to choose the cast and then let them get on with it – although obviously he is responsible for orchestrating the production as a whole” (qtd. in Everitt, 2).

In fact, the relationship between women actors and women directors may be complicated and nuanced in unexpected ways. The book *Clamorous Voices* contains a set of interviews with five RSC women talking about their experiences as actors rehearsing Shakespeare. In one of these interviews Harriet Walter commented that it did not yet feel “normal” to face a woman in the director’s chair. The relationship between female actor and female director thus seems to be complicated by issues that have as much to do with history and politics as theatre:

As an actress I want and require a very clear definition of space and role to mark our respective jobs. I don’t want any confusion about what the director’s job is and what my job is. My experience with women directors has been that some

have a tendency to blur the definitions. They depend upon my sisterhood and sometimes consider it a betrayal if I argue with them. This emotional connection puts a difficult burden on the working relationship. It's easier to defy a male director. If a production fails or if he makes a mistake, there's only a slight possibility that his career will be damaged. It's a personal failure, but a(s) limited failure. If a woman's production fails, though, in a sense she has failed for all women directors. It is still the case that every time we do something publicly we are under pressure to represent women, and all the choices we make have to be right because any flaws or failures in a production will be put down to our gender. ("Introduction" to *Clamorous Voices*, xx-xxii.)

The underlying assumption in this and other comments by women actors is that there is a hierarchy in the rehearsal hall and the Director is an authority figure, whether to be "defied" or obeyed. Again, the nature of the director/actor relationship, whether authoritarian or collaborative raises several questions. How is this manifested in working methods? In what ways does this relationship vary from director to director? Does the relationship vary according to the size of the cast or the gender of the cast member? What, if any, distinctions are accounted for by the institutional framework within which the work is being done? Buzz Goodbody was well aware how actor-director relationships in the theatre were related to a power hierarchy. In 1973, she commented: "Actresses are in a paradoxical position because they are used to, if not sleeping with the director, at least flirting with him because he is a man and they are used to having him boss them around. I have to convince them that I have a different kind of strength" (qtd. in "It's Politics That Make The Theatre Exciting for Buzz," n.p.). In rehearsing one of her early directing assignments in 1971, the non-Shakespearean play *Occupations* by Trevor Griffiths, Goodbody had put into practice an "ensemble" philosophy, asking her actors to engage in discussion and exercises in political argument and to read considerable background material. She repeated this practice of discussion and sharing of research in rehearsing *King Lear* and *Hamlet*,

and also conducted improvisations and body-contact exercises related to the plays' familial and sexual dynamics.²⁰

Buzz Goodbody's career directing plays by Shakespeare raises one further question that is as relevant to all women directors as it is to Goodbody. This is the question of women directors as a social group and their institutional status – both with regard to the specific institutions in which they work

and in regard to Shakespeare as an institution. Although Goodbody's isolated position as the only woman to direct Shakespeare at the RSC from 1970 to the mid-80s would suggest she is an anomaly, there are many ways in which her career raises central issues in the history of women as workers in the theatre, for example the length of time it took for her to move from being an Assistant Director to being a Director.

Dympna Callaghan has suggested that the settings for Buzz Goodbody's work at the RSC, Theatreground and The Other Place, sustained an institutionally marginal status for Goodbody and that she “worked simultaneously within and against dominant paradigms of theatre practice” through her “deployment of the techniques of the margin at the centre of culture” (“Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 165, 177). Buzz Goodbody was convinced that culture and Shakespeare could play a crucial role in altering the way in which people regard the political and social realities in which they live.²¹ This was most clearly expressed in her identifying a potential radicalism in Shakespeare – “I love Shakespeare because he is saying all the time that politics is people and people politics” – and in her determination to make the political relevance of Shakespeare available to popular audiences, including schoolchildren (qtd. in “It's Politics That Make The Theatre Exciting for Buzz,” n.p.). Throughout her career she was

adamant concerning the need to expand the audience for Shakespeare and make “Culture” accessible to certain classes of people who had hitherto not been part of the RSC’s upper-class, middle-class and tourist audience.²² For example, in her production of *King Lear* she introduced a prologue spoken jointly by Lear and Edgar that related poverty statistics and newspaper accounts of the deaths of the elderly, reports of brutality and 17th century legal remedies for dealing with the itinerant poor. As Callaghan explains, the prologue thus “placed the cultural specificity of the Renaissance alongside references to current social issues” with the clear intent of critiquing present injustices. Her audience were not to take refuge in the “bourgeois comfort” of a universal, status-quo affirming Shakespeare.

Like Joan Littlewood, Goodbody believed in the revolutionary possibilities she saw in Shakespeare’s texts and so was not concerned merely to establish Shakespeare’s contemporary “relevance” but to attempt a cultural intervention with “an explicitly political challenge” (Callaghan, “Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 171). In this respect she had to negotiate on a daily basis a tension between marginality and engagement with the cultural centre.²³ Joan Littlewood has provided a powerful statement of the *credo* that lay behind her work – and which applies equally well to the work of Buzz Goodbody:

The bourgeoisie have tried to turn Shakespeare’s revolutionary humanism into cheap philanthropy – translate his philosophy into submissiveness – his disregard for religion and metaphysics into philosophical and religious tolerance. It is for us the revolutionary therein to translate Shakespeare and Marlowe and the rest into the living criticism of the bourgeois which they represent. (Qtd. in Runkel, 38-9; see also Callaghan, “Fun Palace,” 112 and 124, note 10.)

Buzz Goodbody's and Joan Littlewood's appropriations of Shakespeare were directed at fulfilling their agendas of social change. To what ends are contemporary women directors appropriating Shakespeare?

Notes

* This talk is based on research done in relation to a major project concerning women directors that I've been pursuing for several years and which will eventually be published as a book. The first chapter will cover the years 1879 to 1930; the second chapter covers 1930 to 1970; in a third chapter I take up the work of Joan Littlewood in the 1950s; the singular career of Buzz Goodbody in the 1970s is a fourth chapter and then I will devote at least two chapters to the work that has been done since the 1980s when opportunities for women to direct increased considerably. At this point I have completed most of the archival research for the first four chapters and I'm working with both archival materials and personal interviews in relation to the work of women from the 80s to the present day.

1 In the nineteenth century the term "director" was rarely used. Instead, the person doing the work of the modern-day director was identified as the "producer" or, sometimes, as the "stage-manager."

2 Elizabeth Schafer provides a compelling account of Eliza Vestris's career as a director who produced a "feminized version of Shakespeare" (197), and the ways in which her work has consistently been undervalued and her achievements identified as "domestic" (194-200).

3 Schafer has noted that Sarah Thorne worked “in areas particularly susceptible to being marginalized: the provinces, teaching and actor training” (205).

4 Schafer has discussed how labelling a woman theatre director as an eccentric “needs to be recognized as a way of belittling that woman’s achievements. It is a strategy of containment which was still being used two centuries after Sarah Baker by some reviewers discussing the Shakespeare productions of Joan Littlewood, constructing Littlewood as a ‘loony left’ eccentric, a theatre ‘character’ who shouldn’t be taken too seriously” (194).

5 Schafer has made the point that Langtry was “a shrewd businesswoman” in filling theatres through the drawing power of her beauty and her name” (204).

6 See Julie Holledge, *Innocent Flowers...*, 98-9. See also Ashwell’s account in *Modern Troubadours*.

7 The women who directed for The Lena Ashwell Players in peacetime included Esme Church, Beatrice Wilson, Nancy Price, Irene Hentschel and Helen Ferrers. See Schafer, 213, 259.

8 In *Modern Troubadours* Ashwell rhapsodised: “There is something in the rhythm of Shakespeare, in the splendour and fullness of the language which raises the mind and exalts the spirit, which gets to the soul of every man, whatever his class or education, whether he is a Cockney or comes from the farthest parts of the Empire” (48).

9 I presented some of this research on Joan Littlewood at the Annual Conference of the Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society, held in Banff, Alberta in May 2005. My paper was titled “Joan Littlewood’s Radical Renaissance Productions for the 1950s: Shakespeare ‘in the Present Tense’.”

10 It is clear that Littlewood viewed Shakespeare as one of the sites of cultural production in society, one of the places where the society can work out its understanding of itself; in short, “Shakespeare is one of the places where ideology is made.” See Alan Sinfield, “Reproductions, Interventions,” 132. See also my article “Affirmative Shakespeare,” 139.

11 In spite of this description Littlewood herself declared, of Brecht “I hate the bastard. He’d send his *Gauleiters* to inspect every production.” And in one interview she was dismissive of Stanislavski and the Method: “I went to America, I saw poor little Marilyn Monroe. She knew more than Lee Strasberg and he whole pack of them... (*The Independent Magazine*, 26 March 1994, 20).

12 For example, see “A Life-Size Macbeth...”; Wilson, “Macbeth (in Sam Browne) Just Threw His Words Away”; Keown, “At the Play...”; *Illustrated London News*, 21 September 1957; Marshall, 299. It was the reviewer in “A Life-Size Macbeth...” who called Littlewood’s cuts and re-arrangements “savage.” One exception to this vilification was the review “Macbeth in Not-So Modern Dress...” which called the production “driving, inventive.”

13 On the concept of “affirmative culture” see Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” 88-133. See also Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry...,” 120-67; Adorno, “The Culture Industry Re-considered,” 12-19; Marcuse, “On the Problem of the Dialectic,” 21. I have argued that the concept of “affirmative culture” predominated in the discourse of Canada’s Stratford Festival in its first twelve years: see “Affirmative Culture at Canada’s Stratford Festival,” 139-63. See also my unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, “Canada’s Stratford Festival 1953-1967: Hegemony, Commodity, Institution.” McGill University, 1988.

14 Colin Chambers, Alycia Smith-Howard, and Dympna Callaghan (“Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change”) have both outlined the basic facts of Goodbody’s biography.

15 For example, Deborah Warner directed a production of *Titus Andronicus* in the Swan Theatre in 1987 and a production of *King John* at The Other Place in 1988; Cicely Berry directed *King Lear* at The Other Place in 1988; Di Trevis directed a touring production of *The Taming of the Shrew* for the RSC in 1985; Sheila Hancock directed *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for the RSC tour in 1987; Katie Mitchell directed *3 Henry VI* in 1994.

16 Notably, Joan Littlewood had decided more than 15 years earlier that in order to serve her agenda of popularising Shakespeare and breaking down the boundaries between performers and audience she would remove the proscenium arch in the Theatre Workshop’s space in the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. See Coren, 60.

17 See Kennedy, 253-54; Smith-Howard, 82-3; Chambers, 67-8.

18 Keir Elam, for example, has discussed the relationship between the dramatic text and the performance text at length in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. See also William B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*.

19 See Carol Neely’s comments in Marianne Novy, ed. *Women’s Re-Visions of Shakespeare*, 250.

20 Colin Chambers gives an interesting account of Goodbody’s rehearsal methods in *Other Spaces*, 63. See also Smith-Howard, 39.

21 Regarding cultural intervention see Chambers, 32. Also see Callaghan, “Buzz Goodbody: Directing for Change,” 165, 171; and Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, 303.

22 See Alan Sinfield's insightful observations concerning the way that "The inegalitarian bias in cultural provision derives from...cultural assumptions that freeze out and discriminate against the lower classes, ethnic groups, women. The final twist is that when lower class people do not take to the arts, it is said to be their fault" (*Literature, Politics and Culture...*, 55).

23 Dympna Callaghan's discussion of the ways in which "marginality became the signature of their [Littlewood's and Goodbody's] work is most illuminating. See "The Aesthetics of Marginality: The Theatre of Joan Littlewood and Buzz Goodbody," 273.

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Teaching Beowulf Using Film:
Exploring the Best Visual Aids to Help Students
Understand Early English Language and Culture
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Note: This paper was given as a visual presentation of text combined with film clips. It did not exist as a formal speech, but as an interactive presentation. Subtracting the film clips and translating it into pure text lowers the power of the visual images, but it will give a reader an idea of the subject discussed.

Purpose

Teaching the poem *Beowulf* is always a challenge: most students have never been exposed to Old English nor do they have more than a rudimentary understanding of the culture of the Geats and Danes. If an instructor can overcome the linguistic barrier by using a good translation of the poem, he or she still has to negotiate the cultural barrier – and this is where a good film version comes in handy.

Recently we have been given four new versions of *Beowulf*:

- the 1999 film *The 13th Warrior*
- the 2005 film *Beowulf & Grendel*
- the 2006 film of Benjamin Bagby's stage performance of *Beowulf*
- the recently released 2007 *Beowulf*, filmed with motion capture

Audience

The target classroom for this technique:

- 200-level or 2nd year students
- Non-English Majors
- General Education Course
- Survey Course

Problems/Goals

While there are many film versions of Shakespearian plays, and a lot of movies that portray a convincing medieval world, there are very few films to choose from when one needs to give a visual example of Early English or Norse culture.

Admittedly, none of these films are an absolutely accurate representation of either Norse or Anglo-Saxon culture – they are the result of Hollywood’s imagination, or created for a very specific purpose -- and therefore instructors have to be very clever and creative in using them as visual aids to illustrate the poem.

Film Versions

13th Warrior

- 1999 Film, directed by John McTiernan, produced by Touchstone Pictures
- Starring Antonio Banderas
- Based on *Eaters of the Dead* by Michael Crichton
- 103 Minutes – Rated R

The film is loosely based on the book, but it offers many opportunities to discuss Norse culture especially since it is set in what appears to be the 9th or 10th century. The hero is not Beowulf, but a man of Arabic descent, an ambassador who volunteers to be taken by Norsemen to Denmark to help defeat a great monster. The beginning sequence (approx. first ten minutes) is very useful as a short clip to be shown in the classroom because it has a mix of languages – the Arab speaks only Arabic; his guide speaks Arabic, Latin, and Greek; the Norseman who befriends them speaks Latin and (an unidentified) Norse language. The polyglot nature of the time is treated very well, and the hero ultimately learns the Norse language to survive. I use the clip to illustrate certain time periods in *History of the English Language* and *British Literature I* classes, and it always generates a satisfying discussion.

Beowulf & Grendel

- 2005 Film, directed by Sturla Gunnarson
- Starring Gerard Butler and Stellan Skarsgård
- Filmed on location in Canada and Iceland
- 103 minutes – Rated R

Intending to be an authentic account of the fight between Beowulf and Grendel, this film has stunningly beautiful background and scenery, and convincing costumes. The dialogue is uneven, however, as is the acting by both Butler and Skarsgård. Grendel himself is a strange troll-like man in what appears to be an uncomfortable rubber muscle suit. The film is best shown by using it as a source for visual examples – the mead hall, the arrival of Beowulf’s men on the beach, the crazy Welsh missionary – all will help students envision Beowulf’s world. My favorite moment is the insertion of one of Beowulf’s men as the tale-teller who spins tall tales of how “mighty Beowulf is” to the local children until Beowulf walks up to him, rolls his eyes in amusement and rudely tells his friend... *to shut up*.

Beowulf

- 2006 documentary/performance of *Beowulf*, lines 1-1062, recorded live in Helsingborg, Sweden
- Directed by Stellan Olsson
- Performed by Benjamin Bagby, voice and Anglo-Saxon harp
- 98 minutes – No rating

Benjamin Bagby's performance is a simple and austere affair that relies on the color of the language of the poem, a simple harp plucked only for emphasis, and on Bagby's own rubber-faced presentation. Because of the lack of action I use it in lower division classes as a short example, focusing on the well-known introduction to the poem. In upper division classes I play more of it, discussing linguistics and poetic emphasis, but it is difficult to show in a classroom because of the lack of action on the screen. I found the round-table discussion of the poem (in the supplementary material on the DVD) to be very useful for an examination of oral culture.

Beowulf

- 2007 Film, directed by Robert Zemeckis
- Starring Ray Winstone, Anthony Hopkins and Angelina Jolie
- Filmed in digitally enhanced live-action
- Screenplay by Neil Gaiman & Roger Avary
- 114 minutes – Rated R

This version would be very useful to show in the classroom because of its entertainment factor and notoriety. The digitally enhanced live-action is very fascinating and allowed the director to create a world that is startlingly authentic. The R-rating is for violence and brief nudity, with some suggestive moments that can be easily blamed on the hedonistic nature of the mead hall. Grendel is more than just a troll; he is a fascinating and complex monster. Grendel's mother (Angelina Jolie) is a water demon, and despite the so-called nudity, is actually modestly clothed in gold paint for her turn in front of the camera.

Despite the digital enhancement, the acting is very convincing. The plot, however, will create an enthusiastic classroom discussion because although it is the only film today that covers both the Grendel and the dragon halves of the poem, the interpretation as to why these two halves are connected is solely the screenwriters' conclusion. This conclusion, though, is strangely convincing, and I discovered that many students appreciated the poem on a new level as a result. The Bonus Features include Neil Gaiman explaining his rationale for the interpretation, and I found this to be very useful to show in class.

Advantages

Showing a film in the classroom has several advantages:

- Students are challenged to re-envision the poem, just as the film-makers did
- Students are encouraged to consider the sources of oral tradition as being natural to culture, as opposed to artificial
- Students learn to evaluate the quality of films, and may open a scholastic dialogue between the poem and the films

This presentation contained a very simple thesis: I discussed which films were worth showing in the classroom, and what selections from the films had proven to be the best visual aids in helping students open and understand the cultural and linguistic world of the poem *Beowulf*.

**The Rhetoric of Desire & Lesbian Space in
*The Assembly of Ladies and The Floure and the Leafe***

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Both *The Assembly of Ladies* and *The Floure and the Leafe* are unique among Middle English dream visions in that each has a female narrator, and as such, I believe these poems reveal important ideas about the nature of female desire in the late Middle Ages.¹ Marilyn Desmond, in “The Voice of Exile: Feminist Literary History and the Anonymous Anglo-Saxon Elegy,” argues that in a patriarchal society, a female narrator must observe her place in society, fulfilling the roles expected of her, while trying to speak through the written word.² In order for her voice to gain acceptance, the female poet must rely upon, at least to some degree, prevailing social conventions. Moreover, many such poems ultimately reinforce patriarchal standards, whether consciously or inadvertently. This is the case, I will argue, with *The Assembly of Ladies* and *The Floure and the Leafe*: through their spatial details, these two dream visions demonstrate the dangers of unchecked female desire, with particular attention to lesbian desire, and visibly demonstrate how heterosexual desire must be reinscribed and reinforced.

Contextually, this is an appropriate fear. The 15th century witnessed a growing concern with all-female communities, as men recognized that enclosure was a double-edged sword—female

¹ Early editors attributed the works to Chaucer; in fact, they were not excluded from the Chaucerian canon until 1868.

² See Marilyn Desmond, “The Voice of Exile: Feminist Literary History and the Anonymous Anglo-Saxon Elegy,” *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990): 572-90.

isolation was necessary to preserve masculine power, but it was also feared because it could lead to challenging the necessity of the male wielding that power. Georges Duby writes:

What, men asked, do women do together when they are alone, locked up in the chamber? The answer was: Nothing good. [...] The moralists were obsessed with thoughts of the guilty pleasures, which, they had no doubt, women enjoyed in the gynaecium either alone or in conjunction with other women and young children. [...] [W]omen, particularly young women, are constantly vulnerable to the pricks of desire, against which there is no defense, and that they usually satisfy these desires through homosexuality.³

Moreover, as Sahar Amer and others have shown, Arabic and Indian texts that document lesbian activities were starting to be translated and filter into Western society.⁴ As well, in the 15th century, world trade and travel was rapidly expanding. Arabia was fascinating because of the stories that pervaded travelers' tales about harems as sites of erotic delights, but India, which is mentioned in *The Assembly of Ladies*, and was considered the epitome of the exotic because of

• ³ Georges Duby, "The Aristocratic Households of France, Communal Living." In *A History of Private Life*, ed. Georges Duby. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1988), 79-80.

⁴ e.g. the 10th century *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* by Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Nasr Al-Katib. This is just one of a number of encyclopedias circulated around the Arab world between the 11th and 16th centuries. See especially Sahar Amer, *Crossing Borders: Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2008).

the rumored variety of sexual practices. This rampant line of thought would grow in the 16th and 17th centuries, but the seeds began in the late Middle Ages.

Of course the term “lesbian” is anachronistic, but I choose to use it here, as I have done in my other work, as a deliberate political choice. Moreover, in order to recover a medieval history of woman-woman eroticism, it is necessary to read between the lines. Some scholars have chosen to locate these “blanks” both textually and physically. Judith Bennett, in a much-discussed article, suggests that in order “to approach the social history of lesbianisms in the Middle Ages, [...] we try broadening our perspective to include women whom I have chosen to call ‘lesbian-like,’” such as women whose “lives offered particular opportunities for same-sex love,” as well as others who resisted other norms of female (hetero)sexuality.⁵

Both *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies* depict all-female communities, and it is this arrangement that leaves them susceptible to concerns about proper desire and sexuality; indeed, both poems open with lesbian-like desire. However, both ultimately reassert patriarchal control over women’s bodies and desires, and do so through judicial use of architectural constructs and spatial metaphor. There are a number of points throughout both poems that correspond with this perspective; here I have time enough to discuss only the maze and the arbors. However, the various bed and dressing chambers, the courts, and the fields also contribute to this sense of confining and supplanting female, specifically homoerotic, desire.

⁵ Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-like’ and the Social History of Lesbianism,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 1-24; 9.

The Assembly of Ladies begins unusually as it is set in September, not in springtime, which is the traditional setting for a dream vision. Springtime settings implied fertility and growth, new life, rebirth, and fanciful desire. An autumnal setting signals the foreclosure of reproduction. Indeed, the poem points out “the fresh season was al to-gydre done” (l. 2).⁶ Just as woman-woman erotic encounters are infertile, so, too, is the opening of the poem.

Another unusual detail about *The Assembly of Ladies* is the poem’s setting in a maze, which provides deep symbolic significance. Mazes were contradictory in meaning—they were simultaneously a symbol of duplicity and moral confusion, and of ordered ritual and the value of persistence.⁷ The Middle English Dictionary defines “mase” as “a source of confusion or deception; vision, fantasy, delusion; deceit;” but also as a confused or useless activity; an idle

⁶ All quotations taken from: *The Assembly of Ladies*, ed. Derek Pearsall. TEAMS Middle English Texts. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. Accessed 2 December 2007. <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/assint.htm>>. Originally published in *The Floure and the Leafe; The Assembly of Ladies; The Isle of Ladies*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990; rpt. 1992).

⁷ See Penelope Reed Doob, “Contradictory Paradigms: The Labyrinth in Art and Literature,” in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1992), 59-80.

diversion,” as well as a labyrinth structure.⁸ This tie to idleness is picked up on by the narrator in *The Assembly of Ladies*.

The Assembly of Ladies narrator presents her characters—herself and her fellow ladies—as they ramble through the garden labyrinth one afternoon, reacting differently to the bends the maze presents:

There were ladyes walking, as was the wone, [...]
Disportyng hem everiche after theyr guyse,
In crosse alleys walking be two and two,
And som alone after theyr fantasies.
Thus occupied we were in dyvers wise, (ll. 5, 9-12)

The narrator then notes that “bi one assent,” the company of ladies enter the maze together when “aloure other busynesse was done” (l. 31) to pass the time each “aftyre other entent” (l. 33). Some are “mased in their mynde” and some are so carried away by impetuosity that “for verray wrath they stept over the rayle.” Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson note that the use of “mase” both as a verb and a noun [(a)masen—to be confused; mase—labyrinth] suggests that the formal garden reflects more than 15th century fashion.⁹ Indeed, its linkage with idleness, fantasy, and confusion points directly towards a transgressive location—the maze provides a space for women to explore their own desires. Moreover, feminist critics have explored medieval mazes as

⁸ *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath, Sherman McAllister Kuhn, and Robert E. Lewis; vol. M.1 (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1975). Available full text online <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>>.

⁹ Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson, “The Assembly of Ladies: A Maze of Feminist Sign-Reading?” In *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers, Linda Hutcheon, and Paul Perron (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1991), 171-96; pp. 183-84.

symbols of the female body and of a female textual hermeneutic. For instance, Carolyn Dinshaw observes that obscene punning pervades descriptions of labyrinths. Sexual intercourse is associated with seductive bypaths, turnings and twisting of the straight way.¹⁰ Significantly, the women enter the maze after “busynesse” is done and they are idle and able to “disporte” in the “crosse alleys” (l. 11; pleasurable amusement) according to their own fantasies.

Belief in the relationship between idleness and sin, specifically sexualized sin, and even more specifically homosexuality, was common in the Middle Ages and a central feature of medieval theology. Both Jerome and Benedict note the connection,¹¹ and Aelred of Rievaulx writes:

Idleness is indeed the enemy of the soul...It is the mother of all evils, it engenders passion...and nourishes vice...[it] sows evil thoughts in the mind, [and] kindles and inflames illicit desires.¹²

This association is also connected to the concept of *acedia*, the sin of excessive sorrow or despair; a state that Pearsall suggests might also be signaled by the September setting.¹³

During her journey into the maze, the narrator, growing weary, enters a “strete passage,” which, recalling Dinshaw’s connections, is reminiscent of a vagina. After passing through it, she “comes forth”—enters—“an herber feyre and grene.” Traditionally in medieval gardens, arbors are for lovers to meet or poets to dream. In this case, the lady awaits her fellow female

¹⁰ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison: U Wisconsin P), p. 77.

¹¹ See Jerome, *Epistolae CXXV.II* (*PL* 22, col. 1978), and the *Rule of St Benedict*, 48:1. The latter resulted in a proverbial saying: “The wickedness of Sodom came from idleness and a full belly.”

¹² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, trans. Mary Paul Macpherson, in *Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises and Pastoral Prayer*, Cistercian Fathers Series, vol. 2 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1971), 42-102; pp. 54-55.

¹³ See Pearsall’s introduction for an overview of the flower symbolism. For a discussion about *acedia*, see S. W. Jackson, “Acedia the sin and its relationship to sorrow and melancholia in medieval times,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 55 (1981): 172–85.

companions. The circular arbor is enclosed by masonry and contains a “turning wheel,” perhaps reminiscent of the Wheel of Fortune. Flowers, all with symbolic meaning, grow in abundance: marjoram (virtue & honor), daisies (chaste love), forget-me-nots (constancy), speedwell (remembrance), and pansies (thoughts).

Amidst this setting, the narrator sits awaiting her female companions, “remembryng of many dyvers cace/ of tyme past, musyng with sighes depe” (ll. 75-76)—acting in a manner reminiscent of the traditional dreamer suffering from lovesickness. She is pale and wan—according to the opening of the poem—suffering from lack of sleep, plagued by memories, and prone to sighing and weeping. As she naps on the ornate benches within the arbor, the narrator has her dream.

Of particular importance, I believe is the description of the arbor as a “delectable place.” Although today we use delectable most often in association with taste, the Middle English definition connects it more closely with sight, although it also carries a sense of being tied to the senses in general. In particular, delectable meant “sights, etc. pleasing to the senses; pleasurable.” Other verbs of sight crop up in this section, too: the arbor is enclosed “ful secretly” to keep it from prying eyes; the daises “shewe himself”; the narrator “beholdys” the scene. Thus, the narrator is tempted by sight, although she does not fully give in to temptation.

Idleness, the enclosed arbor, and the sense of sight also contribute to the presentation of female desire in *The Floure and the Leafe*. The narrator of *The Floure and the Leafe* begins her tale in a much different manner than *The Assembly of Ladies*. It is springtime (May Day, in fact) and the nightingale—traditional symbol of romance—is singing. The narrator is alone, however, and makes a very specific point that she is not unwell and has no reason not to sleep (including, we discover, sexual activity). Whereas *The Assembly of Ladies*

narrator began pale and wan, *The Floure* narrator is logical and controlled. In fact, as Alexandra Barratt points out, the narrator is “unnaturally calm.” The explanation for this composure and self-sufficiency—“the narrator is a follower of the leaf—of chastity and fidelity, of strenuous and virtuous activity.”¹⁴ Her demeanor demonstrates her emotional and physical chastity.

Because she cannot sleep, the narrator goes for a walk in the garden:

And at the last a path of little breade
I found, that greatly had not used be,
For it forgrowen was with grasse and weede
That wel unneth a wight might it se. (ll. 43-46)¹⁵

This narrator follows a similar path as the last, following a narrow vaginal passage—this one distinctly unused, i.e. virginal—into an enclosed arbor. This arbor does not contain the flowers and masonry of the more formal version found in *The Assembly of Ladies*; instead, it is populated by sycamore and lush grass. Also unlike the arbor in *The Assembly of Ladies*, this arbor will not be shared. It has the properties of concealing the one inside while allowing her to look out:

¹⁴ Alexandra A. T. Barratt, “‘The Flower and the Leaf’ and ‘The Assembly of Ladies’: Is There a (Sexual) Difference?” *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987): 1-24, p. 8.

¹⁵ All quotations taken from: *The Floure and the Leafe*, ed. Derek Pearsall. TEAMS Middle English Texts. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. Accessed 2 December 2007. <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/flourint.htm>>. Originally published in *The Floure and the Leafe; The Assembly of Ladies; The Isle of Ladies*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990; rpt. 1992).

And shapen was this herber, roofe and all,
As a pretty parlour, and also
The hegge as thicke as a castel wall,
That who that list without to stond or go,
Though he would all day prien to and fro,
He should not see if there were any wight
Within or no; but one within well might
Perceive all tho that yeden there without
In the field, that was on every side (ll. 64-72)

This pleasant arbor embodies the imagery of secrecy, enclosure, and impenetrability. Within the dream vision tradition, as Paul Piehler notes, the *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) and *Locus amoenus* (pleasant spot), mixing sensual and spiritual significances at their very roots, offer “richly symbolic settings for the enactment of the private moralities of eroticism.”¹⁶ Typically, they function as a locus from which a male narrator can view female characters. In these situations, female characters become a projection of the male narrator’s desire. The garden is transformed into an erotic and sensual place in which it is expected that men will fantasize about women under the guise of unrequited love.¹⁷

In the arbor, a soft breeze, “pleasaunt sights,” and merry songs assail the narrator, until “so was I...thorow ravished” (l. 103). She looks around busily, finding the nightingale, and is overcome by “so pasing a delicious smell,” “whereof I had so inly great pleasure/ that as me thought I surely ravished was...” (ll. 113-14). Ravished is an interesting word in Middle English. The most common meaning was “to steal; to take away; plunder; appropriate.” Other meanings

¹⁶ Paul Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory* (Montréal: McGill-Queens UP, 1971), pp. 98-99.

¹⁷ Carl Withaus, “‘Wrethen in Frere’: Narrative Voice, Gender, and Chastity in *The Floure and the Leafe*,” *Women and Language* 22.1 (1999): 37-43; 41.

included: “to capture, trap, catch”; “to rape, especially a virgin”; “to transport”; “to drive someone into a state of stress or ecstasy”; “to entrance, enrapture; delight; overwhelm”; “to compel, sweep along.” Each of these meanings somehow combines pleasure, power, and sexuality.

The narrator’s ravishment is inspired through her senses, particularly sight. Coupled with lasciviousness, sight was considered dangerous to virtue. Suzanne Biernoff defines sight in the Middle Ages as “both a tool for the acquisition of knowledge and a locus of carnal desire.”¹⁸ Sight was a necessary evil, and like many things, had to be used properly, or the results could be disastrous, especially to virtue and chastity. John Baldwin notes, “twelfth century physicians assigned to the eyes an important role in the arousal of sexual desire.”¹⁹ So dangerous was sight that the standard punishment for rape, especially of a virgin, in the twelfth century was having one’s eyes put out. Sight engendered concupiscence, a view echoed by romances, courtly love manuals, and theological treatises alike.²⁰

¹⁸ Suzanne Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages: Ocular Desires* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 1.

• ¹⁹ John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1994), p. 105.

²⁰ The most famous of these, Andreas Capellanus’ *The Art of Love*, discusses lustful looks in some detail. For a good edition of this treatise, see *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, ed. P. G. Walsh (Duckworth, 1983), which contains parallel texts in Latin and English. See also Ambrose’s *De Virginitate* and Tertullian’s *On the Veiling of Virgins*. See also Lynn Brumbaugh-Walter, “‘The Grace of the Mutual Glance’: Reciprocal Gazing and Unholy Voyeurism in *The Life of Christina of Markyate*,” *Medieval Perspectives* 11(1996): 74-95; Janet Soskice, “Sight and Vision in Medieval Christian Thought,” in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, ed. Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York: Routledge, 1996).

There is, then, a clear connection between the gaze and sexuality; yet, as A. C. Spearing points out, sight has a “unique status among the senses as the only one that involves no material contact with its object” which interestingly leads to his conclusion that sight “gives least satisfaction to bodily desire.”²¹ The paradox is revealed—sight is both reliable and unfaithful, both fulfilling and unsatisfying, but always interactive. Because of its precarious balance, the sense of sight was especially vulnerable to pollution. Because of the dual nature of sight—it can be a shared or a solitary experience—it is central to fantasy and voyeurism.²²

The arbor that houses *The Floure and the Leafe* narrator is especially conducive to fantasy and voyeurism since she can look out, but no one can see in. Her fantasies are immediately made clear. After she hears voices described as “sweet and delicious,” the narrator peers out to see the most beautiful women she has ever laid eyes upon. They are richly dressed and crowned with chaplets of various leaves: laurel, which symbolizes virtuous service; woodbind, which symbolizes fidelity in love; and, as the narrator notes, “sadly some wore” *agnus castus*, which symbolizes dedicated virginity. That the narrator deems it “sad” that some of these beautiful women have chosen perpetual virginity is intriguing.

²¹ A.C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); p. 5.

²² I am using voyeurism here not in the narrow sense of a “peeping Tom,” or in the Freudian sense of “perversion,” but in the broader sense of observing actions, perhaps sexual in nature, that were generally assumed to be private, at least to some degree.

More intriguing is the narrator's voyeurism. Safely ensconced in her enclosed arbor, she not only observes the beautiful ladies, but also judges them:

And thus they came, dauncing and singing,
Into the middes of the mede echone,
Before the herber where I was sitting,
And, God wot, me thought I was wel bigone,
For than I might avise hem, one by one,
Who fairest was, who coud best dance or sing,
Or who most womanly was in all thing. (ll. 183-89)

This scene is one of voyeuristic, homoerotic female desire. The ladies parade in front of the “wel bygone” narrator who secretly watches and evaluates them based on appearance, movement, and womanliness. She is enraptured; that is “ravished.”

Thus both dream visions lead their female narrators down a narrow path to a well-appointed arbor where they indulge in fantasies and await (or watch) the company of other women. Sight, however, is carefully impeded in *The Assembly of Ladies*. The maze that narrator is in prevents sight both in and out, which we can discern when she loses sight of her companions. Instead of being able to voyeuristically gaze at other women, *The Assembly* narrator cannot see them as they cannot see her. Similarly, the sight of love's martyr's is veiled from sight. When she approaches the beryl and crystal wall of the main chamber, the narrator sees that “wheron was graven of stories many oon,” (l. 457), and these stories include the tales of Phillis, Thisbe, Cleopatra, Melusine, and Anelida among “many mo than I reherce yow here” (l. 469)—female desire is choked by the number of tales that are told. However, these engraved stories are also “with fine umple...al over-sprede” (l. 471), dimming their glow and muting their impact. Sight, in *The Assembly of Ladies*, is obstructed, particularly sight that damages claims of heterosexuality.

Each poem further demonstrates that spatial location can be used to construct intimacy between women. In *The Floure and the Leafe*, the initial intimacy occurs through the narrator's voyeurism. However, the familiarity continues after she approaches the Lady in White. As Carl Withaus points out, in *The Floure and the Leafe*, the description of spring does not introduce a beloved; instead, the narrator uses this convention to draw the reader into the poem, but then...replaces the beloved with the "faire lady."²³ Similarly, in *The Assembly of Ladies*, intimate exchanges and confidences do not pass between women in public halls; rather, they occur in private chambers. It is only during the intimate activity of dressing the lady that Diligence calls the lady dreamer "suster" (l. 259). Sister in this case betokens intimacy, an intimacy created by place—private chambers—and circumstance—personal service by trusted servants.²⁴ The behavior and interactions of women within a matriarchal sphere highlight the bond that is emphasized by spatial proximity.

Women's desire, empowerment, and gratification have all been highlighted, and so must be contained. *The Assembly of Ladies* is framed by heterosexuality, so its reassertion is assured. The poem presents a tale within a tale, as the dream vision is being related by the narrator to a knight. Reminders of heterosexuality are scattered throughout. For instance, as the narrator is being led to the palace of Lady Loyalty she asks her guide about men, and is distressed to discover they are not allowed: "'Nat one?' quod I, 'ey, benedicite!'" (l. 148). This serves as a reminder that

²³ Withaus, "'Wrethen in Frere,'" p. 40.

²⁴ Colleen Donnelly, "'Withoutte Wordes': The Medieval Lady Dreams in *The Assembly of Ladies*," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 15 (1994): 35-55; 43-44.

despite the all-female community and her masculine role, the narrator's desires are properly focused on men.

The reinforcement of heterosexuality is also emphasized by the poem's conclusion. After the narrator presents her complaint, Lady Loyalty declares that judgments on the matters before her will be deferred. Much scholarly debate has ensued over the deferred judgment. I suggest that part of its purpose is to allow the narrator to make an active choice to condemn men and heterosexuality and remain within the female space, or to return to a sexually desegregated world. The narration then ends not when she awakens, but rather when "the knight, who has listened with keen interest, utters his positive verdict on the dream and she gives title to it, presenting the story now as a book."²⁵ This is a performative act. After receiving male validation, the narrator names her text—the story she has conceived—in a manner similar to assigning gender at birth.

The narrator of *The Floure and the Leafe* is enraptured by the women she watches, but after some time she notices that men are entering the field from the same place the ladies came out. Instead of dancing and singing together in a harmonious manner, the men "burst in and compete in linear and destructive jousts."²⁶ As she watches, the narrator notes their clothes and their actions, but does not remark upon their attractiveness or form, and while the men, too, wore chaplets or carried staves, none bore the *agnus castus* of complete chastity.

²⁵ Maria Beatriz Hernández-Perez, "Distortions of the Chaucerian Tradition in *The Assembly of Ladies*," *Selim* 11 (2001-2002): 27-49; 34.

²⁶ Barratt, "Sexual Difference," p. 10.

These men are not the only disruptive force. As the narrator watches, another complete company—clothed in green and wearing chaplets of flowers—enters: “And at the last I cast mine eie aside,/ and was ware of a lusty company/ that came roming out of the field wide” (ll. 323-24). They play and dance together until the weather turns against them and they must be saved by the white company. Withaus purports that this is a unique perspective on the traditional May Day game of the Flower and the Leaf, adding a dimension of “moralizing adherence to the Flower or the Leaf in terms of a contrast between “trouth” (chastity and honor) and “idle dedes.”²⁷ The narrator is emphatically reminded by her beloved Lady in White that idleness must be scorned, and that women must preserve their virtue. The conversation concludes with the narrator choosing the company of the Leaf and awakening, with her adherence to virtue ringing in her ears.

Overall, then, each poem contributes a unique female narrator to a genre dominated by male narrators allowing space for the development of female desire without giving way to a space of sexual excess. Indeed, *The Assembly of Ladies* is about pursuing desire, while *The Floure and the Leafe* is about containing it. In highlighting these developments, however, each poem also reaffirms the existing patriarchal power structure, and, ultimately, upholds proper heterosexual behavior, whether the choice is marriage or virginity.

²⁷ Withaus, “Wrethen in Frere,” p. 38.

“Seeming Wealth”: Wyatt's “My Mother's Maids” as Critique of Horace's
Satire 2.6

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Sir Thomas Wyatt's epistolary satire “My mother's maids” is often overlooked by critics, purportedly because of the superiority of the poet's other two verse satires, and it is too often dismissed as little more than a straightforward retelling of the country mouse fable in Horace's *Satire 2.6*.²⁸ However, Wyatt's version does not merely echo Horace's endorsement of the

28 Substantive criticism of Wyatt's satires, generally focusing in order of importance on “Mine own John Poyntz,” followed by “A spending hand,” and finally “My mother's maids,” includes: Colin Burrow, “Horace at Home and Abroad: Wyatt and Sixteenth-century Horatianism,” in *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 27-49; Joost Daalder, “Seneca and Wyatt's Second Satire,” *Études Anglaises* 38.4 (1985): 422-426; Kenneth Graham, *The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in Early English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980); Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); H.A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period: An Essay* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959); Jerry Mermel, “Sir Thomas Wyatt's

simple country life over that of the city and court but rather focuses attention on the inherent violence that characterizes the world outside the self. In fact, Wyatt's poem is better read as a satire of its Horatian source, genre, and central theme about the peace and contentment that can be supposedly found in the country.²⁹ By altering a number of components of the Roman poet's

Satires and the Humanist Debate over Court Service," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 11 (1978): 69-79; Raymond Southall, *Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964); Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005); Gary Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Longman, 1986).

29 For examinations of Wyatt's poetic craft, see Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jonathan Crewe, *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Barbara Estrin, *Laura: Uncovering Gender and Genre in Wyatt, Donne, and Marvell* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Douglas Peterson, *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles*, 2nd ed. (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues, 1990); Diane Ross, "Sir Thomas Wyatt: Proverbs and the Poetics of Scorn," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987): 201-212; and Krisztina Szalay, *The Obstinate Muse of Freedom: On the Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, *Studies in Modern Philology* 15 (Budapest:

tale (both slight and central), Wyatt transforms Horace's classical model into a commentary on the limitations of the latter's view of human conduct..³⁰ For Wyatt, exerting any effort to find peace outside of oneself is not only a chimera but a search that will inevitably end in tragedy. Wyatt ultimately argues that the only way to survive in the court is through the adoption of Stoic philosophy, turning inward and trusting only in oneself and the certainty of appearance as *appearance*, rather than possessing faith in others or the outside world.

The overall genre or “frame” of the poem is a generic mix of verse satire and verse epistle. As an epistolary satire its purpose traditionally is to educate its reader about the foolishness or criminality of the world and to do so privately, its nature allowing for a clearer and more direct message than a more open (and much more dangerous) publication would. Wyatt's poem, however, is not entirely clear in presenting its cautionary message; just as his major satirical example is presented in the form of another satirical genre – the beast fable – so the direct source for his poem, Horace's *Satire* 2.6, is qualified by Wyatt's fundamental disagreement with the Roman poet's philosophy.³¹

Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000).

30 All quotations from Wyatt (unless noted otherwise) are taken from *The Complete Poems*, ed. R.A. Rebholz (New York: Penguin, 1978). All quotations from Horace are from *Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 194 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

31 The most in-depth examination of Horace's mouse fable is David West, “Of Mice and Men: Horace, *Satires* 2.6.77-117,” in *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry*, eds. Tony Woodman

While his Roman model seeks to educate the reader on the nature of ignorant fools, Wyatt focuses attention on the dominance of Tudor culture and morals by malignant criminals who are aware of and take pleasure in their vices.³² Wyatt's lesson is that inwardness will be the inevitable action taken in any situation: it becomes the reader's responsibility to look inward before he is forced to examine himself as a consequence for leading a vicious life.

The conditions in which each poem was composed could not have been more opposite: Horace wrote his poem in the middle of a successful period of his life, while Wyatt do so after having just barely escaped execution.³³ Horace championed the country life as opposed to that of

and David West (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 67-80. West compares Horace's poem to its earlier and later versions by Aesop and Henryson.

32 Donald Guss, in "Wyatt's Petrarchism: An Instance of Creative Imitation in the Renaissance," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 29.1 (1965): 1-15, argues that Wyatt is preeminently concerned with individuals in power: "Wyatt's concern is with the injustice of powerful men ... Wyatt, then, unlike Horace, raises the question of the moral responsibility of those who so run courts that innocence is helpless there" (6). While Guss's argument is undoubtedly pointed towards Henry, it is important to note that a critique of Henry in the poem is anything but explicit; it is very likely this deniability that provides Wyatt with the power to provide such a potential criticism of his ruler.

33 As Ellen Oliensis points out in *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), a similar set of frames exists within Horace's poem as exists within Wyatt's: "The multiple oppositions that frame and structure the tale of the two mice –

the city because his association with the well-connected figure Maecenas provided him with a Sabine farm, which, in turn, served as his escape from the stress of life in Rome.³⁴

Wyatt, living in exile after a period of imprisonment, has nothing to celebrate and yet cannot openly criticize the king for his treatment of the poet (as Wyatt managed to avoid execution

between wealth and poverty, vice and virtue, danger and safety, servile dependence and manly (mously) independence, city and country – line up with a certain conventional neatness in parallel columns. But in Horace's case, the columns are not parallel but intertwined, and the accounting cannot be so simple. For Horace's country retreat is not just an alternative to but a gift from the city, a crumb, as it were, from the master's table” (50).

34 Oliensis notes that the poem is a kind of celebration: “Its occasion is Horace's delight in his newly acquired Sabine 'farm,' a rustic refuge that enables him to recapture the leisure he once enjoyed within the city of Rome ... [even though] the author of Satires 2.6 is a busy man and, in a small way, a public figure. The seven years that have elapsed since his admission into Maecenas' circle ... have transformed Horace from a relative nobody into something of a somebody” (46). However, Burrow says that “Horace insinuates human desires and moral attitudes into locations, and it often looks as though his Sabine farm is the ultimate place of valuable repose. But there's something – it's almost a species of embarrassment, a fear of acquiring definable attitudes and of the publicity which a straight expression of longing brings – which cuts off his meditations on the country from becoming ideals” (30). he urges that Horace fluctuates between celebrating what he has gained and appearing to flaunt those gains.

thanks to Henry's exile order).³⁵ Wyatt has no reason to tout the virtue of country life; his exile from London in 1536 keeps him away from the place of his employment, but he is not out of its influence, since, after all, it is the king who sends him to his home in Kent. Thus, Wyatt recognizes a danger in the world regardless of one's location: the countryside does not hide one from the most significant threats.

The different situations of the two poets are reflected in their treatments of the mouse fable. The narrative frames of the poems are noticeably different; each poet emphasizes or downplays the reason for the fable's appearance in his work. In Horace, the tale is told by the speaker's neighbor, a farmer named Cervius, who “rattles off old wives' tales that fit the case” (*garrit anilis ex re fabellas*) specifically to teach others about the perils of wealth (ll. 78-79). Just as his country mouse learns a lesson and prospers from it, so does Horace provide his readers with the opportunity to recognize that a valuable lesson is to be provided within the fable.

In Wyatt's poem, the speaker recounts a tale which he claims was told some time in the past by his mother's maids for their own enjoyment (“while they did sew and spin” [l. 1]). This allows Wyatt to separate (or at least to make it seem that) his fable's content is not a critique of his present condition – by stating that it is an old fable told by serving women, Wyatt can claim that it is not a direct analogue to Henry's court.

35 Burrow describes Wyatt's introduction of Horace to a sixteenth-century audience: “These people needed a poet who identified places with values, since home was where they wanted to be; and they needed a poet who could mutedly express hostility to someone to whom he owed everything” (32).

Similarly, Wyatt begins his satire specifically with the mouse fable and moves from the tale into a more direct discussion of his meaning in an epistle to his friend Poyntz; in Horace's satire, the fable occupies the second half of the poem, following an explanation by Horace about why his country farm is preferable to his home in the city. By reversing Horace's structure of lesson/fable to fable/lesson, Wyatt uses Horace's tale to explain precisely why the Roman's initial praise of country life is folly.

Horace argues through his fable that there is a dichotomy of worldly environments: the city is a corrupting place and its inhabitants, like the city mouse, are corruptors of the innocent (the innocent being present in the form of the country mouse), while the country is peaceful and free of stress and vice. Wyatt's moral is that the outside world— that is, anything beyond oneself (or more specifically, one's *mind*), and not specifically the city as in Horace's poem – is not only corrupting but absolutely deadly.

By placing his country mouse in disastrous conditions, Wyatt may very well be responding to the conditional happiness mentioned by Horace, if not mocking the Roman's success when compared to Wyatt's own situation when writing his poem:

<p><i>si quod adest gratum iuvat, hac prece te oro:</i> <i>pingue pecus domino facias et cetera praeter</i> <i>ingenium, utque soles, custos mihi maximus</i> <i>adsis!</i> (ll. 13-15)</p>	<p>if what I have gives me comfort and content, then thus I pray to thee: make fat the flocks I own, and all else save my wit, and as thoUniversity art wont, still be my chief guardian!</p>
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Horace suggests that rustic life will make him happy, but he also implies that it might not – and Wyatt points out this inconsistency immediately in his own version of the mouse fable to demonstrate the error and futility of searching for peace in the outside world.

The country mouse appearing at the beginning of each fable is placed in a situation that demonstrates each poet's outlook on the world around him. Horace's mouse lives frugally but does not seem to dislike his place in life: Horace states that the country mouse lives in a cave, where “roughly he fared, frugal of his store, yet could open his thrifty soul in acts of hospitality” (*asper et attentus quaesitis, ut tamen artum / solveret hospitiis animum* [ll. 82-83]). Wyatt, on the other hand, has the impoverished and weather-beaten nature of his country mouse's life elaborated upon in great detail by the speaker:

The stormy blasts her cave so sore did souse,
That when the furrows swimm'd with the rain,
She must lie cold and wet in sorry plight. (ll. 6-8)

The country mouse in each poem also possesses vastly differing stores of food from the other: Horace's mouse manages to hoard oats, beans, raisins, and bacon (ll. 84-85) while Wyatt's has “sometime a barley corn, sometime a bean,” though his speaker notes that “her store was 'stroyed with the flood” (ll. 12-14). This difference – Horace's mouse having food and Wyatt's not – alters the reason for which the country mouse travels to the city.

While Horace can retreat from the city and enjoy retirement in the peace and quiet he finds on his farm, Wyatt notes the irony of this pastoral fantasy early in his fable, such as when he

describes the hardships of his country mouse in her small home. In fact, the initial description of Wyatt's country mouse and her home is a parody of Horace's description of his farm:

<i>Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus, horatus ubi et tecto vicinus iugus aquae fons et paulum silvae super his foret. (ll. 1-3)</i>	This is what I prayed for!—a piece of land not so very large, where there would be a garden, and near the house a spring of ever-flowing water, and up above these a bit of woodland.
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Horace's prayers become a realized curse for Wyatt's country mouse, who possesses a small store of food “stroyed with the flood” (l. 14), the successor to the ever-flowing water desired by the Roman poet.

The feasts described in each poem provide insight into each poet's critique of city and country life. Horace provides details of three feasts, the first of which is a dinner at his farm – a meal that takes the place of the feast at Maecenas's to which he had been invited.³⁶ The second meal (existing within the fable) is served by the country mouse, who is visited by a friend from the city and serves the visitor a simple feast of the foods he has at hand; he “grudged not his hoard of vetch or long oats” (*neque ille / sepositi ciceris nec longae invidit avenae*) in the spirit

9 Oliensis states that “the displacement is a gesture not only of discretion (Horace will never publish the private interactions of Maecenas' circle) but also of authority, enabling Horace to represent himself as the master of his own *domus* ... [the emphasis of this change] is all on Horace's ownership: Horace's hearth, Horace's friends, Horace's slaves” (49).

of friendship and generosity (ll. 83-84). The country mouse further humbles himself and sacrifices the few luxuries of his life in order to make his guest's stay comfortable:

<i>cum pater ipse domus palea porrectus in horna esset ador loliumque, dapis meliora relinquens.</i> (ll. 88-89)	Meanwhile, outstretched on fresh straw, the master of the house himself ate spelt and darnel, leaving the titbits to his friend.
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The city mouse, on the other hand, attempts to seduce the country mouse into living as luxuriously as he does, showing disdain as the country mouse brings out his best:

<i>aridum et ore ferens acinum semesaque lardi frusta dedit, cupiens varia fastidia cena vincere tangentis male singula dente superbo</i> (ll. 85-87)	varying the fare to overcome the daintiness of the guest who, with squeamish tooth, would barely touch each morsel.
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Not content with the simplicity of the country mouse's life, the city mouse convinces his friend to travel to town to experience an urban feast (the third example of meals in Horace's poem):

<i>dum licet, in rebus iucundis vive beatus; vive memor, quam sis aevi brevis.</i> (ll. 96-97)	While you may, live happy amid joys; live mindful ever of how brief your time is.
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The city mouse's *carpe diem* philosophy acknowledges that death will come to everyone; however, he also argues that it is possible to find happiness before death in material pleasures. While this seems at first glance closely aligned with Wyatt's critical view of the world, there is one major difference: Horace does not blame material pleasures for the mouse's error but rather accuses the city of promoting such a material philosophy.

Wyatt introduces his version of the city mouse first through the filter of fantasy, appearing in a scene of wishful thinking on the part of the country mouse:

“My sister,” quod she, “hath a living good
And hence from me she dwelleth not a mile.
In cold and storm she lieth warm and dry
In bed of down. The dirt doth not defile
Her tender foot. She laboureth not as I.” (ll. 18-22)

The city mouse does not do the convincing here (save indirectly as a fictional version of herself in the country mouse's imagination). Instead, it is the country mouse that convinces *herself* to leave her home. This change in the poem is pivotal as Wyatt suggests that it is the individual that sends him or herself into error by looking outward, rather than having external pressures coerce an inherently innocent individual into making mistakes.

The journey to the city is also changed in Wyatt's poem to depict more clearly the poet's philosophy on error. In Horace's version, the country and the city mouse travel together for at least a day, as night falls by the time they reach the city walls (ll. 99-100). The country mouse thus must go to some effort to become wayward. In contrast, Wyatt's country mouse jokes about the distance between her home and the city, not even a mile away: “at this journey she maketh but a jape” (l. 31). By closing the distance between the city and the countryside, Wyatt heightens the absurdity of his country mouse's fantasies of urban life when compared with her own home –

if the city is so easy to reach, why does the mouse live in the country? The answer is that, for Wyatt, error is always near, making it more difficult to remain virtuous than to succumb to vice.

The city in each poem has its own atmosphere, consistent with the poet's satirical focus. Horace describes the urban home in which his mice relax as a palace in order to reflect the materialistic excesses of the city:

rubro ubi cocco

*tincta super lectos canderet vestis eburnos,
multaque de magna superessent fercula cena,
quae procul exstructis inerant hesterna
canistris. (ll. 102-104)*

where covers dyed in scarlet glittered on ivory
couches, and many courses remained over
from a great dinner of the evening before, in
baskets up hard by.

There is no allure to the city within Wyatt's poem; in fact, no details are provided other than that there is a stool under which the mice spy a cat (l. 53), making the conditions of the city home far less appealing or luxurious than those in Horace's poem. Wyatt's point is that the fantasy of city life is just that, and his country mouse demonstrates through her wishful thinking that inward error can be just as easy to achieve as outward error.

Wyatt's city mouse is also a polar opposite of her Roman predecessor; where Horace's city mouse inspires his country friend to visit the city and experience its varied recreations (ll. 90-97), Wyatt's mouse is a creature frightened of her home: "of every noise so was the wretch aghast" (l. 39). She offers the country mouse – her sister, a much closer relationship than that of the friendship shared by Horace's mice – a toast of "wine so clear" (l. 47) that causes the country mouse to shout and cheer. In fact, Wyatt only states that the city mouse "feasted her, that joy it was to tell / The fare they had" (ll. 46-47) while Horace describes in detail the bustling nature of his city mouse's feast, wherein the mouse runs around like a young waiting-boy tasting each dish before serving to his guest (107-109).

The interruption of each poem's main feast occurs in a unique fashion, providing perhaps the keenest insight into the viewpoint each poet has of courtly life (or even country life). In Horace's poem, an external signal gives the mice ample opportunity to escape from the cause of their alarm: the doors to the house crash open and "Molossian hounds" charge in, barking and bellowing (ll. 111-115).³⁷ Wyatt's mice end their feast with the country mouse's own cheer; the poet states that

10 As Oliensis notes, "The seeming ungraciousness [of Horace's preference for dinner at his

home over Maecenas'] is mitigated by the fact that it is not the master of the house (who never

as she looked askance,
Under a stool she spied two steaming eyes
In a round head with sharp ears. (ll. 52-54)

By transforming the Molossian hounds into a single house cat, Wyatt drastically alters the dynamic of the relationship between the mice and the source of their fear: the cat is the natural predator of the mice, while the dogs are merely loud distractions. “In France,” Wyatt's narrator says,

Was never mouse so feared, for though th' unwise
Had not yseen such a beast before,
Yet had nature taught her after her guise
To know her foe and dread him evermore. (ll. 54-58)

It is easy to recognize that the appearance of the cat precedes a much more violent encounter than that between Horace's mice and dogs. By not having the cat make any sound as he approaches the mice (since the country mouse has to spot the cat to notice him, rather than hearing him approach), Wyatt makes the danger faced by the mice much more immediate – the cat at any time could be (and *is*) nearby, ready to pounce on his prey.

The outcome of the city feast in Horace is confusion and fright, but the country mouse is yet provided with the opportunity to recognize that life is less stressful and frightening back in his rural home (ll. 114-117). While the mice panic from the unforeseen presence of the hounds in the hall, they are ultimately unharmed physically and the country mouse can return home with a greater knowledge of the terror of city life.

puts in an appearance) but his dogs – not the host but his invidiously barking attendants – that drive the country mouse out of the city” (50, n. 37). While the obvious counterpart to Wyatt's cat is King Henry, Wyatt can deny this comparison by claiming that his target, like Horace, is his fellow courtier and not the king.

In Wyatt's poem the outcome could not be more deadly. When the cat is spotted by the mice, the city mouse immediately flees: "she knew whither to go" (l. 59) to avoid the clutches of the cat. The country mouse has no such luck, and ends up being caught by the cat:

At the threshold her silly foot did trip,
And ere she might recover it again
The traitor cat had caught her by the hip
And made her there against her will remain
That had forgotten her poor surety and rest
For seeming wealth wherein she thought to reign. (ll. 64-69)

Wyatt's country mouse has no chance to survive this encounter, and so her lesson is moot. The final line in Wyatt's fable touches on the the expectations of city life in each poem: in Horace, the country mouse manages to taste the luxurious life promised him by the city mouse, while in Wyatt the country mouse does not experience the easy life she *thought* she would (even though it was not promised or even suggested by the city mouse).

The final significant difference between the two poems is the poets' intent of direct versus indirect communication: despite initially hiding his praises to Maecenas as prayers to the gods, Horace *wants* his patron to know that he is thankful for his current social position (or at least, he wants his patron to see that he is publicly thanking him).³⁸ Wyatt, unlike Horace, has to cloak his

11 Eduard Fraenkel states that it is "safe to assume that he relied on the sympathetic

understanding of those enlightened men [ie., Maecenas and his friends] whom he knew to be capable of seeing the difference between the feeling that lay behind his prayer and the form in which he expressed them" (*Horace* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1957], 141). In addition, Oliensis urges that "the displacement is sufficient to stave off the self-incriminating "thank you" (portraying Horace as a poet for hire) that we might have expected Horace to produce. Moreover, had Horace thanked Maecenas directly, the poem might read as an

criticism in vague messages and recounted folk-tales to make sure that his own patron is not aware of the poet's potential feelings toward him (or at least that he cannot know definitively that Wyatt is criticizing him). Essentially, Wyatt is able to criticize Henry indirectly by focusing on the courtiers that surround the king: the poet relies on the inability of his reader to note an explicit complaint towards Henry, seeking the opposite effect that Horace had intended with his own fable.

Wyatt's criticism of Horace is ultimately realized in *The Quyete of Minde*, his translation of Plutarch's *De Tranquillitate et Securitate Animi*, in which the poet's argument for an inward focus is most clearly explained and greatly detailed. As the work concludes, there is an affirmation of Stoic steadfastness:

[T]his I wyll nat do/I wyl nat lye/I wyll vse no crafty deceites for to compasse men/
I wyll nat begyle/I wyll nat disceitfully lye in awayte. this syns it is in vs/it is a great
help to them [d.i^v] that lyfte them selfe vp to the surety of mynde/in which maner lyke
as botches be in the body/so is a naughty conscience in the soule/as that that leueth
repentaunce/busely prickynge and pulling the minde.³⁹

This is undoubtedly a mirror of Wyatt's argument within "My mother's maids," which suggests a distinction from one's fellow courtiers by urging an inward search and focus in order to achieve prosperity. Further, this argument stresses against acting outwardly so as not to create error within oneself, a "naughty conscience in the soule" and "repentaunce/busely prickynge and pulling the minde." The outward action is rejected by Plutarch and Wyatt while inward consequences remain, as in the rest of Wyatt's works, the sole point of consideration for a Stoic.

enforced or ungraciously punctual pay-off of Maecenas' generous gift" (48).

12 Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds. *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1969), p. 461.

Toward a Feminist View of the Passion of Christ:
A Comparison of the Poetic Visions of Aemilia Lanyer and John Donne
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Of the many writers during the early 17th Century who sought patronage through their poetry, Aemilia Lanyer and John Donne stand out as unusual companions along a commiserate literary journey. Although there is little evidence to suggest that they knew each other, they both wrote at least one poem with the same patron in mind (Lucy, the Countess of Bedford) and both wrote with the hopes of finding a better place in society (Hughes 58). Unfortunately, because they each experienced a “fall from public grace” early in their lives, these hopes were never fully realized. After enjoying life in court as the mistress of Sir Henry Cary, Lanyer’s fall occurred after she became pregnant with his child and was hurriedly married to Alphonso Lanyer. Donne’s fate was hardly more enviable; he was socially punished after eloping with Ann More, an act that enraged her father. As George Williamson relates:

When Donne was released from prison on February 12, 1602, and was reunited with Ann, he was without a position, without a university degree, without professional status, and humiliatingly forced to live on the charity of his wife’s cousin. The experience of poverty, degrading in any usual situation, had become a fact of Donne’s life. (17)

Being thus displaced by society was a factor in their decision to write poetry and attempt to earn a living from it. More important to us than the patronage or fame they received (or didn’t receive) are the poems that resulted from their endeavors. Although both Lanyer and Donne seek to establish a relationship with Christ in their religious poetry, Lanyer’s work is particularly significant because she is able to reveal the selfless Christ as both human and divine in a radical manner. Her revelation of Christ as a personal ally links her more closely to Christ and also places women at the center of the Passion in a way that her contemporaries did not do. By

examining the parallels between the religious poetry of John Donne, especially that of *Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward* and Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, I intend to compare and contrast the ways in which the two poets contemplate the Passion of Christ and how they see themselves in relation to him.

Although there are differences between how Lanyer and Donne position themselves in relation to Christ in their religious poetry, there are also some distinct similarities in the ways in which they write thematically about "sight," the Virgin Mary, and Christ's choice to die for the sins of humanity. Their word choices often play upon the idea of blindness and sight. For Lanyer, sight is related to seeing the truth. She says that it is sin that blinds men and "makes them fools"(l.247-48), and as Pilate's wife she begs him to "Open thine eies, that the truth maiest see" (l.249). For Donne, the truth inherent in seeing Christ's death can be painful: "Yet dare I almost be glad, I do not see / That spectacle of too much weight for me" (l. 15-16). Also, in *Holy Sonnet I*, he remarks: "I dare not move my dimme eyes any way, / Despaire behind, and death before doth cast / Such terror..." (l.5-7). When Donne isn't averting his eyes, he seems to be awash in his own tears that "make a Heavenly Lethean flood" (*Holy Sonnet IX*, l. 10). Though their treatment of sight differs, the use of the language and the importance attached to sight, images, eyes and blindness seem important to note as similarity between the two poets.

Another similarity appears in how both Lanyer and Donne treat the Virgin Mary in their writings. Surprisingly, Donne gives the Virgin Mary some much-deserved credit. For instance, in *Good Friday*, he mentions that Mary was "God's partner here, and furnish'd thus, / Half of that sacrifice which ransom'd us" (l. 31-32). Using the term "partner" to describe Mary's relationship to God is heartening to hear coming from a man educated in a misogynistic era. For Lanyer,

Mary was emblematic of purity. For example, in lines 1063-64 of *Salve Deus*, Lanyer writes:

“His glorious Angel; who did thee assure/ To beare a child, although a Virgin pure”.

Consequently, both poets would concur that the Virgin Mary played an important role (albeit a sad one) in the Crucifixion of Christ. Lanyer acts as witness and describes Mary as a “woeful mother wayting on her Sonne, / All comfortlesse in depth of sorrow drowned...”(l.1009-10).

Donne, however, cannot even grant himself permission to look on Mary in *Good Friday*, “durst I / On His miserable Mother cast mine eye, / Who was God’s partner here, and furnish’d thus / Half of that sacrifice which ransom’d us”(l. 29-32). In a striking parallel, Lanyer echoes this exact sentiment, recognizing, like Donne, Mary’s role as the mother of the son of God in lines 1087-88: “Making thee Servant, Mother, Wife and Nurse, / To Heavens bright King, that freed us from the curse.” It seems as if they both would agree that without the Virgin Mary playing her part, God might not have been able to free the world from sin by sending his only son as a sacrifice.

Of the two, Lanyer is the more immersed poet-narrator of Christ’s sacrifice because she speaks to her audience as a *witness* to the action: “His hateful foes are ready now to take him,/And all his deere Disciples do forsake Him”(l.623-24). Not only does she witness the events leading to his death, she also implies that she knows what Christ is thinking and feeling: “They tell his Words, though farre from his intent, / and what his Speeches were, not what he meant” (l. 655-56). However, in Donne’s poem, *Good Friday*, he admits that the sight of Christ on the cross might be too much for him to bear: “Yet dare I almost be glad, I do not see / That spectacle of too much weight for me...Though these things as I ride be from mine eye, / They’re present yet unto my memory” (l. 15-16, 34-35). But how can this be a memory for him if he never witnessed it? Here he draws into question his version of the event with this narrative

discrepancy. At the same time, however, some readers might be suspect of Lanyer's narrative as well and argue that her work is "a thin veneer for a subversive feminist statement" or that she wrote solely as a ploy for patronage "given her dubious past" (Lewalski, *Writing Women* 219). In refutation, Lewalski notes that:

Lanyer appears to be sincerely, if not profoundly, religious, and she presents Christ's Passion as the focus for all female goodness (and masculine evil)... As a poet she interprets her experience of life in religious categories. Her feminist perceptions can be rendered only in terms of the discourse of Scripture, but they force a radical imaginative rewriting of its patriarchal norms to place women at the center. (219)

In order to place women at the center of this experience, Lanyer forcefully enters the drama with commands, judgments, and questions aimed at or about men and their role in the death of Christ (Keohane 9). For example, as Pilate's wife she orders him to, "Open thine eies, that thou the truth maiest see"(l. 755). Later, she pronounces judgment (of men) when she says, "If one weake woman simply did offend, / This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end" (l. 831-32). She also posits a question about Judas, "If in Christs Schoole, he took so great a fall, / What will they doe, that come not there at all"(l.743-44). In using this straightforward language, she lures her readers into the Passion of Christ by offering her audience a chance to meditate not only on the injustice done to Christ by men, but also on the injustice done to women. In Donne's personal poem, *Good Friday*, his view of himself as a sinner colors his relationship with Christ in a way that is mostly absent from Lanyer's work. Although Lanyer mentions sin and the need for grace, she never uses language asking Christ to, "...Think me worth Thine anger, punish me, / Burn off my rust, and my deformity" as Donne does at the end of this poem. Both speakers address Christ, but Donne has literally turned his back on Christ in riding westward (away from the site of the Passion in the East) and then turns his back on Christ again "that he may be scourged by the Deity and thus purged of his sins" (Warnke 112). Because this purging of sins must happen

before he may look on Christ or begin a relationship greater than that of sinner and savior, Donne's relationship with Christ never seems to help elevate his status and may be a reason for his hesitant treatment of the Passion. Rarely timid, Lanyer's *Salve Deus*, "is an affirmation, celebration and vindication of women. While in important instances, then, Donne's speaker raises the question of his deserving Christ's sacrifice, Lanyer's, for the most part, suppresses that question" (Keohane 7-8). By rejecting her position as a mourning or penitent sinner, she is able to communicate a wider range of emotions and ideas related to herself, Christ, and the other women to whom she writes, which makes her work valuable and more insightful to her audience.

The position of the speaker and the identity with which they wrap themselves plays an important role in how they see Christ in his hypostatic union—the union between full divinity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ, which occurred when "the word became flesh" (John 1:14). When Lanyer refuses the role of the socially acceptable, penitent sinner, she frees herself to take on new roles and to align herself (and all women) more closely with Christ, which is a bold step to take in her day and age (Keohane 7). This refusal of herself as a sinner is daring because, as Lewalski notes, "Lanyer sought to rewrite patriarchy and patronage, supported on the one hand by a sense of female community, and on the other hand by the firm conviction that God the Divine Patriarch was their ally against the many earthly patriarchs who oppressed them"(89). Furthermore, because Lanyer is able to ally herself with Christ, her work shows how Christ is oppressed by the evilness of men just as women are. Donne is unable to create as close a connection with Christ as Lanyer is because while he does focus on the human aspects of Christ, he cannot fully connect with Him.

What impedes this connection? Frank Warnke writes that in Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, "There is little hope and not very much trust...The speaker desperately wishes to go to heaven, and even more markedly—to escape hell" (105). This concentration on the self can help explain part of the reason why Donne cannot connect with Christ. It may also be difficult for Donne to face what Richard Hughes notes as "the absolute paradox of Christ which eludes simple comprehension" (247). Christ's divinity creates a gulf that Donne cannot easily cross or understand as shown in lines 21-28 of *Good Friday*:

Could I behold those hands, which span the Poles
And tune all spheres at once, pierced with those holes?
Could I behold that endless height, which is
Zenith to us and our antipodes,
Humbled us below? Or that blood, which is
The seat of all our soul's, if not of His,
Made dirt of dust, or that flesh which was worn
By God for His apparel, ragg'd and torn?

This major difference between how the two poets treat Christ as an ally certainly shows not only how they see Christ in their lives, but also how they see themselves and the world around them. As a result, Donne's struggle with himself as a sinner impedes his journey to find Christ; whereas, Lanyer doesn't stumble over that penitent stone and would have us believe that she and Christ have tea, discuss politics and are ready to take on the world, beginning with the oppressive men, or as she calls them: "wretched Worldings made of dust and earth" (l. 675). Janel Mueller reiterates that what makes Lanyer's understanding of Christ's incarnation viewed in light of the Crucifixion so "rich, outrageous, and originary" is her ability to *handle* the crucifixion,

universalize the lessons from it, and *empower* females (101). Furthermore, Mueller notes that Lanyer “looks to the figure of Christ in history, to divinity humanized or humanity divinized” and the result of this endeavor is a revelation of a “demonstrated truth that the crucifixion was a public, historical action taken by men alone which vindicates, once and for all, female nature and feminine attributes” (101). Nowhere in Donne’s *Good Friday*, *La Corona* or even the *Holy Sonnets* is he able to show such an empowering truth as Lanyer does in *Salve Deus*. Because he never frees himself from the role of penitent sinner, his meditative, religious poems reveal how desperate he finds himself and how he needs God’s help to be saved. In contrast, Lanyer focuses less on the self than on the community of women to whom she’s writing and on removing the oppression faced by Christ and women. Lanyer’s identity of selflessness parallels the humbleness of Christ which proves inspiration leading to the personal empowerment of the women who would read her work. By creating Christ as an ally against oppression and sin, she is able to rail against injustice and break free from restraints. Anyone who reads Donne can certainly identify with him as a fellow sinner, but it is a much more empowering measure to read Lanyer and ally oneself with Christ!

So where does this empowerment lead in connection to sin and worthiness? Both poets meditate on how deserving humanity is for Christ’s sacrifice, and one major difference in the treatment of sin is how Donne and Lanyer place blame and assess worthiness for this sacrifice. In his poetry, Donne nearly always places the blame for sinning upon himself; yet, Lanyer often holds herself and the Countess above reproach. Radically, she is able to do this because she speaks directly to Christ in her poem and supplies his answers. Furthermore, as Keohane writes, “by assigning to Christ himself a mix of grief and joy, of loss and gain, Lanyer is able to figure the relationship between the Countess of Cumberland (herself cast as an exemplary woman) and

Christ as fitting, not as itself hopelessly imbalanced”(9). The Countess, like the speaker, becomes free from the position of the penitent sinner, since she is victorious in her own battle with sin:

But thou farre greater warre
do'st still maintaine,
Against that many headed monster Sinne,
Whose mortall sting hath many thousand slaine,
And every day fresh combates doe begin;
Yet cannot all his venome lay one staine
Upon thy Soule, thou do'st the conquest winne,
Though all the world he daily doth devoure,
Yet over thee he never could get power. (1.489-96)

In addition, both Lanyer and Donne write intently about how significant Christ's sacrifice was to save the world from sin. Both use diction to describe sin as something physical that Christ wears. In *Salve Deus*, Christ “is content with losse, / Our ragged clothing scornes he not to weare, / Though foule, rent, torne, disgraceful, rough, and grosse, / Spunne by that monster, Sinne, and weav'd by Shame...” (1124-28). Comparatively, Donne's Christ is, “The seat of all our soul's, if not of His,/ Made dirt of dust, or that flesh which was worn/ by God for his apparel, ragg'd and torn?” (l. 27-28) The poets' descriptions of Christ actually “donning” sin and humanness show their common view of the sacrifice that Christ *chose* to give up his divinity in order to become human and thereby save the world from sin.

Yet, although both Lanyer and Donne present comparable views of how Christ puts on sin, they differ in the way that sin can be removed. Lanyer's version of this action is much gentler compared to Donne's violent depiction. After her description of the Passion, she concentrates on Christ's resurrection saying of sin:

These precious balmes doe heale his grievous wounds,
And water of Compunction washeth cleane
The soares of sinnes, which in our Soules abounds;
So faire it heales, no skarre is ever seene;
Yet all the glory unto Christ redounds (l. 1297-1301).

Notice how effective the consonance and alliteration of the words, "precious," "balmes," "grievous," "wounds," and "soares", "sinnes", and "soules" are in creating a mood of serenity to describe how through Christ's sacrifice, the wounds of sin are washed clean with no remaining scars. In Donne's poetry, he uses much harsher imagery when he asks Christ in *Good Friday*: "O think me worth Thine anger, punish me, / Burn off my rust, and my deformity" (l.) In *Sonnet V*, he repeats this prayer, "And burne me O Lord, with a fiery zeale, / Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale" (l.13-14). This discrepancy between the views of the two poets as to how sin is removed is strikingly different despite their similar treatment of the choice of Christ to die selflessly for the sins of humanity. Donne seems to intimate that Christ would require a painful transformation to remove sin, while Lanyer imagines a more compassionate, healing one. This further shows how deftly Lanyer is able to give Christ feminine attributes and ally herself to him which is an empowering move.

Moreover, both poets distinctly write about Christ's *choice* in his role as savior and what that choice means for us. Because Lanyer is allying herself with Christ, she chooses to contrast Christ's choice to sacrifice his life to that of the poor choices made by the men usually central in the story. For example, in lines 523-23 of *Salve Deus*, she cites how:

He was content to step inside their Lure

Although His greatness might doe otherwise:

Here Grace was seised on with hands impure,

And Virtue now must be supprest with Vice.

Very obviously, the "Lure" and impure hand represent the abhorrent nature of the men coming to trap Jesus and take him away. She goes on to show paradoxically that these are "unlearned men" who are "farre from knowing their Saviour" yet who will be saved by him. Lanyer does an exceptional job of magnifying the disgraceful traits in men by contrasting them with the virtuous feminine aspects of Christ. When she reminds us of Peter's betrayal, she notes his "deepe disgrace" and how the rest of his disciples, "Though they protest they never will forsake him, / They do like men, when dangers overtake them" (l.623-24). On a higher level, she is provoking a thoughtful question: If the men who believe in Christ (and are his disciples) fall so short, then what does this say about ordinary men and their faults? Lanyer uses this argument to show the negative traits of men in relation to the Passion of Christ because it allows her to reveal a gulf between men and Christ, thereby allowing for the closeness between women and Christ. Indeed, as Wendy Wall notes, "The crucifixion then, becomes the site of a contest between the sexes, an agonistic moment in history that makes women's virtue visible" ("Our Bodies..." 60).

Donne also speaks of Christ's choice of saving humanity in paradoxes, but he never allies himself with Christ or makes the radical connections that Lanyer does in her work. He does make mention of how Christ "bore our punishment" in his divine poems like the *Holy Sonnets* (Donne 251). Additionally, in *Holy Sonnet XI*, as the speaker, he says, "Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side, / Buffet, and scoffe, scourge and crucifie mee..."(1.1-2) which show his request to take Christ' place, since he is a sinner; whereas, Christ, "Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed." Keohane notes that "Donne positions Christ's Passion as a standard against which his speaker's own actions must be compared and must always fall short: 'But by my death can not be satisfied / My sins.'" (6-7). Still, by taking the penitent sinner route, Donne is never quite elevated to Jesus' level as Lanyer is, which exemplifies a major difference between their works.

Perhaps the most startling difference between the two poets is Lanyer's lack of focus on the worthiness of the individual. Part of what makes *Salve Deus* such a maverick undertaking is that women exude strong connections to Christ that are not centered on sin. This is certainly very different from Donne's work which often describes an unworthy sinner seeking repentance and absolution. The portrayal of Christ embedded in a community of women suggests as Keohane notes, "The suffering Christ is a wonder that Lanyer and the Countess can choose, embrace, and nurture, while the loving Christ is one they can emulate" (12). Indeed, Lanyer's comparison of Christ as a lover for all to gaze upon is a unique and enterprising one. Susanne Woods writes about the possibilities Lanyer opens up by writing about Christ in this way:

Christ is also very beautiful in Lanyer's version, as she holds him up to the desiring gaze of women. Unlike epideictic poets such as Jonson and Donne, Lanyer's focus throughout her volume is less on blazoning the beauty and virtues of her dedicatees or vaunting her own eternizing power than it is on pointing toward the portrait of Christ in her narrative,

and by situating Christ within the tradition of Petrarchan as well as Christian grace she provides another vehicle for insinuating her own authority (*Vocation* 94).

By asserting this authority and using Christ as a focal point, Lanyer enables the community of women to join together "... in a worship that excludes all earthly men, from Adam to Pilate" (Miller 149). In her effective use of rhetoric, she removes women from their traditional role of objects of desire and allows them instead to become worshipping subjects; "therefore exhibiting the potential to liberate them from female subjectivity as well as connecting them with one another in spiritual homosocial bonding" (149). Thus, Lanyer is able to distinctly layer how she portrays Christ, as well as show how she relates herself and women to him unfettered by the usual conventions of sin and worthiness.

As one can see, Lanyer is able to create a community of women centered on Christ, but Donne's poetry usually exhibits a solitary, isolated mood, Hughes argues that from *La Corona* to the *Holy Sonnets*, Donne is, "plagued with the need for a physically realized presence of others" (158). In *La Corona* and *A Litanie* he attempts to imagine a community at prayer: "Our taske is treble, to pray, beare, and doe / Heare this prayer Lord: O Lord deliver us..." (241), but is largely unsuccessful. In fact, Hughes observes that it is only later in *The Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* that Donne is able to evoke "the spirit of the congruence of mankind" (158) as in the following lines from *Meditation I*:

We study Health, and we deliberate upon our meats and drink and ayre, and exercises...and so our Health is a long and a regular work; But in a minute the Canon batters all, overthrows all, demolishes all; a Sicknesse unprevented by all our diligence...summons us, seizes us, possesses us and destroys us in an instant (Donne 415).

Although this is certainly not an uplifting piece from Donne, it does show how he is much more able to commiserate with his fellow man. In his later works and sermons Donne becomes

embroiled with the humanity around him much more so than in his earlier divine poems. This change could be attributed to the fact that he had grown older and wiser or, more simply, that he now wrote with the audience in mind (Hughes 158). Altogether though, it seems as if Donne has to strain himself to feel part of the community of mankind, whereas Lanyer seems quite at ease asserting her poetic authority in the group of women from which she is trying to gain patronage, and it is this ease that further separates her from Donne.

Lanyer's comfort, her confident authority, and her alliance with Christ all serve to imbue the reader with the secure feeling that Lanyer knows what it feels like to be oppressed like Christ and has discovered a way out of that (spiritual) oppression. As Joan Shattock expresses, "her strong spirit is informed by her belief in women's pivotal importance in Christianity. She stressed women's spirituality, chastity, and virtue... but also their learning, knowledge and wisdom" (253). Overall, Lanyer is able to take her reader on an important journey along which we witness the Passion of Christ through new eyes, conquer sin, find rest, and wait for a new command. In contrast, Donne's divine poems can leave one with the impulse to buy a hairshirt and contemplate the blackness of the soul.

Although his treatment of the Passion (in his poems, especially *Good Friday*) is more conventional, the poems provide an interesting contrast to the daring rendition given to us by Lanyer. Because both poets suffered tumultuous personal backlash by society, they used writing as a way to gain patronage, while also as a way to come to terms with their own displacement. On paper, Donne emerges as a man beaten and broken by sin who is forever searching for grace, yet never quite attaining it. These writings of his must mirror some of what it meant for him to be rejected in his real life endeavors to find patronage and favor again in society. However, Lanyer emerges as an unapologetic woman who seeks not only patronage, but also vindication and

authority in a patriarchal society. She manages to ally herself with Christ, but she also articulates new arguments for female advantage. As Mueller notes: “The Crucifixion is worse than the Fall because malice is worse than ignorance as the state of mind in which evil is done...After all, no woman wants the Crucifixion; it is only men who do.” (123). Since both Lanyer and *Salve Deus* are linked to the lowly Christ, her work becomes “not merely a meditation on the Passion, but somehow the ‘real presence’ of Christ, a gift superceding anything her patrons might offer her” (McBride 79). Indeed, this gift is wrapped in a language focused more on living and loving than on sin, death and judgment. Because of this focus, her view of the Passion leaves us with an important vision: by allying oneself with the humble and caring Christ, one can break out of humanity’s shackles to become divine.

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“Swift Re-Fashioning:” Private Women in the Masculinist Public Sphere
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Why did Jonathan Swift feel so uncomfortable with the ratiocative and heuristic methods of the virtuosos in the Enlightenment? How did one criticize the literary public sphere created by the pool of scientific knowledge without immediately entering the public sphere itself in the process of critique? What kind of questions relating to gender and the public sphere rise from such a criticism? “In the Age of Enlightenment, the concept of criticism cannot be separated from the institution of the public sphere. Every judgment is designed to be directed toward a public; communication with the reader is an integral part of the system” (Peter Hohendahl, qtd. in Mackie, p. 52). Though Jürgen Habermas asserts that the emergence of the public sphere in the eighteenth century enabled the sort of social intercourse between men that disregarded rank or status and each man had a say in the public forum, Swift’s skepticism rose from the argument of the overconfidence of empiricism and the authority that is predicated from that knowledge. The complaint is an epistemological one, against the “commonwealth of learning.” Pope, in his *Essay on Criticism*, concurs: “The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read/With loads of learned lumber in his head” (ls. 612-13). He disagreed with the rationalized, logical method of argumentation and consequently used the literary vehicle of the satire to convey his protestations into the literary sphere. Tory satire explicitly refuses to argue according to the rhetorical standards of logocentrism and empiricism of the public sphere. The paradox, however, lies in the given space for the articulation of their protestations. The space in which he communicated his ideas existed only in the literary public sphere; readers bought and read his work from the same booksellers Swift criticized. Swift, in sum, had to enter the public sphere to verbalize his oppositions of it. “If I ridicule the Follies and Corruption of a Court, a Ministry, or a Senate,”

Swift writes, “are they not amply paid by Pensions, Titles, and Power, while I expect and desire no other Reward, than that of laughing with a few Friends in a Corner?” (qtd. in Lock, 266).

Swift’s “The Lady’s Dressing Room” (1732) is a prime example of this sort of complaint - the absurd romantic illusions of the probing Strephon, Celia’s disabused lover, is the metaphorical instrument that Swift uses to satirize the hubris of the scientific method. Strephon systematically explores and speculates upon the various cosmetic paraphernalia in the private space of the dressing room for a public purpose. A formal stipulation for membership within the Royal Society is the disclosure of scientific discoveries and experimental results within the public sphere. Strephon, our mock virtuoso, has the intention of publicizing his “findings.” Thus, the female body, and knowledge associated with the female body, is the site of speculation destined to be examined within the literary public sphere. The narrator of the poem seems empathetic to this sort of fragmentation; he advocates a general acceptance of the necessary separation of public and private selves of women. However, the employment of the fragmentation of the female body as the content of satire supersedes this aim. The form of the satirical poem functions as a cultural critique of the present complaint of the hubris of the scientific method, but it is at the expense of the fragmented female body.

Samuel Johnson articulates the definition of the verb “survey” as follows: “to overlook; to have under the view; to view as from a higher place,” “to oversee as one in authority,” and “to view as examining.” Clearly, Strephon’s “strict survey” of the “inventory” of Celia’s dressing room is taken from an authoritative point of view since he thinks himself as the agent that begins Celia’s expose: he “...swears how damnably the men lie,/In calling Celia sweet and cleanly” (18). Strephon then wears two hats in the progression of the poem - he takes on the role of the speculative expert in his “survey” of the “inventory” and as such acts as a contributing virtuoso

to the pool of scientific knowledge: “No object Strephon’s eye escapes” (47). In this case, we can assume that the private space of women’s dressing room left much room for speculation and Strephon’s exploratory adventure satisfies some of that curiosity and anxiety. The dressing room was a site of intrigue for eighteenth century England since it symbolized the possibility of females capable of acting independently and selfishly. As Tita Chico observes, “rather than merely suggesting that voyeurs not look too closely, the poem gestures toward a private sphere that is inaccessible to outsiders. The proper kind of privacy for women is therefore represented as an idea, ripe for speculation, rather than a physical reality” (139). The notion of women’s privacy as an idea in the representative phallogocentric mind, such as Strephon’s, is an important phenomenon to consider, especially once it is connected with the Lockean association of ideas.

The Lockean brand of empiricism is evident in the psychological processes of Strephon. As we see in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke’s view of the association of ideas is that:

...the mind makes in it self either voluntarily, or by chance, and hence it comes in different men to be very different, according to their different inclinations....Custom settles habits of Thinking in the Understanding, as well as of Determining in the Will, and of Motions in the Body...which once set a going continue on in the same steps they have been use to...and the Motion in it becomes easy and as it were Natural.⁴⁰

For Strephon, the “goddess” “Vengeance” “never sleeping,/Soon punished Strephon for his peeping./His foul imagination links/Each dame he sees with all her stinks” (119-122). He develops a Pavlovian response in the aftermath of the chamber pot - he starts to associate the smell of shit with women. The result of his scientific survey is traumatic aversion. I believe that

⁴⁰ John Locke, “An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding,” ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press: 1975), 396.

Swift's point is a caution of the blind dependence of the connection between ideas of knowledge and the human body. If the empiricists rely on their natural faculties of sight and smell, then they need to be prepared for the extremity of that psychosomatic connection. The narrator acknowledges the necessity of "gaudy tulips raised from dung" in aesthetic appreciation - the idea that a woman is "order from confusion sprung" (144, 143). The narrator advises Strephon to "stop his nose" and change the way he thinks so that he can "bless his *ravished* eyes to see" Celia in her public self. The word choice of "ravished" indicates a forceful action - it is to overwhelm someone with emotion. Thus, the narrator's eyes are forced to appreciate the public persona of Celia as a finished object, in contrast to thinking about the process of the transformation from the private woman in the dressing room to the public character. The narrator, then, is a sort of anti-empiricist; he explicitly denies the disjunction by disciplining his mind and has the psychological capability to extract himself from the dangers of the association of ideas.

The process of Strephon's examination of the objects in Celia's dressing room is analogous with Thomas Sprat's determination that members of the Royal Society must collect facts through "their own touch and sight" (Qtd. Chico, 144). It is a "fundamental law" that Royal Society members collect data through experience - "whenever they could possibly get to handle the Subject, the Experiment was still perform'd by some of the Members themselves" (83) for Truth is produced by "contention of hands, and eyes; as it is commonly injur'd by those of Tongues" (100). Locke concurs: "If we persuade ourselves, that our faculties act and inform us right, concerning the existence of those objects that affect them, it cannot pass for an ill-grounded confidence: for I think nobody can, in earnest, be so skeptical as to be uncertain of the existence of those things which he sees or feels" (IV.xi.2). Strephon begins the visual assessment with the

“dirty smock” and “displayed it wide,/And turned it round on every side” (13-14) then “beheld and smelt the towels” (44). Trusting the reliability of his own sensorial abilities of sight and smell, Strephon bases his hypothesis of deceptive women in the private spaces of dressing rooms from his observations of the various objects in Celia’s room. Strephon observes the disjunction between the apparent public physical perfection of Celia and the seemingly covert griminess to produce the illusion of perfection. Chico notes that “throughout Swift’s corpus, there is a decided emphasis on an opposition between idealization and realization, a polarity that inevitably seems to privilege the truth production of unmasking, but that Swift likewise calls into question” (135). It is precisely the heuristic of unmasking that Strephon seeks in Celia’s dressing room - the empirical method of physically collecting various data in Celia’s room to make assumptions of the woman that lives in it. Celia, though absent, is being examined through the objects that are interpreted as her prosthetics, since they, in Strephon’s eyes anyway, play an integral element in the public persona of Celia. The woman, in essence, is the chamber pot “with rings and hinges counterfeit/To make it seem in this disguise/A cabinet to vulgar eyes” (76-8).

The climax of the physical examination arrives with the discovery of the contents of the chamber pot: “So Strephon, lifting up the lid/To view what in the chest was hid,/The vapors flew from out the vent,/But Strephon cautious never meant /The bottom of the pan to grope,/And foul his hands in search of hope.” The allusion to Pandora’s box functions metaphorically in Swift’s satire via the curiosity of Pandora and the spirits within the box. Swift places an equivalence with Pandora’s fatal curiosity with that of empirical science and imprudent confidence in human rationality. In “The Gulf of All Human Possessions,” Swift depicts the definitive end of human endeavor as a cesspool: “A Treasure here of learning lurks,/Huge heaps of never-dying works;/Labours of many an ancient sage,/And millions of the present age” (39-42). Contrary to

Habermas' contention that Swift was a proponent of the public sphere, Swift's epistemological complaint lied in the "commonwealth of learning" where no secure, philosophically impeachable criterion by which to decide what knowledge is. Thorne observes that the public sphere is founded on its ability to test truth claims but Swift's forceful cynicism seeks to rob these claims of the standards by which their reliability might be tried.

After collecting his "data," Strephon begins to apply deduction and speculates one particular beauty regimen Celia practices upon stumbling on her magnifying glass: "A glass that can to sight disclose/The smallest worm in Celia's nose,/And faithfully direct her nail/To squeeze it out from head to tail;/For catch it nicely by the head,/It must come out alive or dead" (63-68).

Thinking along phallogentric, virtuosic lines, Strephon's first mental association with the magnifying glass is for the traditional scientific purpose of exposing assumed perfection - hence, the assumed pathology of Celia's nose. For example, Robert Hooke's view of a period through a microscope revealed what seemed to be a perfect, round dot to be quite the contrary under closer scrutiny. However, Swift is in what Thorne calls the "performative contradiction:" in order to criticize aspects of the public sphere, such as the plethora of scientific writing from various experimentation, he must enter the public sphere itself to articulate his opposition to it. The publication of the poem itself is also in contradiction to his sentiments of the public sphere. However, in this disavowal of the contradiction that exists in the literary public sphere and the criticism of the scientific method inherent with the "Age of Enlightenment," the fragmentation of the female body becomes the vehicle for the conveyance of this aim. What is intended as a general censure of the acquisition of knowledge through speculation and exploration transforms into a more specific, gendered treatment of the female body. The absence of the woman in the private room, the unexplored territory, is the surrogate for the woman herself - the Freudian

“dark continent.” Though Swift addresses the larger questions of the hubristic reliability of the scientific method, like Pandora’s box, he opens up more questions of the role of the female body in the public sphere.

This poem is ultimately a list, an inventory of the objects that are supposed to reveal, unmask the woman who is not present. The absent woman becomes reconfigured by the observations of an aggressive male through her cosmetics and fashion. The systematic inventory of the objects is indicative of a strict head-to-toe scrutiny. Beginning with the top of her head, Strephon discovers “various combs for various uses,” moves down to her forehead with “a forehead cloth” and after an assorted scan of other objects, ends with the end - Celia’s end. To Strephon’s horror, in high romance, he exclaims, “Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!” In essence, Strephon navigates his way through Celia’s body through the various objects that become her prosthetics - we can imagine not a woman in her physical flesh and blood form, but an assemblage of cosmetic products. What occurs here is the veritable replacement of her absent body with the present objects as the result of Strephon’s scientific method. “Being ‘fashionable’ in this sense means being without substance, referent, content and ‘true’ value” (Mackie, 7). The female in this poem is quite literally without substance, referent, content and ‘true’ value since she is absent. The assessment of her “self” is produced through her prosthetics of cosmetics and fashionable attire.

Swift successfully raises questions of the reliability of the scientific method and the psychological assumptions of association related to the acquisition of knowledge based on the connection between the mind and the body. The model of the Habermesian public sphere is inconsistent with Swift’s contention of the pool of public opinion - even if it is a scientific pool of knowledge. But more questions rise when Swift ultimately uses the public sphere to criticize it

- even under the guise of the defense of the necessary, or at the very least, forgivable separation of private and public selves of women.

The narrator describes Strephon's entry into Celia's dressing room to be furtive and forceful - he "stole in" while "Betty" was "otherwise employed" (7,6). We can deduce that two voices exist within this poem - the progressively disgusted voice of Strephon and the slightly critical, self-elevating narrator. The narrator describes Strephon as "the rogue" and "the swain" - placing classic archetypal nominations on the voyeur as a method for satire in this poem. The classical allusions of literary tropes, verse form and Greek mythology become a vehicle for satirical perversion in the context of what ultimately is the discovery of Celia's chamber pot - the Pandora's box of the dressing room.

Swift's attitude of modern speculation and empiricism comes in full force in *A Full and True Account of the Battel Fought Last Friday, Between the Antient and the Modern Books in St. James' Library* (1697). The Moderns, "being light headed, they have in Speculation, a wonderful agility, and conceive nothing too high for them to mount" (145). This sort of hubris results in the production of theories of knowledge that have little value and the faults of the Moderns are explicitly identified as speculation and excrement in tandem. "Aesop" tells the Moderns that empiricism is faulty in its theory of experimental knowledge: "Erect your schemes with as much method and skill as you please, yet, if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your own entrails (the guts of Modern brains) the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb."

Disruptions of Gender: Clerval as Androgynous Soul-mate in Mary Shelley's
Frankenstein

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Both Victor Frankenstein and the creature he creates can be discussed as characters with androgynous traits in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Henry Clerval, Victor's ever-present best friend, seems, however, to contain androgynous traits that are equally relevant as those of either Victor or the creature. Victor and Clerval's friendship, so central to the novel—Clerval is even elevated to equal status with Victor's family members—can be considered more than just a common friendship. The two friends, like other paired characters in the novel (Victor/Walton, Victor/Elizabeth, Victor/creature), share the status of soul-mates as well as friends. They complement each other and have compatibility and a comfortability with each other that goes beyond ordinary friendship. Clearly issues of androgyny and soul-mate relationships are prevalent throughout the novel, but it is Clerval as an androgynous character and his relationship with Victor, that will be examined here.

When considering Clerval as soul-mate to Victor it is usually to see him as the best friend, an intellectual male peer or contemporary for Victor, fulfilling Victor's need for a homo-social relationship. This relationship, on the surface, fulfills needs for Victor that are in contrast to the needs fulfilled by the nurturing, familial character of Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Clerval seem to work in tandem, both as soul-mates to Victor, both complementing him and serving necessary, but different, needs as a best friend versus a love interest. I would argue, however, that Clerval, as a soul-mate for Victor, does not function solely in complement with Elizabeth. His androgynous characteristics put him in competition with Elizabeth and even cause him to function as a possible replacement for her. At the conclusion of the novel, with both Clerval and

Elizabeth dead, it must be acknowledged that the creature (or Walton, who is dismissed by Victor as a potential soul-mate) remains as the only possible soul-mate for Victor. However, that relationship is fraught with negativities that prevent the relationship from being a positive, complementary one. While they remain alive, Elizabeth or Clerval seems to be the most positive choice of soul-mate for Victor. Clerval, taking on both the roles of the best friend and intellectual and social peer for Victor and the role of the nurturing caretaker, is created as an androgynous character, making him, rather than Elizabeth, the ideal soul-mate for Victor.

Clerval, as both an androgynous character and as Victor's ideal soul-mate, serves to reinforce Shelley's commentary on gender in the novel. Her employment of androgynous characterizations in the text seems to emphasize an uncomfortability with masculine and feminine character types and hence with the patriarchal culture at work in the novel and in society. Colleen Hobbs argues that episodes of hysteria in the novel that create Victor as an androgynous character produce "a site where orthodox gender stereotypes are revealed as inadequate, dangerous constructions" (152). Victor's creation of the monster, which is interpreted by many critics as a life-giving, thus feminine, event, and the soul-mate relationship that develops between these two masculine, yet arguably androgynous, characters destabilizes the masculine/feminine dichotomy. By examining the androgyny present in Clerval's character, who is perhaps too easily dismissed as Victor's "sidekick," this destabilization of gender stereotypes becomes clearer. Clerval has the ability to usurp Elizabeth's role in the novel completely, becoming both homo-social peer and love interest for Victor. This is not to suggest that Clerval is himself a homosexual (though some critics have argued that this is the case), but to suggest that the needs fulfilled in Victor's relationship with Elizabeth can be fulfilled just as well, or better, in his relationship with Clerval.

With the suggestion, then, that Clerval could replace Elizabeth, the major female character of the novel, it seems Shelley is reinforcing the lack of need for female characters or a feminine subjectivity or that Shelley's novel reinforces gendered stereotypes of masculine and feminine. What the absence of female characters, or their appropriation by an androgynous male character more fully developed and well-rounded than they are, actually suggests, though, is a need for more developed female characters. Working within the confines of "the language and codes of patriarchal culture," rather than letting it impose silence on her and her female characters, Shelley made her comment on the patriarchal structure without by "transgress[ing] literary structure from within—demonstrating the inadequacy of the paternal narrative by opening it up to what it excludes" (Hodges 156). The absence of female characters acts to destabilize the gender stereotypes that keep them as flat characters. Promethean Victor, playing god (and woman) by creating life, and androgynous Clerval, his seemingly perfect soul-mate, and even the creature himself attempt to live dual identities. As a result, these three androgynously created creatures question rather than reinforce gendered character types by emphasizing what is lacking in the novel.

The androgynous males of the novel, as more developed characters, contrast and call attention to the stereotyped females that Shelley presents in the characters of Caroline, Justine and Elizabeth. Clerval's androgynous characteristics and his ability to effectually usurp the place of Elizabeth by becoming Victor's soul mate, demonstrate the ineffectuality of a masculine/feminine dichotomy in relationship to gender stereotypes in Shelley's novel. Clerval, as the ultimate male/female, suggests that those characteristics created male and those created female (such as those of the female characters in the novel) need re-examination. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that "femaleness...gender definition...is at the heart of this

apparently masculine book” (232). By associating female characteristics with male characters in the novel who, by virtue of their biological sex, are factors in its patriarchal structure, the novel suggests that the women in the novel, despite their stereotyped and flat personas, and, by association, women in general, should not be so easily dismissed.

Clerval is less easily dismissed as his ties to Victor are recognized early on and are reinforced as the novel progresses. Clerval’s close homo-social bond with Victor is established when Victor introduces him as one with whom he was “united in the bonds of the closest friendship” (Shelley 36-7). They were schoolfellows, members of the same homo-social group, though Victor admits to a tendency to avoid the crowd of other peers while focusing his friendship on Clerval. Later at Ingolstadt, they become student-colleagues, though Clerval’s late arrival and Victor’s illness prevent them from studying contemporaneously. During their travels to England, Clerval is Victor’s companion and friend while they both venture there, ostensibly to pursue their intellectual interests. This schoolfellow-peer relationship establishes the basis for their friendship with Clerval as the only close male friend of Victor’s.

As the novel unfolds, Clerval seems to be defined both by what he is, a friend and fellow-student, and what he is not. In many examples, what he is “not” stands in comparison to the other male characters, emphasizing a lack and creating a feminized impression of his character. Textually, as well as in his actions, he takes on traditionally feminine characteristics and actions. Clerval causes Victor to remember “scenes of home so dear,” associating him with the domestic sphere rather than the male-centered world of the university in which Victor currently resides (Shelley 58). His most notable feminine characteristic is that of nursing Victor through his illnesses. After Victor has abandoned his creature and has fallen into a fit upon Clerval’s arrival in Ingolstadt, Clerval becomes his “more kind and attentive nurse” (Shelley 60). None of

Victor's family, most notably Elizabeth, come to Ingolstadt to nurse him in his illness as Clerval has "spared them this grief by concealing the extent of [Victor's] disorder" (Shelley 60).

By downplaying the severity of Victor's illness in this way, Clerval virtually ensures that he will be the primary caregiver and Victor agrees that "nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life" (Shelley 60). Clerval here is given the role of life-giving mother, an association reminiscent of Victor's creation of the creature. Both men have restored to life a creature non-living or on the brink of death. Clerval in his role of nursing and nurturing Victor has given birth to a renewed Victor. William Veeder argues that "Henry is an excellent nurse; he responds sympathetically to nature and poetry. But these 'feminine' traits do not make him effectively androgynous, do not make him the Knightly Man whom the nineteenth century envisioned as True Woman's complement" (211). It seems, though, that his "'feminine' traits" do make him a complement to Victor—just what Victor requires in his time of need.

Later, after the deaths of William and Justine, it is again Clerval, notably rather than Elizabeth, that becomes Victor's companion on his travels to England as he tries to digest his grief and prepares to enact his promise to the monster to create a mate for him. Just when Victor is at another crisis of spirit, it seems that it is Clerval who brings him comfort, rather than Elizabeth his intended bride. Elizabeth, with her suggestion that Clerval accompany Victor to England, with "her care[,] provided me [Victor] a companion in Clerval" (Shelley 147). She herself is "rendered mute" upon his departure, unable even to find words of condolence and sympathy, or best wishes for a good journey (Shelley 147). Victor instead finds comfort in Clerval's companionship though his presence has "interfered with the solitude" that Victor had anticipated (Shelley 146). On the journey, Clerval views the scenery with a "wild and

enthusiastic imagination” (Shelley 149), while Victor is unable to feel his exuberance. Here the two are contrasted through Victor’s despair and Clerval’s exuberant imagination. The imbalance that Victor is experiencing demonstrates how he has allowed the senses and reason to dominate while Clerval still has the passion and imagination that allow him not only to see the beautiful scenes before him, but to express them. Though Victor admits to “days spent in listless indolence,” (Shelley 147) he hears the words of Clerval praising the external nature and providing “human sympathies” to him in his despair (Shelley 149). Clerval, rather than the “yielding” Elizabeth, provides here a contrast to Victor. He “represents both a more androgynously balanced temperament, and the counter-weight to the excessively Ulyssean Victor” while serving as a complement to balance and complete Victor whose sensibilities are unbalanced (Scott 194).

Victor’s association with reason and the senses and Clerval’s association with passion and imagination are further emphasized in their choice of disciplines. While Victor is a scholar of the sciences, Clerval has chosen to study languages, though his father, a merchant, disapproves. Clerval is concerned with the “moral relations of things” according to Victor’s description of him as a young man, a trait which Victor in his Promethean undertaking has lost sight of (Shelley 37).

These contrasting traits of Victor and Clerval culminate in their respective demises. Clerval, despite his ability to express himself on the journey to England, ends up silent and dead. Significantly, while Victor, the young, hearty, male protagonist of the novel lives through the monster’s rampage (until the end certainly where he is worn down over time rather than murdered), while Clerval succumbs to the creature. This is certainly a way to permanently silence Clerval, like the mute Elizabeth who cannot find the words to send Victor on his journey.

Clerval joins the list of the creature's murder victims along with William, a child; and Justine, a female; and those who will be murdered, Elizabeth, another female; and Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor's father, an elderly man who dies apparently of heart failure. Veeder considers that "the novel's healers—Caroline, Justine, Elizabeth, Henry, Alphonse—are all slaughtered" (210), associating Clerval with the feminine or weaker males of the novel, due to their age or infirmity, and with the victims, rather than with the male protagonist or the male narrators.

Textually as well as in his actions and description, Shelley has created Clerval as distinct from the other male characters in the novel. Unlike Victor, the creature and even Walton, who frames the novel with his own tale, Clerval is not allowed to narrate his own story. Shelley, though a female author, uses a male narrator, really three male narrators, and creates stereotypical female characters. But Clerval, again in comparison to other marginalized characters of the novel, does not have his own voice. Clerval's thoughts, words and actions are told to us through Victor. Clerval's death is described briefly by the creature. At no point in the novel does Clerval tell his own story. In Shelley's three-point narration, Clerval seems to be the lone young male that is left out of the storytelling and who is instead associated with the victims, and non-narrators, of the novel. His failure to narrate the novel associates him definitively with the silenced female characters of the novel and underscores his lack of voice.

Though Clerval evidently wants to pursue his education in Ingolstadt as Victor does, he is again distinguished from these three narrators by his lack of an all-consuming quest. Both Victor and Walton pursue scientific quests creating a bond between them. Victor sees himself in Walton and thus provides Walton with his cautionary tale. From a feminist perspective, "*Frankenstein* locates the initial error of Victor and Walton in excessive 'masculinity' and insensitivity to feeling, and ultimately leaves Walton conscious of that error's consequences,"

though for Victor it is too late (Scott 189). All three of the narrators “are obsessed with problem-solving” according to Gilbert and Gubar (225) while both Victor and the creature are consumed by their quests for revenge which prove fatal. Gilbert and Gubar also feel that the three narrators “appear to be trying to understand their presence in a fallen world” and “their questionings [about this state] are in some sense female, for they belong in that line of literary women’s questionings of the fall into gender” (225). Gilbert and Gubar’s interpretation emphasizes the unity of the three male characters, while excluding Clerval, and acknowledges their androgyny.

Clerval, though he has a vocation in his studies, does not pursue them as an all-consuming quest like Victor does. More than the other male characters, he seems able to temper his passions and restrain his ambitions. He enters the university later than Victor and, though eager, even takes time from pursuing his studies to nurse Victor in his first illness. While they are in England, Victor once again isolates himself in his work, while Clerval in pursuit of his interests, joins a group of friends and stays associated with other people. He remains in a more domestic sphere, a reminder again of the associations with home and family that Victor sensed regarding Clerval, in contrast to the lonely, isolated island hut that Victor inhabits.

Additional evidence supporting both Clerval’s androgyny and the argument that he is Victor’s most complete soul-mate is evidenced in Clerval’s lack of a love interest. Though he is associated with people, home, and domesticity, he has no female partner of his own. He seems always to function as an extension of Victor, surfacing in Victor’s time of needs and then fading into the background. It is difficult to imagine the life that Clerval leads when he is not with Victor. This is not to suggest again or necessarily that Clerval is a homosexual and that the object of his affection is Victor, though this is a potential interpretation, but to suggest that his feminine characteristics are further emphasized through his lack of a female companion. He has

no potential female partner with which to be contrasted. If he did, his masculine characteristics may become more apparent. When he is set up in opposition to or as a complement for Victor, his feminine characteristics become emphasized.

The androgynous character of Clerval seems more able to complement Victor than the female characters in the novel who are portrayed as flat and nearly lifeless, (and ultimately, literally, lifeless) and largely silent. The “self-effacing female characters...[are] assigned to a marginal position” in the text (Hodges 157). All are nurturers, though in the case of Elizabeth, due to Clerval’s and her own intervention, she does not figure as the primary nurturer to Victor. Victor’s mother, Caroline, who died nursing Elizabeth through scarlet fever serves as a near-cliché of the self-sacrificing female. Justine, though an employed domestic, also serves as a nurturer of the family and even seems to mirror Elizabeth’s role in the family. She dies without much protest over her own innocence, even going so far as to ensure her status as a victim by professing her own confession (though under coercion). Elizabeth, who should be Victor’s soul-mate, who should be his complementary being, is written so one-dimensionally that her role is usurped by the more well-rounded Clerval. All of these women give the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. Significantly, both Justine’s and Elizabeth’s lives are directly sacrificed to Victor’s masculine quest. Victor, blind to the destruction he has caused, fears for his own life on his wedding night, but Elizabeth, as the helpless female, is the one who will actually pay this sacrifice with her life.

Though Shelley seems to maintain the patriarchal dominance and the masculine/feminine dichotomy through the male-centric narrative structure and weak, gendered female characters, it is through her creation of androgynous characters that her commentary on gender is expressed. The largely ineffectual female characters of the novel are unable to break out of their traditional

gender roles. Clerval, as a character who creates a balance between masculine and feminine worlds, could replace Elizabeth in the novel and in Victor's life as soul-mate. The creation of this androgynous character of Clerval, who disrupts gender stereotypes, raises a question about the gender stereotypes of even the female characters. The destabilization and disruption of traditional masculine/feminine associations overcomes their marginal state, so that while Clerval's role is questioned, so too are the roles of the other characters and the dominant patriarchal society that they inhabit.

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“Who Is It We’re Crying For?”
Union, Nationalism, and the Loss of Identity in *Castle Rackrent*
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Two dates establish the temporal frame for Maria Edgeworth’s first novel, *Castle Rackrent*. The title page identifies the text as an “Hibernian tale taken from facts and from the manners of the Irish squires before the year 1782.”¹ The other date, 1800, appears twice: at the end of the anonymous editor’s preface, and then, at the end of the brief postscript that immediately follows Thady’s narrative and which brought the first edition to its close.² 1782 and 1800 mark pivotal turning points in Irish history, as well as for the Edgeworths. 1782 saw the repeal of the Declaratory Act of 1720 which had affirmed the right of British Parliament to legislate for Ireland and the amendment of Poyning’s Law so as to give legislative independence to Irish Parliament, as well as the introduction of the Relief Act which restored to Catholics the right to purchase and own land.³ It was also the year Richard Edgeworth ended his tenure as an absentee

¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 63, 59. Henceforth *CR*; all further references will be made parenthetically in the text.

² Because the glossary was added after the text was already in print, it directly followed the preface and the “Advertisement to the English Reader” in the first edition. This was corrected in all subsequent editions, in which it appeared at the end of the novel (*CR*, n. 1, pp. 347-348).

³ Cf. “Ireland,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* <<http://search.eb.com/bol/topic?eu=109323&sctn=4>>, accessed Jan. 15, 2001; Edmund Burke, *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs*, ed. Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1978 [first edition 1881]), pp. 243-248; *CR*, n. 8, p. 348.

landlord in England, moved his family to Edgeworthstown in Langford county, and took personal control of his estate with Maria as his personal assistant. In January 1800, Maria Edgeworth published *Castle Rackrent*, a few months before the Irish House of Commons approved the Act of Union with Great Britain and so effectively ended its legislative independence.

The preface invokes the impending legislative merger of Ireland and Britain and links it to Thady's account of the follies and extravagances of the successive Rackrent squires that lead to the loss of their inherited estate. This loss reappears as a loss of both national and individual identity, and culminates in the hyperbolic figure of *Ireland*, together with England, properly reading, or recognizing the reading of, *Castle Rackrent*:

There is a time, when individuals can bear to be rallied for their past follies and absurdities, *after* they have acquired new habits, and a new consciousness. Nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity, and the present generation is amused rather than offended by the ridicule that is thrown upon its ancestors. [...] When Ireland loses her identity by an union with Great Britain, she will look back with a smile of good-humoured complacency on the Sir Kits and Sir Condys of her former existence (*CR*, 63).

The temporal framing of the novel reappears in this passage as the space of reading across time, from 1800 into the era before 1782. We can read the “new habits” and “new consciousness” whose acquisition is the condition of possibility for Union, as ways of learning to read, ways of coming to understanding literary representation. But to come to a recognition of what one reads, it seems, requires the supplementary occurrence of a political event that will bring reading to its end. *Castle Rackrent* thus raises serious questions about political and aesthetic modes of representation and their relation to the historical and biographical circumstances it invokes. What are we to make of the preface's and glossary's unnamed male editor's strident insistence that Thady's narrative is a “tale of other times,” that the events and “the manners depicted [...] are not those of the present age” (*CR*, 63), and that Thady's tale literally is bracketed by the two dates “1800”? What is the valence of this displacement, and what is at stake in identifying Thady's tale as one “taken,” as an acquisition or laying hold of that doubles as a grasping, an extraction or even a removal from history? How does the implicit historical progression from 1782 to 1800, from legislative independence to Union, structure *Castle Rackrent's* multilayered narrative? And if the *novel* emerges from the movement of reading back and forth across the unrepresented space set off by the pre-1782 tale and the 1800 glossary, footnotes and preface—a movement that is to culminate in a recognition that is at once also the loss of that very identity—

what identity is it that Ireland stands to lose by an Union with Great Britain? And finally, in this conflation of questions of literary and political representation that *Castle Rackrent* brings to a crisis, Who is speaking for whom, but also, who and what is being represented?

In the Ireland preceding legislative independence in 1782, the anti-Catholic Penal Laws or Popery Laws Cromwell had introduced in 1695 excluded Catholics from the offices and functions of the state as well as from voting, effectively denying them a voice in the political, if not the narrative, representation of the nation.¹ Barred from practicing law, Catholics could only be legally represented by the very class that had disenfranchised them. Both politically and

¹ The setting of the novels action in the “before the year 1782” locates it in the era preceding the legislative independence of Ireland in which the anti-Catholic Penal Laws or Popery Laws, introduced in 1695, were still in effect. Ireland was, even according to the letter of the law, a colony of England. Writing to Sir Hercules Langrishe, M.P., in 1792, Edmund Burke, one of the most vocal and influential advocates of Catholic Emancipation, saw in the Penal Laws the main source for “the present mischief” in the state of Ireland: “Their [the Popery laws’] declared object was to reduce the Catholics of Ireland to a miserable populace, without property, without estimation, without education. The professed object was to deprive the few men who, in spite of those laws, might hold or retain any property amongst them, of all sort of influence or authority over the rest. They divided the nation into two distinct bodies, without common interest, sympathy or connection. One of these bodies was to possess *all* the franchises, *all* the property, *all* the education; the other was to be composed of drawers of water and cutters of turf for them.” Edmund Burke, *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs*, ed. Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1978 [first edition 1881]), p. 210.

Henceforth *L*; all subsequent references will be made parenthetically in the text.

legally, Catholics could not speak for themselves, they had to be spoken for.

The most recognizable voice in *Castle Rackrent* is that of Thady, the Catholic narrator of the Rackrent memoirs. His voice is contrasted with that of the unnamed male editor, the implied author of the preface and of the glossary, as well as of the footnotes.¹ The editor presents and

¹ For a detailed analysis of the ways in which the notes and glosses attempt to control Thady's narrative, I refer to Kathryn Kirkpatrick, "Putting Down the Rebellion: Notes and Glosses on *Castle Rackrent*, 1800," *Eíre-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 30: 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 77-90. Kirkpatrick's reading argues that the competing voices of the text be read as a site of an ideological struggle structured around Protestant and Catholic power relations. In her reading, the glossary as well as the preface and the postscript attempt to mitigate the radical implications of Thady's narrative, namely the loss of the Anglo-Irish landowner's Irish property to Irish Catholics, for the English audience the text was intended for. While I am more than sympathetic to her overall argument, and agree that the novel's outcome can be interpreted as invoking the *specter* of the loss of the Anglo-Irish gentry's property to the Catholics, Kirkpatrick seems to overstate her case by unequivocally identifying Jason as a Catholic. Given that the novel is set in the times "before the year 1782" when the penal laws against Catholics were still in effect, Jason must have at one point converted to the Protestant faith, most likely to the Church of Ireland, in order to be able to acquire any sort of property or to study law. Her casting Jason as Catholic is an anomaly that stems from the misreading of a single numerical digit. In a footnote to the relevant passage, she writes that "Edgeworth was careful to set her tale in the past, "before the year 1792"" (my emphasis), thus moving the history of the Rackrents into a completely different political and judicial environment in which it was possible for Catholics to own property after the Relief Act of 1782.

contextualizes Thady's narrative voice in the preface, and then supplements and complements the tale from the margins of the text, the foot- and glossary-notes. The implied English readership is told that they may find the "following memoirs [to be] scarcely intelligible, or probably [...] perfectly incredible," and that "Thady's idiom is incapable of translation" (CR, 63). Thady is identified as the Rackrent's "illiterate old steward" (CR, 62), as "habitually lazy," but yet naïvely truthful and loyal. He is constructed as a recognizable figure of otherness: a distinctly un-English character, indeed the polar opposite of the educated Anglo-Irish narrator.

The glossary interrupts the narrative no less than twenty-one times, providing the English reader with a running commentary on linguistic and cultural idiosyncrasies of the Irish. It consistently uses the past tense and takes recourse to hearsay. The gloss on *Whillaluh* begins with "We are told, that formerly ..." (125), the next one on *Duty fowls* with "The editor knew of ..." (CR, 127), the one on *Duty work* begins with "It was formerly common in Ireland..." (CR, 128), and the note to the *raking pot of tea* begins with "We should observe this custom has long since been banished ..." (CR, 135). Phrases like "It is said that" and "It has been affirmed" abound. The glossary functions as a pseudo-ethnographic account that has as its object both Thady's narrative voice and the cultural practices of the Irish. Its use of the past tense and of hearsay relegates Ireland and the Irish into a cultural past, constructing Irish national identity as antiquated, mythical and ultimately unreliable. By casting Thady's narrative and the Irish as knowable *objects* of cultural study, as objective evidence – "features [...] taken from the life" (CR, 121) – the editor takes the place of the knowing subject who can make the 'other' text legible by giving meaning to what would for the "*ignorant* English reader" be "scarcely intelligible" (CR, 63).

The 'making readable' of the text is not limited to this act of cultural demarcation; it

extends to the narrative proper. Because Thady was illiterate, his story had to be committed to writing by the editor, not as a translation, however—"Thady's idiom is incapable of translation"—but as a transcription, so that his tale is "told in his characteristic manner" (ibid.). It is nonetheless the editor who, in writing, 'speaks'; and whose transmission of Thady's voice guarantees its authenticity and vouches for the appearance of the veracity of his narrative. The editor 'carries over' the text into a language accessible to the English on two levels: by on the one hand speaking for Thady, he undertakes an act of mediation that is also an act of translation. On the other hand, the notes and glossary have the function of re-presenting the ethnographic Irish context from which Thady ostensibly speaks, and of at once constructing and constraining the meaning of the text within those bounds. Such a politics of 'speaking for' compromises the editor's claim that "the manners depicted in the following pages are not those of the present age" (CR, 63), for this politics apparently extends the political and judicial circumstances – the "manners," so to speak, of those "other times" – onto the conditions of utterance and representation of 1800. Thady, as the Catholic majority in pre-1782 Ireland, cannot speak for himself, he must be spoken for; he cannot represent himself, he must be represented.

Several critics have argued that Edgeworth's implied recipe for the alleviation of the Irish troubles would be to submit to a system of enlightened British rule and to abjure the drunken, litigious fighting and slovenly past that had defined their former existence.¹ Indeed, the preface's

¹ Cf., e.g. Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790–1870: Politics, History and the Family from Edgeworth to Arnold* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), as well as her "Another Tale to Tell—Postcolonial Theory and the Case of *Castle Rackrent*," *Criticism* 36-3, 1994, and Daniel Hack, "Inter-Nationalism—*Castle Rackrent* and

reference of Thad's tale to Union, "When Ireland loses her identity through an union with Great Britain, she will look back [...]"(CR, 63) seems to imply that the loss of Irish identity through Union will result in its replacement by a unified British identity. Such a recipe is a persistent staple of colonial doctrine, and underlies of Lord Lugard's formulation of benevolent British colonial policy more than a century later.¹ Yet this recipe is never cooked, for in *Castle Rackrent*, the legislative Union between Ireland and Great Britain never takes place. The usage of the future tense defers the "look back ... on the Sir Kits and Sir Rackrents of her former existence" and, with it, Union into a future yet to come (CR, 63). In another sense, however, that future is literally at hand, for the "look back" to the Rackrents begins on the very next page. In this way, paradoxically, it is the return to and re-presentation of an Ireland before its legislative independence in 1782, as well as the narrative elision of the intervening temporal space between 1782 and 1800, that figures the asynchronic grafting of the discourse of a future Union as the loss of an antiquated Irish national identity onto Thady's tale as the very possibility of a future Union. In the following, I suggest that the model of national identity and Union at stake in *Castle Rackrent* is the one elaborated by Edmund Burke. Edgeworth's rethinking of Union and national identity, I suggest, is a revision of Burke's thinking on Union as well as of his influential thought on the proper relationship of Britain and Ireland.

Anglo-Irish Union," *NOVEL* 29-2, 1996.

¹ Lugard writes "Let it be admitted [...] that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate." Lord Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922) p. 617-618.

Edmund Burke, Irish by birth, was easily one of the most, if not the most, recognizable political thinkers in late 18th century England, as well as a vocal, even if often outspoken, advocate of Irish rights and Catholic Emancipation. Burke's articulation of national identity in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790 exerted a powerful influence on contemporary political thinkers.¹ For Burke, Revolutionary France presented a serious threat to the established religious, political and socio-economic order that sustained Britain's status as the most powerful European power. This threat was not merely material. Burke regarded what he considered to be the political and philosophical tenets of Jacobinism with a high degree of antagonism, convinced that it was "resolved to destroy the whole frame and fabric of the old societies of the world, and to regenerate them after their fashion" (L, 327).² To these "old

¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, intr. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1993). Henceforth *R*; all subsequent references will be made parenthetically in the text. For the influence of Burke's thought, see Russell Kirk's introduction to Edmund Burke, *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, intr. Russell Kirk (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1966), as well as Claeys, "The Reflections Refracted: The Critical Reception of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* During the Early 1790's," in ed. John Whale, *Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2000), pp. 40-59.

² Jacobin thought found much support in England from Radicals such as Wollstonecroft and Paine (L. G. Mitchell, Introduction to *R*, p. viii), and had a large impact in Ireland, most notably amongst the Society of United Irishmen.

societies” he also counted Great Britain and Ireland, and accordingly construed Jacobin thought as an attack on the foundation of England’s national identity. In response to the egalitarian idealism of the Jacobins, Burke constructed a model of national identity in which individual rights and liberties were asserted “as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity” (*R*, 33, emphasis in original). Patrilineal inheritance and primogeniture were “a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission,” able to “preserve an unity in so great a diversity of its parts” (*ibid.*). The underpinning and conservation of national unity by the generative and genealogical principle of an “entailed inheritance” yoked the domestic to the political, the family to the nation, in a mode of reciprocal interpenetration Burke referred to as the “family settlement” (*ibid.*):

In this choice of inheritance we have given our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearth, our sepulchres, and our altars (*R*, 35).

If the inseparability of national and family institutions—blood lines, family affections, domestic ties and patrilineal inheritance—constitute and perpetuate the nation, they do so only because they share a common origin and temporal frame. The time of the nation *is* the time of the family extending across generations, and it finds its origin and its legitimization in the unambiguous signification of the Magna Charta, the Petition of Right and the Declaration of Right, that in turn emanate from a mythical past of the “antient” state. The unity of England derives from and finds its expression in the transmission of this past through generations to posterity by the transmission of the laws of the “antient state” to the present.¹

Burke conceptualized the relationship between England and Ireland along similar metaphorical lines as he did the family and nation. While Ireland was subjected to the crown and the imperial authority of England, Burke argued in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Hussey in 1795 that as

¹ Significantly, the past is transported as *property* to the next generation. For a discussion of this, see below.

a “member of the empire, an Irishman has every privilege of a natural-born Englishman, in every part of it, in every occupation, and in every branch of commerce” (*L*, 404). While the Irish (including its Catholics) could be regarded as equal *citizens* of Empire after 1792, the same could hardly be said for the relationship of the Irish *state* and England. Writing to Sir Charles Bingham, Burke couches his vision of the proper power relations between Ireland and England in terms of a consensual family settlement:

But if it be true that the several [national] bodies which make up the this complicated mass are to be preserved as one empire, an authority sufficient to preserve that unity [...] must reside somewhere; – that somewhere can only be in England. [...] So I look upon the residence of the supreme power to be settled here not by force or tyranny, or even by mere long usage, but by the very nature of things and the joint consent of the whole body (*L*, 72).

Ireland appears as one of numerous national bodies, a member of the polity that has some degree of local autonomy, but as a member of what Mary Corbett has aptly dubbed “the imperial family of Great Britain” is otherwise subordinate to the authority of the imperial center, the unequivocal location of which is to be England.¹ Similarly to his invocation of the family in the *Reflections*, Burke strives to naturalize the hierarchical arrangement of political power: “the residence of the supreme power” is not to be arrived at by “force or tyranny,” nor by the mere fact of legal precedent (to which Burke otherwise liberally took recourse to, but rather by the conjunction of “the very nature of things” and “the joint consent of the body.” One does well to note that “joint consent” is a legal event whose occurrence is proper to the “very nature of things” that constitutes the nation in the image of the family. For Burke, the inviolability of this constitutive and constitutional principle provided the foundation for the hierarchically ordered co-existence

¹ Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790–1870: Politics, History and the Family from Edgeworth to Arnold* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), p. 31.

of Ireland and England. Likewise, his vocal advocacy of Catholic Emancipation and condemnation of the Penal Laws was grounded in the conviction that the latter did not have an adequate constitutional basis and that they exceeded the bounds set by familial affection.¹ Burke himself was unwilling to step beyond these bounds, and urged for a gradual, centralized reform of the law, even if, as in the franchise debate, that meant the continued tolerance of what he conceded were injustices.² What made this position ideologically tenable was that Burke considered the problems of the Irish to be of their own making: “I must speak the truth – I must say that all the evils of Ireland originate within itself” (*L*, 414). Unlike England whose political and social foundations are threatened by the illicit import of French ideas, Ireland’s troubles are properly Irish, the result of its own history, of its own failures to transmit an “entailed inheritance” unsullied by local evils from one generation to the next. In the absence of a purified origin upon which to found its laws, in the persistence of an origin of evil, the “nature of things” in Ireland is decidedly unnatural, its body divided, its heritage unsure. Nonetheless, Burke seems to think that Ireland, as a national body in the mass of the British Empire, hence as a recognizably *British* body, can legitimately give its bodily consent, as it were, to the settling of imperial power in England. When it came to the *Irish* character of Ireland’s national body, however, matters were much less clear, particularly when it came to the loaded question whether England and Ireland should to be fused into a single national body by a political Union.

Burke’s position toward Union is characterized by pragmatic skepticism on the one hand and ideological certainty on the other. As early as 1778, he wrote to Samuel Span saying that the

¹ See esp. *L*, 182-205; 212-274.

² Cf. *L*, 273.

“union was a business of difficulty, and [...] a business impracticable. Until it can be matured into a feasible and desirable scheme, I wish to have as close a union of interest and affection with Ireland as I can have; and that, I am sure, is a far better thing than any nominal union of government” (*L*, 103). Burke’s preference for a “a union of interest and affection” over legislative Union anticipates the notion of the “family settlement” he would articulate twelve years later. For Burke, the relation of England and Ireland was that of a familial bond; even if it was not to be a quasi-marital Union, Ireland and England ideally shared a reciprocal common identity: “I cannot conceive how a man can be a genuine Englishman, without being at the same time a true Irishman [...]. I think the same sentiments ought to be reciprocal on the part of Ireland [...], with much stronger reason” (*L*, 412). Burke remained committed to the priority of the familial bonds between Ireland and England at the expense of political Union throughout his career. In 1792, he commented that “For my own part, I have never been able to bring my mind to anything clear and decisive upon the subject. [...] As far as I can form an opinion, [union] would not be for the mutual advantage of the two kingdoms” (*L*, 267-8). Burke’s skepticism toward Union in the *Letters* takes on more ominous overtones after 1789. Not only would a Union exacerbate Ireland’s exploitation by England, it would also deepen the gulf separating Ireland’s Catholic majority from its Protestant minority and precipitate such “great divisions and passions” (*L*, 268) as to provoke an union between radical Catholics and Protestant dissenters—such as, e.g., the United Irishmen—striving to effect “a change in the constitution in Church or State, or both” (*L*, 267) – in short, lead to a Jacobin revolution and the loss, even forfeiture of the “entailed inheritance.”

If the prospect of Union gave shape to the specter of Ireland’s falling away from Britain’s empire, the prospect of separation, either by mandate or by revolt, promised similarly

unpalatable consequences. Commenting on a meeting of Catholic dissenters in 1795, he writes that “the [Jacobin] language of the day went plainly to a separation of the two kingdoms. God forbid that anything like it should happen!” (L, 403). One year later he wrote “Ireland cannot be separated one moment from Britain without losing every source of her present prosperity, and even of her future” (L, 412). An Ireland independent of the guiding and stabilizing hand of British authority, an *Irish*, not a *British* Ireland, would have neither a viable political nor economic future. It is thus not surprising that Burke did not once entertain thoughts of separation.¹ The “union of interest and affection with Ireland” was for him inviolate. Burke envisioned Ireland as more than just a member of the imperial family, but as already part of the British nation despite of its nominal independence, having a British identity through its familial bonds: “I cannot conceive how a man can be a genuine Englishman, without being at the same time a true Irishman [...]. I think the same sentiments ought to be reciprocal on the part of Ireland [...], with much stronger reason” (L, 412).² Given that Ireland was in addition already a

¹ In contrast, Burke does develop a strong position about possible separation, which he strongly opposed. Commenting on a meeting of Catholic dissenters in 1795, he writes that “the [Jacobin] language of the day went plainly to a separation of the two kingdoms. God forbid that anything like it should happen!” (L, 403), and a year later he wrote that “Ireland cannot be separated one moment from Britain without losing every source of her present prosperity, and even of her future” (L, 412).

² Esther Wohlgenut, “Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity,” in *SEL*, 39: 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 645-658, has argued that Burke’s correlation of familial heredity with national continuity constructs a hermetically closed model and thus a nation that can only preserve its identity through the vigorous policing of its borders. Her following reading of

member of the empire and subject to the English Crown, a part of the “imperial family of Great Britain,”¹ this suggests that Burke believed that Ireland would not stand to gain anything from Union she did not already possess. Loss, if it was to occur, would not appear as a loss of Irish identity as the editor in *Castle Rackrent* asserts, but rather as a loss of *English* identity.² But Burke is as quick to dispel such ghosts as he was in conjuring them. Only a page later, he declares he is “sure that the people of Great Britain, with or without a union, might be depended upon [...] to aid the Government of Ireland with the same cordiality as they would support their own” (*L*, 269). Against the haunting fear of the dissolution of the “imperial family of Great

Edgeworth’s oeuvre as a challenge to and a rearticulation of Burke’s articulation of national identity, however, rests on the assumption that Burke regarded Ireland as a separate, essentially alien nation with regard to England. Consequently, Edgeworth’s evocation of the question of “cross-cultural “learning”” in the image of the Warwickshire militia “opens the possibility of an overlap between the two nations” and thus represents “the cornerstone of Edgeworth’s rewriting of Burkean nationness” (647). This case, given my reading of Burke, can at the most be made in the abstract, and even then is open to doubt. While Burke’s model of national identity admittedly does also have the function of creating a bulwark against France, it also provides resources for the recuperation and preservation of the nation through the strengthening of familial ties and the extension of the family itself (cf. *L*, 76). In this sense, Burke’s model cannot be said to be hermetically closed as such.

¹ Mary Jean Corbett, op. cit., p. 31.

² This idea is not entirely foreign to *Castle Rackrent*; in Thady’s narrative, the demise of the Rackrent line is closely tied to the departure of the Rackrent wives for England with their portable assets.

Britain,” Burke again sets the notion of familial affection between Ireland and England, of father aiding the son, or perhaps more aptly, the wife. In the words of Burke writing about the preservation of the various parts of a State, “mutual inter-marriage and inheritance [...] bind countries more closely together than any laws or constitutions whatsoever” (*L*, 76).

In *Castle Rackrent*, the Union between Ireland and Great Britain (re)appears in the form of the marital unions between the Rackrent landlords and their respective wives. Early in his story, Thady writes (or, better, tells the editor) that the “family of the Rackrents is, I am proud to say, one of the most ancient in the Kingdom. Everybody knows that this is not the old family name, which was O’Shaughlin, related to the kings of England” (*CR*, 66). Sir Patrick O’Shaughlin gained the estate after the death of his remote cousin Sir Tallyhoo Rackrent in a hunting accident “upon one condition, [...], that he should by act of Parliament take and bear the surname and arms of Rackrent” (*ibid.*). Such a change of surname and the acquisition of property by a member of an old Irish family would have been accompanied by a change of religion from Catholicism to Episcopalianism in pre-1782 Ireland, as the Penal Laws did not allow Catholics to inherit land from Protestants. While Sir Patrick’s wife goes unmentioned, Thady assumes that Sir Murtagh’s wife “had Scotch blood in her veins” (*CR*, 68), and he identifies Sir Kit’s Jewish wife as “the grandest heiress in England” (*CR*, 75). Isabella, Sir Condy’s wife, is the daughter of an Anglo-Irish family, chosen by Condy over Judy M’Quirk, Thady’s illiterate and Catholic relative.

Edgeworth’s rethinking of Union as marital union between Irish men and British women chiastically inverts the gendered representation of the hierarchy of power that prevailed between England and Ireland: the ‘Irish’ Rackrent men become the ostensible center and imperial masters

over their ‘English’ wives – Ireland over England, so to speak.¹ The wives of Sir Murtagh, Sir Kit and Sir Condy all survive their husbands with their fortunes intact (with the possible exception of Isabella, whose contested jointure ends up in court). If the Rackrent men (with the possible exception of Sir Condy) had all married for money and material gain, they all failed – and that in a double sense. For just as the Rackrent ladies were not the sources of wealth their husbands thought them to be (Murtagh does not inherit the Skinflint estate, Kit does not succeed in extorting the cross, and Condy dies drinking away the little money he received for his wife’s jointure), they do not provide the offspring that would allow the transmission of the Rackrent inheritance, and so effectively interrupt and bring to the verge of collapse the line of patrilineal inheritance Burke envisioned as the foundation of national continuity. Also, on the other hand, by carrying off what would be part of the inheritance of the primogenitured son, by taking, in other words, the financial means which were either pilfered from the land or should have gone

¹ As such, it stands in opposition to the Burkean construction of “the imperial family” in which England is given as the patriarch at the center of Empire and Ireland as the ostensibly feminine margin, as Mary Jean Corbett, *op. cit.*, p. 31-32, has argued. In *Castle Rackrent*, the Rackrent lords become the ostensible center and imperial masters over their wives – Ireland over England, so to speak. But it is not only the overturning of hierarchies that make Edgeworth’s rewriting of Union notable; indeed the very fact that women figure so prominently is unusual, for they are the glaring in absence in Burke’s model of familial affection. Excluded from actual inheritance, they have no other role than to sustain the patrilineal line of inheritance and economic transmission of property. As such, they are the invisible guarantors of both familial and national continuity and unity. Edgeworth’s handling of this trope, as I discuss text, is much more ambiguous.

into the maintenance of the estate, the Rackrent women take as *portable* property the assets of the land, leaving the Rackrent estate in ever poorer shape. They act both as the interrupters of patrilineal inheritance and as the usurpers of primogeniture, bringing to a crisis the familial line. Edgeworth in this way subverts the pattern of familial inheritance so crucial to Burke's project. Instead of Burke's "preserv[ation of] the various parts of a State [through] mutual inter-marriage and inheritance" (*L*, 76), the Rackrent marriages symbolize the opposite – the slow but continuous dissolution of the (e)state. In keeping with the troping of the Rackrent women as tenuous signifiers of England, the property/inheritance they usurp flees Thady's Ireland, Castle Rackrent, with them. This, most clearly in the example of Sir Kit's widow who takes her treasure back to England with her, is allegorically aligned with the exploitation of Ireland by England, especially if one takes into account that the Rackrents are "one of the most ancient [families] in the Kingdom" (*CR*, 66), and as such are identified as former Catholics while all of the Rackrent ladies are Protestant. Maria Edgeworth's rewriting of Union as political union is thus a story of failed unions, a tale of unions that lead to the dissolution rather than the transmission of the proprietary foundation of the (e)state. And this dissolution is coupled, I would suggest, to a loss of identity that appears as the loss of the ability to "speak for," to represent oneself.

On the morning after their arrival at Castle Rackrent, Sir Kit takes his wife on a tour of the premises of the estate. All the while, the new Lady Rackrent – for Thady a dark complexioned Jewish foreigner – interrogates Sir Kit about the names and uses of the various buildings, the turf stack, and other items. Thady is dismayed at her lack of knowledge, and lets the editor and reader know that "to hear her talk one might have taken her for an innocent" (*CR*, 77). Matters, in Thady's estimation, only get worse when "she takes out her glass, and begins spying over the country," and misidentifies the O'Shaughlin bog, calling it "that black swamp

out yonder” (ibid.). Sir Kit, already embarrassed, answers but curtly, whistling in the time between them. The episodes of misrecognition become more frequent, with Lady Rackrent first missing the trees planted out in the bog, then misidentifying them as shrubs, and finally insisting that “they [may be] what you call trees in Ireland [...], but they are not a yard high” (CR, 77-78). At this point Thady intervenes, trying to “soften matters between them, for [he] saw she was going the way to make his honour mad with her,” saying that

they are very well grown for their age, and you’ll not see the bog of Allyballycarricko’shauglin at-all-at-all through the screen, when once the leaves come out. But my lady, you must not quarrel with any part or parcel of Allyballycarricko’shauglin, for you don’t know how many hundred years that same bit of bog has been in the family; we would not part with the bog of Allyballycarricko’shauglin upon no account at all; it cost the Sir Murtagh two hundred good pounds to defend his title to it and boundaries against the O’Leary’s who cut a road through it. (CR, 78).

At this, Sir Kit’s wife “fell into laughing like one out of their right mind, and made [Thady] say the name of the bog over for her to get it by heart, a dozen times,” then asking him how to spell it and what it meant in English, “Sir Kit standing by whistling all the time” (CR, 78). Thady’s conclusion is drastic, but revealing: “I verily believed she laid the cornerstone of all her future misfortunes at that very instant; but I said no more, only looked at Sir Kit” (ibid.).

Sir Kit’s wife does not see the bog’s importance as a site of a male contest for power between the O’Learys and the Rackrents, but rather as a sign of the ‘otherness’ of Ireland and Irish customs, manifested in the exoticism of its name and the worthlessness of the bog. Her laughing fit, her repetition *ad infinitum* of “Allyballycarricko’shauglin,” her dissecting it into letters – to both of which Thady is the (un-) witting accomplice—and her desire for it to have an English meaning metaphorically carves the bog into pieces, just as the road and boundaries of the O’Learys did. Ironically, her linguistic appropriation of the land reduces very property she lays

claim to a mere simulacrum, the shadowy image of the “black swamp” she had initially identified. In this way, the marital union of Sir Kit and “the Jew Lady Rackrent” drains the land of its linguistic identity: their union cannot provide an adequate grounding for the representation of the land. The specter of the legislative Union the preface invokes returns here in the asynchronic grafting of the discourse of the “[loss of] identity through an Union with Great Britain” (*CR*, 63). Union/union, then, here reveals a discourse of loss that neither the one nor the other can absorb.

In the circling structure of the novel, the “same [ill] wind that took the Jew Lady Rackrent over to England [brings] over the new heir to Castle Rackrent,” Sir Condy. His ill-fated stay in Castle Rackrent begins with a similar metaphorical act as did that of Sir Kit’s wife. In Thady’s telling, while “she [had lain] the cornerstone of all her future misfortunes” (*CR*, 78), Sir Condy “erect[s] a handsome marble stone in the church of Castle Rackrent” to the memory of Sir Patrick, a “monument of old Irish hospitality” (*CR*, 84). In both cases, the metaphor of the stone as the foundation for the future led/leads to a loss of identity. Sir Condy, ruined by his own non-management of the estate, his marriage to Isabella, the disproportionate spending of his wife, and his election to parliament, bets the rest of his meager financial means that he can complete the same feat as did his ancestor, Sir Patrick, and empty “Sir Patrick’s horn” in one swallow (*CR*, 120).¹ While he wins the bet, he loses his life, for he – very much in the same way as did Sir Patrick before him – “drops down like one shot” and dies five days later (*ibid.*). In the disrupted

¹ The instance of the coin toss would provide another interesting reading in the terms of identity, representation, union/Union (the coin’s Irish side vs. its British side), property and literary representation (the “mark” of Judy M’Quirk).

patrilineal history of the Rackrents, this is the final instance of loss of identity.¹ In Condyl's history, it is preceded by two related instances, the first of which will be of interest here, the second being Condyl's attendance of his own wake. The former is more of a continuation of the theme established in the previous section, and is concerned, again, with the coincidental loss of property and identity.

Sir Condyl can be seen as repeating the pattern established by his ancestors, all of which were singularly, it seems, incapable of maintaining a stable and empowering relationship to their land. When Sir Condyl is forced to sell his land to Jason after his stint in parliament, he loses his capacity to be Irish. Like Sir Kit at Allyballycarricko'shauglin, he loses his land by not being able to name it, by his not being able to possess it in language. The "usurper" in this case is ironically Thady's own son, Jason, who had become agent and creditor of the Rackrents during Sir Kit's tenure at Castle Rackrent. In the same manner that the "Jew Lady Rackrent" is able to name the land in the abstract, dissecting it, and endeavors to give it an unequivocal meaning through a translation into plain English, thus carving the bog into pieces and confining it, Jason, more radically than she, gives the land a meaning in currency, translating it into the language of finance, distributing it on papers to be signed away. Sir Condyl's signature on the papers that sign the (e)state away to Jason figures as the event of the loss of identity. The novel ends with transfer of property, and with it the transfer of the right of representation, of "speaking for" the land onto Thady's son. But with this final transfer of property, which uncannily resembles the previous transfers of failed patrilineal transmission in that it emblemizes the crisis of the Burkean ideal

¹ As Thady remarks, It is not he who is the last of the Rackrents, but rather Isabella, the second wife in Edgeworth's tale who will "die" twice – surviving the first death to the dismay of Sir Kit and Jason, respectively.

of national continuity, the property of the Rackrents leaves the sphere of familial politics, of the conflation of the domestic and political. For in Thady's telling, Jason does not marry, and thus – at least at the end of the novel – there is no indication that the Burkean inheritance will be continued. As an attorney and an accountant, Jason is the representative of the same class as was, in sorts, Sir Kit's wife, and can be aligned with the looming shadow of the manufacturing class' impending presence in Ireland.

Mary Jean Corbett suggests that the failure of the Burkean model of national continuity in *Castle Rackrent* be read as a failure that demonstrates the need for, at the eve of Union, the installment of a Burkean English-style conservatism, a resurgence and reinvestment with power of the landed gentry (epitomized, I presume, in the figure of R.L. Edgeworth), which she describes as the desire for an “English patriarchal intervention.”¹ However, while it does seem to have been Burke's fear that English identity would be lost in Union and would thus need at least moderate patriarchal reinforcement and reform, Maria Edgeworth's text not offer no such a conclusion. For it is the ostensible *telos* of the editor's historicizing of the text from its margins that suggests it will be Irish identity that will be lost on the eve of Union, after its construction and relegation into a distant past. If the paradox of that supposition is that such an identity is undercut in its very constitution, by its very narrative, it follows that *Castle Rackrent's* parallel losses of identity operate in different historical spaces, feeding off of each other. The loss of identity through Union and in service of the construction of national identity is endlessly deferred, negotiated with each re-reading of the text, offering neither answer nor end.

In conclusion, I wish to return to the beginning in a – futile – search for an origin of loss.

¹ Mary Jean Corbett, op. cit., p. 47.

I will, however, begin with an end, with the death of Condy Rackrent, who dies imitating the last great drinking feat of Sir Patrick, the patriarch of the Rackrents, himself the last of the O'Shaughlins. Condy's death can be read as Sir Patrick's third death, albeit a symbolic one. His second death, following this logic, would be marked by Sir Condy's stone memorial to the "monument of old Irish hospitality" (CR, 84). The death of Condy would figure as the death of "old Irish hospitality," the asynchronic death of the editor's construction of a monolithic Irish identity. But it must also be taken into account that the *editor* himself ironizes the *first* death of "old Irish hospitality," i.e. of Sir Patrick, in his own garrulous note on the *Whillaluh* (124-127). From Thady's telling, we learn that Sir Patrick died a caricature of the man he used to be, unable to carry the claret steadily to his mouth, and perishes "just as the company rose to drink his health with three cheers" (CR, 67). His funeral, furthermore, was "such a one as was never known before or since in the county!" (ibid.). And that, indeed, seems to have been the case, for just as Sir Patrick's body was being escorted through his own town, his own place of origin, at the height of the *Whillaluh*, his body is stolen and "seized for debt" (CR, 68).

What is one to make of this? On the one hand, of course, it signals the theme that is to come in the book in its various repetitions. But on the other, there seems to be a finer point at work in the aforementioned glossary-note, which intrudes into the narrative immediately preceding the seizing of the body. The note, which gives a rather extended account of the *Whillaluh*, can be read as the funeral that is held for Sir Patrick's soon-to-be missing body, as portraying the funeral Sir Patrick never had. But on a second reading, the note reveals itself to rehearse the *same* fate that befell Sir Patrick's body in its ostensible construction of Irish antiquity. What begins as a seemingly faithful antiquarian report – "A full account of the Irish Gol, or Ullaloo" (CR, 124) – mutates into an account of the degeneration of customs and

ceremonies. The editor notes that the proceedings have lost their dignity. This, we are told, is due to the fact that the various priests repeating mass at the funeral are paid “according to the *ability* of the deceased” (CR, 126), the extravagant taste (waste) of the peasantry for funerals, and the concomitant economic socio-economic loss they incur. As the note draws to a close, the editor refers to “alarming symptoms” he has seen that “seem to prognosticate the declining taste for the Ullaloo in Ireland” (ibid.). The symptom, it turns out, is the satirization of the Ullaloo on a Dublin stage, which culminates in the suspension of the lamentation and one of the mourners asking her neighbor, “Arrah now, honey, who is it we’re crying for” (CR, 127). This is the second time the line appears in the note. Previously, in a faithful and objective anthropological manner, the editor referred to the custom as it was practiced in Munster, while the body was being taken to the burial ground.

This [the mournful howl of the Ullaloo] gives notice to the inhabitants of the village that a *funeral is passing*, and immediately they flock out to follow it. In the province of Munster, it is a common thing for the women to follow a funeral, to join in the universal cry with all their might and main for some time, and then to turn and ask – ‘Arrah, who is it that’s dead? – who is it we’re crying for?’ (CR, 125, emphasis in original).

While this first instance seems to be a harmless custom in which the learning of the identity of the deceased is the order of the day, the implications of the editor’s mention of the Dublin episode is more ominous. There the point is not the actual recognition of the body, but rather that it has become irrelevant whose or even what body is bewailed. The body – like the Allyballycarricko’shauglin and the Rackrent estate when it is passed on to Jason – becomes an empty signifier, an excuse for a party, so to speak. The “declining taste for the Ullaloo”, the glossary suggests, is itself a symptom of the loss of meaning and significance that attend this emptied out cultural ritual. Read in conjunction with the note, the theft of Sir Patrick’s body – its

total absence from the funeral train at the moment it is passing through his own town – can be read as the pinnacle of absurdity the *Whillaluh* seems to be moving toward. But, this, it must be remembered, is a satire on the satire in Dublin which is a satire on Munster which is a satire on Sir Patrick’s funeral, on his doubled first death, which inadvertently satirizes his place of origin, which is that of the Rackrents, but which in Sir Patrick’s final death falls on Jason Quirk. In this endless deferral of dead bodies posing as anthropology, constructing and undercutting the “monument to old Irish hospitality,” one might want to ask what identity is in danger of being lost. For in the multiple losses of Irish identity there also lies the question of the identity of Union itself. In its deferral beyond the boundaries of the text, one is tempted to ask “Arrah now, honey, who is it we’re crying for?”