Selected Papers from the 21st Annual Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature

held at Dordt College

April 4-5, 2013

edited by Bob De Smith

Table of Contents

Forward i

by Bob De Smith

Teaching King Lear and its Adaptations 1

Bruce Brandt - South Dakota State University

"Age is unnecessary": Stages of Life in King Lear 12

Rachel M. De Smith - Baylor University

Sight, Spite, and Milton 22

Clay Daniel - University of Texas---Pan American

Young Stephen Sondheim's Classic Spin-Offs: West Side Story and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum 36

Gayle Gaskill, St. Catherine University (Minnesota)

The Ambiguous Portrait of Trolls: Defining Trolls in Icelandic Saga and J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit 51

Jacob Herrmann - South Dakota State University

Reading Pleasure and Virtue in the Sixteenth Century: Early Print History of Stephen Hawes' Example of Virtue and Pastime of Pleasure 64

William Hodapp – College of St. Scholastica

"'Nor Shall Death Brag': Life Beyond the Zombies in Carrie Ryan's "The Forest of Hands and Teeth" 79

John Kerr - Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Dreaming the Divine: Dream as Confession in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* 89

Kirby Lund - University of North Dakota

The Tragedy of the Common Cuckold : Richards' Messalina and Its Sources 102

Art Marmorstein - Northern State University

Burney and the Anti-Captivity Narrative—A Reflection on Genre 115

Susan H. Wood, Ph. D. – Midland University

Appendix: Conference Schedule 126

Forward

by Bob De Smith

The Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature held its 21st annual conference at Dordt College April 5-6, 2013. It is rather amazing that a loosely organized, *ad hoc* sort of affair has had a run of more than two decades. But frequent attendees know different. They notice a dedicated leadership among those who have hosted the conference, a continuing commitment to the conference (some folks have attended all but one or two of the conference's annual iterations), and a convivial community that welcomes fresh ideas and a diversity of approaches. For myself, the conference forms my most important scholarly community. Thus hosting the conference was more like planning a reunion or a party than a conference. I look forward to the 22nd annual conference, to be held April 4-5 2014 at St. Cloud State University.

One distinct highlight of this year's conference was the keynote address by Dr. John N. King. His exploration of "The Reformation of the Book: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning" was far ranging and engaging. It set the stage for other papers which considered material studies or meaning in context. As the selected papers contained in these proceedings demonstrate, the conference offered careful readings of texts as well as intriguing studies of contexts.

As organizer of this conference, I wish to thank Bruce Brandt, Steven Hamrick, Michelle Sauer, and John Kerr—conference regulars all—for their advice and support along the way. My colleagues in Dordt's English Department helped out by chairing sessions and swelling the

banquet throng. Much thanks. Sarah Moss took many of the conference details out of my hands, which was just what I needed. The conference was supported by Dordt College's English Department, its Co-Curricular Committee, and the Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service. I am delighted to offer to you this set of selected papers as witness to the fine scholarship and lively discourse which characterizes the conference. Thanks to all who read papers, and particularly to those who submitted their work. The Program of the conference is included as an appendix.

Teaching King Lear and its Adaptations

Bruce Brandt - South Dakota State University

For the SDSU English department's capstone course this semester, I offered a course exploring literary adaptations of Renaissance literature. One segment of the course centered on three adaptations of Shakespeare's *King Lear*: Nahum Tate's play *The History of King Lear*, Akira Kurosawa's film *Ran*, and Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres*. Each profoundly revises Shakespeare's play, adapting the plot to new ends and using it to explore new questions and to speak to their own respective times. A similar adaptive process, of course, had been performed by Shakespeare himself. His immediate source was an anonymous play titled *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*. However, Shakespeare made a number of significant changes to it, most notably adding the deaths of Lear and Cordelia. The class therefore began its study of *Lear* adaptations by confronting the effect of Shakespeare's transformation of the happy ending of a romance narrative into the tragic conclusion presented in his *King Lear*. What issues does he confront thereby? Clearly there is no "solution" to Lear—no single reading that captures all it does. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the play reveals a deeply rooted concern with the nature of human life, and that the fundamental questions it poses are given point by Shakespeare's new ending. What, Shakespeare's revision of the Lear story asks, is the relationship between humanity and the gods (or God), what does it mean to be human, and what gives meaning to human life?

King Lear has long been seen as fundamentally skeptical about the relationship of humanity and divinity. It questions the role played by the gods play in human life—do they in fact care about humanity? Moreover, it suggests that what mankind longs for is a god in its own

image—a god who reflects our own values, and who will therefore care for us. Thus, discomforted by the unexpected arrival of Goneril at Regan's castle, Lear prays, urging the gods to support him because they, like he himself, are old:

> Oh heavens,
>
> If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
>
> Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,
>
> Make it your cause; send down, and take my part! (2.4.190-93)

The play shows such projections onto the gods to be subjective and to vary with mood. At one point the depressed Gloucester sees only cruelty in divine behavior:

> As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;
>
> They kill us for their sport. (4.1.36-37)

Yet, shortly thereafter, in better spirits, Gloucester addresses the gods he prays to as "You ever-gentle gods" (4.6.219). Similarly, the notion that the gods are dispensers of justice is invoked by Albany when he learns that Cornwall has been killed after blinding Gloucester:

> This shows you are above,
>
> You justicers, that these our nether crimes
>
> So speedily can venge! (4.2.79-81)

However, such affirmations of divine justice within the play can become highly problematic, as in Edgar's statement to Edmund that Gloucester's adultery justifies his blinding by Cornwall:

> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
>
> Make instruments to plague us.
>
> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
>
> Cost him his eyes. (5.3.173-76)

Edgar's vision of divine justice is hard to accept—the punishment seems too cruel to fit the crime. The point, though, is that neither this repellent sense of justice nor any of the other invocations of the gods can be said to embody the vision of the play. They confirm the characters' human longing for meaning, but as Bevington puts it in his introduction to the play, the universe of *King Lear* is indifferent, if not malign (1201).

What, then, does *Lear* suggest that it means to be human? Talking to "poor Tom" leads Lear to a blunt reflection on what remains when the accouterments of civilization are stripped away. This, he perceives, is all we are: "thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art (3.4.105-7). Lear's characterization of "unaccommodated man" expands upon his earlier response to Regan, who had asked him why needs even one attendant knight:

> O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars
> Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
> Allow not nature more than nature needs,
> Man's life is cheap as beast's. (2.4.266-69)

The physiological necessities of survival apply to beasts as well as to human beings and do not distinguish us from them. Lear asserts that the bare needs of being human are something more—the bare forked animal requires accommodation.

Finally, in addition to questioning the bare necessities of a human—as opposed to bestial—life, the play inquires into what holds society together and gives meaning to life, and such meaning as it finds exists in the bonds that connect people to one another. The superstitious Gloucester sees breakdowns in these relationships:

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us…. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked twixt son and father. (1.2.106-12)

In particular, he finds that

> This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father. The King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. (1.2.112-15)

Edmunds's diagnosis of his father's superstitious beliefs as an example of "the excellent foppery of the world" (1.2.121) is surely right, but if Gloucester is wrong about their astrological cause, he is not wrong about the effects caused by the cracking of the bonds that bind one to another, be they father and son or daughter, king and subject, or master and servant. Although Lear did not understand her, Cordelia was right to say that she loved her father according to her bond (1.1.93). This is the only source of value affirmed within the play.

In this play, at least, Shakespeare's interest in the value created by human bonds is generic rather than particular. That is, he is not concerned with questions such as what motivates Edgar to remain loyal to his father or Kent's motivation for continuing to serve Lear. The issue for Shakespeare is not what motivates a particular individual's behavior; rather he is concerned with the centrality to human life of the relationships that bind people together and the consequences that ensue when these bonds are "cracked." There is no backstory. As psychologically real as Shakespeare's characters may seem, they are defined entirely by dyadic roles: father-son, father-daughter, master-servant, brothers, or sisters, and within these roles they reflect elemental dichotomies: goodness or evil, loyalty or disloyalty.

When the class turns to Tate, Kurosawa, and Smiley, it becomes apparent that these later adapters of the Lear story have turned away from Shakespeare's more abstract and philosophical

inquiry in favor of character development, more deeply individualizing each character and providing reasons for the choices that they make. The goal of Nahum Tate's 1681 *The History of King Lear* was expressly "to rectify what was wanting in the regularity and probability of the tale" (Dedication, lines 24-26). Although he is now generally reviled for restoring a happy ending to his *King Lear*, his version held the stage for over 150 years, and that during this time Shakespeare's Lear was not performed. In short, Tate's Lear satisfied people, giving them something that they both wanted and found wanting in Shakespeare: Cordelia does not die and Lear is restored to his throne.

The majority of Tate's changes reflect the values of his time and the conventions of Restoration drama. Politically, it was clearly better for a play of that historical moment to depict the restoration of a monarch rather than his loss of power and death. Dramatically, the restoration audience relished a love-interest within a play, and a rape or attempted rape scene (a fate plotted by Edmund against Cordelia) was virtually de rigueur. More importantly, Tate satisfied the restoration and eighteenth century demands for poetic justice, which required that evil be punished and good rewarded. Obviously this affects the ending of the play, but it motivates other changes as well, such as having Goneril and Regan poison each other. Tate, a true son of the age of reason, also insists on the characters' rationality. Shakespeare's Lear, according to Regan, had "ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.296-7). Tate's Lear exiles Cordelia in a fit of choler, a passion to which he has always been subject. Tate does not accept subconscious motivations and lack of insight into one's self, but he understands that passion can override rational decision making. Cordelia's refusal to flatter her father is similarly rationalized. Shakespeare's Cordelia simply and properly refuses the hyperbolic exaggeration demanded by her father's ceremony, for true service may mean refusing to obey. Her behavior reflects the same lesson of true service

taught by Cornwall's servant, who attempts to intervene in the blinding of Gloucester. However, these revelatory explications of human bonds are insufficient for Tate, who cannot imagine anyone turning down a third of a kingdom for such reasons. He wants there to be some practical reason for such behavior—an outcome that would give Cordelia something that she wanted even more than a third of the realm. Tate's answer reflects the love interest that he has created for the play. Cordelia is in love with Edgar, and so must free herself from her betrothal to Burgundy by deliberately losing her dowry. The rationality of Tate's world is admittedly attractive, but it no longer rings true. We believe in the subconscious, and think that people do not always know what they do or why they do it.

From Tate, the class turns to Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*, a film set in medieval Japan. Kurosawa had begun with the idea of a film based on the sixteenth-century Daimyo Mori Motonari, but then noticing similarities to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, he adapted *Lear* as the primary basis for his film. The parallels with Shakespeare's play are many, but are freely altered and recombined. Lear's three daughters become Hidetora Ichimonji's three sons, perhaps in part because daughters could not have inherited in this era, but perhaps also because Mori Motonari actually had three sons. As in Shakespeare's Lear, the aging Hidetora decides to pass on power to his sons. However, there is no formal contest of flattery, and the kingdom will not be divided. Each son will inherit one of Hidetora's castles, but the oldest will be head of the Ichimonji clan and Hidetora assumes that the other two will support him. Saburo, the youngest son, objects, saying that his father should retain power and predicting disaster if he doesn't. Like Cordelia, Saburo is then exiled for his blunt honesty along with the loyal Tango, an analog for Kent. Kurosawa does not retain the Gloucester plot, but elements of it are worked into other parts of the play. Hidetora's two daughters-in law, Lady Sue and Lady Kaede, are respectively good and

evil, similar to the dichotomies between Shakespeare's Albany and Cornwall and between Edgar and Edmund. Kyomi, the fool character, is present from beginning to end, and is more of a character in his own right than is the fool in *Lear*, who is primarily an externalization of Lear's own foolishness. Saburo is right. The result of Hidetora's relinquishing power is dissension between the two older brothers that leads to the deaths of Hidetora and his three sons, and the kingdom is lost to a rival warlord.

Like Tate, Kurosawa found that Shakespeare's refusal to provide either a history or complexity of motivation for his characters was a weakness. To rectify this, as Christopher Hoile observes, Kurosawa creates "an abundance of dialogue added specifically to provide the characters and actions with a background not found in Shakespeare" (29). Hidetora prefaces his abdication of power with a long speech rehearsing the story of his life. We learn that he became Great Lord of the region through fifty years of constant warfare, first conquering the castle he intends to give to Saburo, then the larger castle he intends for ¬¬¬Jiro, his second son, and finally the castle of the previous Great Lord, which is to be given to Taro, his eldest son. He has succeeded in no small part because of his ruthless tyranny. When he conquered the second castle, he left only two members of the family alive. He married the Lady Sue to Jiro, and he forced her brother Tsurumaru to choose between death and blindness. Similarly, when he conquered the third castle and became Great Lord, he left only the Lady Kaede alive, killing her family before her eyes. She was then made the wife of Taro. The two war-trophy brides are mirror opposites. Sue becomes a devout Buddhist who accepts her fate and maintains a good relationship with Hidetora. Kaede devotes herself to avenging her family, and the dissension between the brothers gives her the opportunity to do so. She goads her husband Taro into alienating his father, marries Jiro after he has had his brother assassinated, and arranges for the death of Sue. In her final

speech, she boasts that she has achieved her goal, the destruction of the Ichimoni clan. Kurosawa thus gives us a "Lear" who has always been fierce and imperious, and once he has made his foolish decision, the enmity of Kaede and her pursuit of revenge provide a clear rationale for the events leading to his downfall.

Kurosawa maintained that the reason for Lear's daughters turning against him "must lie in his past behavior" (Hoile 30). Jane Smiley echoes Kurosawa's dissatisfaction with *King Lear.* She has said that she never liked Lear, found Cordelia to be cold and unlikeable, and felt that Goneril and Regan would not have acted as they did without good reason. "Shakespeare," she said in an interview with Jon Anderson, "would attribute their anger to their evil natures, but I don't believe people in the 20th Century think evil exists without cause" (Qtd. in Schiff 370). A Thousand Acres is her answer, retelling *King Lear* from Goneril's point of view.

Set in Iowa during the 70s and 80s, *A Thousand Acres* tackles issues of feminism, American attitudes towards the land, and Midwestern farm values that lie outside the concerns of *King Lear*, including organic farming, the health effects of nitrates, the role of banks in the farm crisis, and the gendered construction of rural life. Above all, though, it provides a motivation for the behavior of Ginny and Rose, the analogues of Goneril and Regan. The novel closely mirrors its Shakespearean predecessor, with one-on-one matches for every major character and with intriguing parallels for each of Shakespeare's plot twists. The division of the kingdom becomes incorporating the farm, a process from which Caroline, Smiley's Cordelia, is excluded for questioning the soundness of the idea. The battle to restore the kingdom becomes a lawsuit by Caroline attempting to restore control of the corporation to her father. She loses the case, but ends up caring for their father in his senility. At the novel's opening, Jess Clark, the Edmund character, has just returned home after an absence of thirteen years. He had gone to Canada to

avoid serving in Vietnam and then had been living an alternative lifestyle on the West Coast. He comes to believe, falsely, that his father will support him in an organic farming venture, and while home has affairs with both Ginny and the newly widowed Rose. Under its new management, the farm takes on a debt burden that it cannot handle, and is sold, leaving Ginny and Rose with an unpaid tax bill for their patrimony.

The explanation that Smiley found for Goneril and Regan's treatment of their father is incest. After the death of his wife, Smiley's Lear, Larry Cook, had begun sexually molesting the two older daughters. Ginny had repressed the memory, recovering it during the course of the novel, but Rose had never forgotten, and it was thanks to her that Caroline had been spared. Smiley thus provides both a deep motivation for the daughters' feelings about their father and a searing condemnation of patriarchal values. However, we are given no real insight into Larry Cook. Just as Goneril was simply evil, so is he. And so is the Gloucester figure, Harold Clark. We know Smiley's Harold only as a petty, vindictive man who enjoys setting people up to be humiliated. In part, this is because we see Larry and Harold from Ginney's point of view, and she does not understand them. She comes to know what her father has done to her, but she does not understand him except as a symbol of patriarchal authority. She does escape, though, leaving the farm and her husband to live in St. Paul, where she works as a waitress at a Denny's restaurant. It may not strike the reader as a great life, but it fulfills a childhood fantasy, and it is manifestly her own life—not her father's or her husband's vision of what her life should be. Thus Smiley, like Tate and Kurosawa, moves away from a parable of good and evil and any abstract assertion about the nature of life. Her interest, and theirs, lies in causes and motivations, or in Tate's word, "probability."

My students enjoyed each of these three adaptations, but in our class discussions they expressed a preference for Shakespeare's version. In making this judgment the class acknowledged the bias stemming from Shakespeare's cultural weight and their familiarity with his works, but ultimately they concluded that Shakespeare's *King Lear* was more interesting because it was more complex—that it presented more possibilities for interpretation. Although Tate's unhappiness with Shakespeare's *King Lear* reflects the values of a world nearly as different from ours as is Shakespeare's, Kurosawa's and Smiley's versions of *Lear* reflect late twentieth century values. My students obviously participate in these values and share in the psychological assumptions that would lead an adaptation of *King Lear* to move toward characterization and social criticism rather than metaphysical inquiry into the meaning of life. What they concluded, though, as Hoile expressed it in his analysis of *Ran*, is that Shakespeare, by telling "us no more about the past of these characters than their bonds," elevates them to "universal significance" (30).

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“Age is unnecessary”: Stages of Life in King Lear

Rachel M. De Smith - Baylor University

One of Shakespeare’s best-known passages, the “seven ages of man” speech in *As You Like It* (2.7.139-166), outlines a human life. It progresses from “the infant, / Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms” (2.7.143-44) to “second childishness and mere oblivion” (2.7.165). Each of these stages—the middle ones include schoolboy, lover, soldier, and justice—has clearly defined characteristics and roles. Although this speech does not necessarily reflect early modern views on life’s stages, the speech suggests that each stage carries certain expectations. Such expectations are important not only in *As You Like It,* but also in the tragic world of *King Lear*. In Lear, older and younger generations interact, suffer, and judge one another (and themselves) based on age. In particular, Lear’s identity as an old man remains important for both personal and political reasons. Furthermore, the play’s characters think and talk seriously about behavioral expectations for all ages.

In this paper I argue that stages of life are, in *King Lear*, crucial for characters’ knowledge of themselves and others. Lear finds his stage of life particularly important, as his refusal to act his age contributes to his personal tragedy. Throughout the play, characters both old and young use stages of life to evaluate their own or others’ actions. Careful attention to *King Lear’s* text reveals that age is vital to the way its characters understand themselves and their world.

Throughout *King Lear*, characters’ stages of life proscribe behaviors that each character must decide to accept or defy. In the first scene, for example, Cordelia defies behavioral norms for young women by refusing to obey her father. [1] Shocked by her declaration that she can say “Nothing” about her love, Lear asks, “So young and so untender?” (1.1.106). His question

reveals his expectations for his daughter—that in her youth she will be "tender" and yield to him. Cordelia's response shows that she does not share the same expectations for herself: "So young, my lord, and true" (1.1.107). Rather than accepting her father's expectations of loyalty, Cordelia chooses to act in pursuit of a different concept: truth. [2] Cordelia youthfully (perhaps idealistically) values truth over deference to old age, for which she pays the price of disrespect, her father's disapproval. Her sisters' false words conform to the expected "tenderness" of youth, so they are favored while Cordelia is cast out.

Like Cordelia, Edgar is made an outcast for violating expectations of respect for the old. However, it is his brother Edmund who literally embraces the mindset of rebellion for which Edgar stands accused. The letter that Edmund reads in his brother's voice reveals the discomfort of the young with their elders: "This policy of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times…I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny" (1.2.47-48, 50-51). This letter presents the older generation as tyrannically restricting the younger. Brian W. Young notes that this view was relatively common in Shakespeare's day: "there was resentment among at least some of the young against…the fact…that positions of authority and responsibility were largely reserved" for their elders (50). [3] According to this logic, Edmund is tyrannized by his youth as well as by his illegitimate status. Both place him at the whim of the aged—unless he can manipulate them, as he does with Gloucester. Trickery is Edmund's defense against the "tyranny" of the old, the means by which he rebels against restrictive expectations. Despite the possibility that youth may be tyrannized by age, King Lear suggests that the opposite is worse. Our sympathy remains with Lear and Gloucester for their sufferings even when they do not treat their children well. However, when Edmund, Gonoril, and Regan treat their parents

unmercifully, they forfeit any sympathy they may once have had. The younger characters in the play must thus choose whether to follow or defy expectations of obedience, with mixed results.

Their fathers must make similar choices, if about different expectations. According to John W. Draper, the early modern period observed two distinct categories, "old age and dotage" (528). The As You Like It description of dotage is particularly heart-wrenching in this context: "second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (2.7.165-66). Although Gloucester ("sans eyes") is important with respect to age in the play, the remainder of this paper focuses mainly on Lear. He demonstrates "second childishness" (another attribute) in the opening scene, where his advancing age is a central topic. Lear declares his intent "To shake all cares and business off our age, / Confirming them on younger strengths" (1.1.39-40). [4] The Quarto text says "younger years" (1.40). Lear's intent to divide his kingdom is tied to age, and the discomfort it causes in the play is likewise age-related. [5]

For, as the latter part of the scene reveals, what Lear actually confirms on "younger strengths" is childishly partial. He will "retain / The name and all th'addition to a king" (1.1.135-36), not to mention his "hundred knights" (1.1.133). [6] Lear displays a childish desire to have it all, to enjoy power both general and specific without responsibility. His family acknowledges this immaturity; Gonoril comments, "Old fools are babes again" (1.3.19). In one sense, of course, Lear is acting his age, affected by "second childishness." Although this process is tragic, it is in some ways an expected part of aging, and is often interpreted as such in the play.

The people who surround Lear recognize that his old age is a clue to understanding his actions. In fact, Regan and Gonoril discuss their father's progress to dotage at length. Regan, for instance, calls Lear's changeability "the infirmity of his age" (1.1.296). [7] Lear's illogic and, later, madness are thus a function not only of his sufferings but also of his old age. In the sisters'

commentary, Cordelia's unexpected banishment is likewise explained as a vagary of age. Thus the idea of "second childishness" allows the other characters (and us) to interpret Lear's actions. However, it is only one facet of the expectations projected upon old age in the play.

As Lear's mental faculties devolve, other expectations for behavior appear in the text. In the Quarto text, Gonoril accuses her father, "As you are old and reverend, should be wise" (4.231). She assumes that with age comes wisdom, and implies that Lear has only one of these qualities. The Fool makes a similar comment in the next scene: "Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst been wise" (1.5.43). The Fool, like Gonoril, emphasizes that Lear violates expected norms by not displaying the accumulated wisdom of a long life. When Lear later recognizes that he has aged without wisdom, he (paradoxically) becomes wise.

Regan discusses one other expectation for her father's old age: that of being easily led.

> Oh, sir, you are old;
> Nature in you stands on the very verge
> Of his confine. You should be ruled and led
> By some discretion that discerns your state
> Better than you yourself. (2.4.146-150)

According to Regan, old age like Lear's is to be "confined" because of its infirmity. She claims that others "discern" Lear's "state" better than he does, and in some ways she is correct. Lear does not discern the state of his inner life—nor does he understand his daughters. According to Regan, Lear ought to take her advice because his age has robbed him of the ability to do otherwise.

Thus Lear finds his behavior evaluated according to the expectations governing his age. His response to Regan, however, complicates her interpretation of age: "I confess that I am old; /

Age is unnecessary" (2.4.154-55). On the literal level, Lear enacts before Regan a mockery of the forgiveness she suggests he ask of Gonoril. In this context, the statement that "Age is unnecessary" implies that Lear must see himself as superfluous. He is one of those to whom society owes nothing. [8] Lear here adopts in mockery a state that later becomes literally true. He will find himself among fools and madmen who contribute nothing "necessary" to society.

Moving beyond the literal level of Lear's comment, however, the idea that "Age is unnecessary" is troubling. As discussed in this essay, one's age delivers certain expectations for one's behavior. Lear, being old, is expected to be wise, or to submit to younger governments, or to be slightly crazy. Whichever of these expectations he chooses to fulfill, age is a necessary component for his own and others' understanding of his behavior. Draper takes necessity further as he discusses Lear's tendency toward choleric humor. Although disposition is important, "the physical and mental weakness of old age was necessary to bring the King to this impasse" (532, original emphasis). [9] Age is necessary for Lear's condition, and it is also necessary for understanding that condition. Furthermore, although Edmund, Gonoril, and Regan would like to be rid of their aged fathers, they remain obsessed with old men. No sooner do they cast out Lear than they resent Gloucester for helping him. No sooner have they tortured Gloucester than they return to worrying about Lear's sympathizers. If age is truly unnecessary, they should not have to expend such energy keeping the old in line. The text of the play proves that for young and old, "age" is necessary for interpreting oneself and others.

Of course, the term "necessary" is a fraught one in this conversation between Lear and Regan. Only a few lines later comes Lear's famous cry, "Oh, reason not the need!" (2.4.266). In context, it refers to his hundred knights, which his daughter protests are *un*necessary. Lear counters with the idea that humanity is lost without something more than the bare necessities.

"Allow not nature more than nature needs, / Man's life is cheap as beast's," he says (7.424-25). The implication is that something beyond the necessaries for survival is important to human life. Lear classes his knights thus, but with his earlier statement that "age is unnecessary," we may see Lear in this way too. The aged may not be necessary for society, but their presence makes life richer, just as Lear's knights and Regan's fine clothing do. With this interrogation of necessity as a concept, Lear's statement about the relative necessity of age takes on new light.

Age becomes necessary for a different reason later in the play. Lear finds age important in his understanding of himself as mortal, "not ague-proof" (4.6.105). Thinking back, he says, "They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there" (4.6.96-98). Here Lear evokes the correlation between age and wisdom, recalling a time when he had neither. He has at last, torturously, acquired the wisdom that should accompany his white hairs. When Gloucester, later in the scene, tries to kiss his hand, Lear draws back, saying, "Here, wipe it first; it smells of mortality" (4.6.133). [10] Lear's aging, his closeness to what Susan Snyder calls "the necessity of dying" ("Psychology" 449), is now a major preoccupation.

He repeats this preoccupation when he is finally reunited with Cordelia. Upon waking in her presence, he says, "You do me wrong to take me out o'th'grave" (4.7.46). He feels he has already died—one sense of "mortality," emphasized by his great age. A few lines later he speaks one of the clearest evidences that he has come to understand his own condition:

> Pray, do not mock me.
>
> I am a very foolish fond old man,
>
> Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
>
> And, to deal plainly,
>
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind. (4.7.61-64)

Lear's dearly-bought understanding of himself is here expressed in terms not simply of humanity but of old age. [11]We are told his age for the first time ("Fourscore and upward"). Furthermore, his admission of his own age accompanies the admission of madness that hints paradoxically at his cure. Lyell Asher calls Lear's old age his "chronological lateness," suggesting that age is an integral part of Lear's tragic realization (211). [12] This realization is most fully expressed in 4.7, and Lear returns to his old age several times. Just before his exit he repeats these ideas one last time: "Pray you now, forget and forgive. / I am old and foolish" (4.7.89-90). Lear will forget; Cordelia, able now to love her father in accord with her own expectations, will forgive. Of course, subsequent events destroy Lear's hard-won peace of mind. However, Lear's realization of his age remains an important focal point in his mental and spiritual journey.

Thus ages and stages of life remain important in King Lear. Throughout the the play, characters interpret their own and others' actions through the expectations accompanying each stage of life. This preoccupation with age in King Lear suggests that audiences should pay attention on a personal as well as literary plane. [13]Lear strongly engages our sympathies, but these sympathies may shift with our age. We may, perhaps, identify more immediately with the children when young, the fathers as we grow older. "Act your age" is a trite statement, but when Shakespeare makes Lear act his, we see the ways in which age may indeed be necessary for making sense of our world.

Endnote

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[1]Although Jaques begins his *As You Like It* speech by referring to the "men and women" who play parts on the stage of the world, the categories he details are entirely male, leaving no place for Cordelia. (Draper, similarly, specifies "manhood" as one of the middle categories.) Expectations for young women must be inferred, but obedience to one's father is an easy inference to make given the trouble this causes to young women in Shakespeare's plays.

[2]Sears Jayne writes, "Had she been older she might have understood that the situation called for a statement of love, not a statement of truth" (278). Jayne's remark may be a little too

pat for the circumstances, suggesting that Cordelia's youth is the sole cause of her behavior, but Cordelia's status as a young woman contributes to the shock she delivers by stepping out of her assigned role of obedience.

[3]Meredith Skura writes on this subject as well, mentioning Montaigne and the idea that generations compete for resources and must thus destroy one another (122).

[4]The Folio text is even more explicit, adding, "while we / Unburdened crawl toward death" (qtd. Charney 13). Charney notes that this is "the first of many references suggesting second childhood" (13).

[5]For one among many studies that address this topic, see Ronald W. Cooley, "Kent and Primogeniture in *King Lear*."

[6]Susan Snyder notes that "Lear is by no means psychologically ready to yield up power," equating Lear's frame of mind with the denial that dying people often bring to bear on their own condition ("Psychology" 455).

[7]Maurice Charney notes that the sisters' conversation is "in terms that one would now associate with dementia or Alzheimer's disease" (13). Draper, on the same topic, remarks, "Some have thought Lear's madness a perfect case of senile dementia….[I]n its development and symptoms, it is also a perfect case of melancholy dotage as the Elizabethans conceived of it" (538).

[8]Keith Thomas (quoted by Young) has written that early modern culture cultivated a measure of resentment toward those who were no longer contributing to social or economic achievements but who expected to be maintained by society anyway (Young 50). Similarly, Snyder writes that Lear "feels so acutely his own loss of function" ("Psychology" 452).

[9]According to Draper, Lear realizes that "old age lies at the basis of his troubles" (533).

[10]Snyder remarks that this could be said of the whole play, which is "haunted by bad smells" ("Psychology" 454-55).

[11]Draper calls this realization "bitter" (536), but it seems that Lear is not so much bitter as weary, that he has finally achieved something of the gentle dignity of old age that he lacked.

[12]Asher writes that Lear is, "along with the old Shepherd in *The Winter's Tale*, Justice Shallow in *Merry Wives*, and the old tenant who accompanies the blinded Gloucester, among the four oldest characters in the Shakespearean corpus" (211). He also notes that Shakespeare makes Lear "excessively old," in comparison to source texts in which the king is moderately so (213). His extreme age exacerbates the attributes, and trials, of old age throughout the play.

[13]Snyder writes, "No tragedy of Shakespeare moves us more deeply, *involves* us" ("Psychology" 450). Snyder suggests that "what we recognize in *Lear* is the process of dying" ("Psychology" 450). This universal action is surely something that we view differently at different ages.

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Sight, Spite, and Milton

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When I beheld the poet blind, yet bold,

In slender book his vast design unfold,

Messiah crowned, God's reconciled decree,

Rebelling angels, the forbidden tree,

Heaven, hell, earth, chaos, all; the argument

Held me a while misdoubting his intent,

That he would ruin (for I saw him strong)

The sacred truths to fable and old song

(So Sampson groped the Temple's post in spite)

The world o'erwhelming to revenge his sight.

(Poems, "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost" 1-10)

"More than any other allusion" in Andrew Marvell's "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost," the one to Samson "has frustrated interpretative efforts," generating a "bewildering array of contradictory observation" (Wittreich, Interpreting Samson Agonistes 65-66). Why does Marvell create a Samson of destructive spite? "Spite" does not quite characterize the biblical Samson who was widely believed at this time to be a type of Christ. Vengeful certainly, but not exactly spiteful. [1]Perhaps then the line responds to Marvell's reading of Samson Agonistes? If so, does Marvell invoke the political Samson argued in much recent scholarship, whose pursuit

of vengeance generates a sometimes terrible, if not terroristic, vision of a survived, revived Good Old Cause? But, again, revenge, not "spite," would also seem to characterize this Samson who, whatever his faults, from this perspective would seem to embody, in Christopher Hill's words, "hope regained." [2] And would Marvell, extensively sharing in this ideology, have denounced either the poet or such a hero as spiteful? And then there is Marvell's connecting spite and blindness. How would Milton's distorting scripture spitefully have avenged his loss of sight?

Can we reconcile Marvell's potentially spiteful and pointedly blinded Milton, a spiteful and blinded Samson, and the two Puritan anti-court ideologues, former Cromwellian colleagues, poets, and friends? To resolve these interpretive frictions, it would seem necessary to locate a Samson who would indicate spite in himself as well as in Milton, so generating suspicion and censure in an apprehensive Marvell who would link this spite with Milton's blindness. Such a Samson, I will argue, can readily be found in the royal Samson of Milton's Samson Agonistes. That work, probably begun as Parker suggests in the late 1640s, does indeed contain radical political messages. But these messages do not primarily respond to a monarchical restoration that does not occur until 1660. Instead, Samson is often a distinctly royal figure who is based on Milton's polemical constructions of a Charles I who once restored would have self-destructively violated any terms and conditions that interfered with his executing revenge on those who had destroyed his Personal Rule. In the drama, Samson enacts this political prophecy. Samson, a "league-breaker gave up bound" (1209) by his people to their "Masters" (1215), is deprived of his "part from Heav'n assigned" (1217), "cut off / Quite" (1157-58). The stormy marriage of Samson and Dalila develops this theme through Milton's use of the husband and wife/king and state (and ship of state) political metaphor. Samson's defense of his often illegal and irreligious actions, especially in relation to his marriage(s), repeatedly resounds with the king's rhetoric of

divine right. And Dalila's defense of her betrayal of Samson echoes the Parliamentarians, especially the Presbyterians, who claimed that they had fought against the king in order to save him from unwise actions and policies. The Philistines, believing that they have prevailed over Samson, jubilantly restore him to public life as "a public servant" in "state Livery" as one "beneath their fears" (1615-16, 1468-69). The climactic carnage vividly warns others of restoring princes whom they have provoked.[3]

This, or something like it, is the "fable and old song" that Marvell feared might echo through the epic. This phrase is almost unanimously read as revealing Marvell's anxiety that Milton, for whatever reasons, would sacrifice scriptural truth to classical art. Yet, as the popularity of Renaissance Christian epic indicates, such textual interchanges were not commonly seen as requiring especially skillful mediation. Furthermore, Milton's vigorous epic assertion of Christian values substantially destroys traditional heroic poetry. Marvell fearing the opposite would imply an obtuse Marvell who had superficial knowledge of his friend's literary priorities. This clearly was not the case. Instead, "fable" here, as in so much of the polemic of the time, indicates a culpable, dangerous, deviation from truth, often with religious and/or political implications. Marvell himself writes in The Rehearsal Transpros'd,

But I would not have any man take Mr. Bayes his Fanatical Geography for authentick, lest he should be as far misled, as in the situation of Geneva. It suffices that Mr. Bayes hath done therein as much as served to his purpose, and mixed probability enough for such as know not better, and whose eares are of a just bore for his fable. (Prose Works 89-90)

And later in the tract he condemns perverters of the early church who "fill'd the Schools and the Pulpits with their Fables brawling of such [unchristian] matters" (170-71). "Old song," then as now, often denoted an opponent's misguided adherence to supposedly discredited

political and/or philosophical positions. Richard Baxter, for example, snarls at the “old Song” of his opponents in A Second Admonition to Mr. Edward Bagshaw (1671): “And he saith nothing to any of them, but sings over his old song again. Is not this a fine man to dispute with?” (147). And in Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie (1675) he states, “This is but singing over the old Song, by one that will not consider what is answered” (239). In 1699, the dissenter Thomas Edwards of Rhual, refuting Baxter, places “song” in his index: “Song: An old Song for the Papists, Baxterians and Quakers to sell their old rotten Ware by, 393.” On page 393, Edwards had relegated these groups to the “assistance of an old Song, as well becoming their Doctrines and Practices for the vending of them.” Catholic Roger Palmer (1668), attacking Bishop William Lloyd, scorns “the old Song of all Hereticks” (131).As these citations suggest, after the monarchical restoration, the epithet seems to have been readily applied to versions of the Good Old Cause. In John Tatham’s The Rump, or, The Mirrour of the Late Times (1660), Lady Bertlam/Lambert scornfully (though not with complete consistency) identifies the widow Cromwell with “an old Song” (57). As late as 1682, a printed popular ballad “A General Sale of Rebellious Houshold-Stuff” (1682), after abusing nearly all concerned with the rebellion of 1642, seemingly reduces their entire cause to an “Old Song” (stanza 10, line 7).

Marvell then, like many others, apparently had expected that the poet would use his religious epic as a platform to articulate a discredited construction of the Good Old Cause (Hill, “Milton and Marvell” 22-23). [4] Marvell relates his dread to Samson---to, I suggest, Milton’s royal Samson. Marvell’s response would have been shaped by his first-hand knowledge of Milton’s perspective on Charles I. The two poets likely would have discussed not only the regicide, but their representations of regicide. [5] This is especially important in relation to a poem like Marvell’s “On Mr. Milton’s Paradise Lost,” which engages with literary controversy,

literary friendship, and literary patronage. [6] Marvell had written his Horatian Ode (June-July 1650) probably in connection with his "pursuit of patronage from the new regime" (Poems 267). Milton seems to have been seen as a primary avenue to this patronage. In a February 1653 letter to John Bradshaw, President of the new republic's Council of State, Latin Secretary Milton urges that Marvell be made his assistant in the Latin Secretary's office. He was not, and his attitude toward the regicide might have influenced this outcome. This, I think, is implied in Marvell's letter to Milton in June 1654. Milton had entrusted Marvell with another letter and his Second Defense to give, apparently, to John Bradshaw, now retired. In his letter to Milton, Marvell attributes Bradshaw's hesitation to open the letter in his presence to Bradshaw's apprehension that Milton was again requesting patronage for Marvell. Marvell then praises Milton's own work for achieving "the Height of the Roman Eloquence," promising to learn it by heart, adding mysteriously that he wished his "poor judgement . . . were so right in all Things else" (Poems and Letters 306). Whatever was amiss in Marvell's judgement here seems to be related to Bradshaw's reluctance and to the Latin Secretary's book. Was it Marvell's construction of the regicide? And is Marvell coyly apologizing for refusing to disguise his view of it, though it was undermining Milton's efforts on his behalf?

Marvell's Horatian Ode is perhaps the most effective literary commemoration of the regicide. Charles I

> . . . nothing common did, or mean,
> Upon that memorable scene;
> But with his keener eye
> The axe's edge did try.
> Nor called the Gods with vulgar spite

To vindicate his helpless right;

But bowed his comely head

Down, as upon a bed. (Poems; lines 57-64)

Marvell emphasizes the King's gentle dignity, pointedly without the quality that distinguishes Marvell's menacing Milton-Samson: spite. The dead king also figures prominently in a major literary context for the dedicatory poem: The Rehearsal Transpros'd. Marvell blames aggressive, Laudian churchmen for undermining "the whole reign of the best Prince that ever wielded the English Scepter" (Prose Works 191). Defending his aid to Milton in 1660, Marvell in The Rehearsal Transpros'd: The Second Part also emphasizes the "Regal Clemency" of Charles II, who, inspired by the memory of his martyred father's much publicized call for forgiveness, had striven for a benign tolerance (Prose Works 418). [7] Chastising the vindictive Bishop Parker, Marvell tells him, "Whatsover you suffered in those times, his Majesty who had much the greater loss, knowing that the memory of his Glorious Father will always be preserved, is the best Judge how long the Revenge ought to be pursued" (167). "Judge" might consciously or unconsciously point toward Samson; if so, it would suggest the intensity of Marvell's engagement with Milton's royal Samson.

With the monarchical restoration in 1660-61, the "chaos" that had bedeviled "heaven, hell, earth" between 1640 and 1660 tends to cease. Except for the horrific executions of a few powerless regicides, it was exceptionally bloodless. Marvell's king, not Milton's, had been restored. Marvell's stand on the regicide became a tremendous political asset. While Bradshaw's head was soon to look down from a pike at Westminster Hall, Marvell rescues a Milton whose own "poor Judgement" in assessing Charles I nearly had cost him his life. The dead king's legacy had not proved to be a source for inevitable bloody vengeance, making a popular

monarchical restoration difficult if not impossible. Instead, in 1660, the legend of the royal, forgiving Christ-like martyr, especially as it had appeared in Eikon Basilike, "was an army, and did vanquish more than any sword could" in forwarding the joyous monarchical restoration. [8]

Marvell then, begins his poem on the epic by subtly indicating his literary and political triumph over Milton before hurrying to encounter a new antagonist who had not fared so well against the older poet, having been memorably rebuked for his inclination to "tag" verses, now to be reminded and rebuked again by Marvell later in the poem. "When I beheld the poet blind" (1)---the poem's first words remind the world of which poet had commemorated Charles I and which poet had attacked him. Milton purportedly had been blinded not so much for his Republicanism as for his printed "libels"/"railing," especially in Eikonklastes, that had violated the sacred majesty of Charles. [9] But Marvell was able to read Milton's poem. And in the only other "seeing" in the poem, Marvell parenthetically repeats/modifies the first line: "(for I saw him strong)" (7)---a deft turn of phrase that tends to stress the subject's strength almost as much as the object's. And then Samson is invoked: "(So Sampson groped the Temple's post in spite) / The world o'erwhelming to revenge his sight" (9-10). In lines that connect Milton-Samson with the spiteful Satan in the epic (McWilliams 167-68), sight and spite form a binding, blinding combination. [10] Wittreich comments, "It is a wonder, therefore, that Milton agreed to having this poem printed with his own" ("Perplexing the Explanation" 286). Indeed, the furious, futile groping suggests the notorious "blind guide" (again, Roger L'Estrange's phrase). In Spring 1660, Milton had announced to his rejoicing countrymen that their restoration of monarchy would "expose to revenge, to beggarie, to ruin and perpetual bondage the victors under the vanquishd" (Brief Notes upon a Late Sermon, CPW 482). Milton, not a restored king, had uncompromisingly, suicidally, apparently uselessly, flung himself against the flood-tide of

monarchical restoration, creating death and doom , at least in the pages of his pamphlets, where there would in fact emerge peace and prosperity.

It would be interesting to know what Marvell himself thought to be the source of Milton's blindness. Marvell in the second part of The Rehearsal Transpros'd gives us a Milton---author of Restoration epics, histories, plays, and reprints---who had "ever since expiated himself in retired silence" (Prose Works 418). "Expiate" has deeply religious connotations. What would Marvell have Milton expiating? Not his religious views, if we are to trust "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost." And certainly not his fundamental political views. Politics, as Marvell well knew, was far from entirely holy ground. And as his Rehearsal Transpros'd and "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost" itself indicates, Marvell and Milton continued to share extensive political ground, as Marvell's critics liked to emphasize. [11] Yet Marvell's poem darkly hints that Milton had indeed been blinded for his attacks on the sacred majesty of Charles I. Immediately preceding the lines on Samson, "Rebelling angels"---not Adam and Eve---are aligned with "the forbidden tree" (4). Exegetical tradition equated this tree with the cross, which numerous ingenious contemporary comparisons had identified with the scaffold of Charles I. Marvell's suspicions are even evident in his apparently redemptive comparison of Milton to Tiresias: "Just heaven thee like Tiresias to requite, / Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight" (43-44). Asked to decide a celestial dispute, Tiresias was blinded by offended deity (Hera), but rewarded with foreknowledge by a pleased Zeus. [12] Marvell's "just heaven" then can be linked with the divine wrath that had been justly visited on Milton for his transgressions, in his prose polemics and his dramatic poem. The reward of prophecy also tends to point to Samson Agonistes, even more than to Paradise Lost. The epic does not readily open itself to readings as prophecy, except for general proclamation that all is for the best in a world to be restored. But, again, Marvell also

could very well be reacting to the errant warning-prophecies in the dramatic poem. With a slight juggling of the eye and ear, "to requite / Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight" becomes "rewards thy prophecy with loss of sight" to keep the poet quiet. Even as it stands, Marvell suggests that Milton himself was the author of his own blindness: "thy loss of sight." In any case, one of his few polemical themes which the Restoration Milton had expiated with silence was the life and death of Charles I---though Marvell's insisting on the virtues of this silence implies that the blind poet still had something to say on the subject.

The creative tensions between these two poets would have been stressed by the epic's potential to create genuine political peril for Marvell. Charles II was usually not vengeful unless the suspect was directly connected with his father's death or had resumed his subversive, usually republican, activity. Paradise Lost had the potential to be guilty of both. Would England's greatest living religious artist attempt to destroy the image of the forgiving, Christ-like monarch (such as had been created in Marvell's ode) that had been validated in 1660? Such a fear could have been fueled by Marvell's reading of Samson Agonistes, in which Milton, apparently ignoring the identifications of Samson with Christ, had twisted scripture in order to create a version of monarchy that would exonerate the blind poet as it condemns the fake, blind martyr, and his blinder admirers-victims. This would have been spite indeed from one who, with Marvell's help (and many others'), had reaped the benefits of "Regal"---not Parliamentary---"Clemency." Marvell, in the passage rebuking Parker quoted above, concludes, "Therefore, to be short, the King hath so indulged and obliged the Non-conformists by his late mercy, that if there were any such Knave, there can be no such Fool among them, that would ever lift up an ill thought against him" (Prose Works 167-68).This comments on Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence (1673). We can imagine Marvell's thoughts about ingratitude for the regal

indulgence of 1660. Again, such an ungrateful fool could have turned daring into disaster for the political "aerialist" Marvell, whose name often was still connected with Milton's, and whose Instructions to a Painter, published in 1667, was a brilliant "balancing act" that needed little disturbance to produce large and negative consequences (von Maltzahn 373). Significantly, Marvell was one of the few to read the poem in manuscript (Campbell and Corns 327). Happily, as he informs Milton, Marvell had found "that Majesty which through thy work doth reign" ("On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost" 31) to be very different from the one that he had encountered in Samson Agonistes, especially, perhaps, in its earlier versions.

Endnotes:

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[1]As Wittreich points out, according to the OED, "spite" at this time simply cannot sustain meanings that would support views of a heroic Samson . "Given Marvell's own intention of releasing Milton from the retributive associations affixed to his blindness, a comparison between Samson and Milton would hardly seem apt." So Wittreich concludes the lines "plainly assert a contrast" between Milton and Samson ("Perplexing the Explanation" 294).

[2]"Samson Agonistes: Hope Regained" is the title to Chapter 31 of Christopher Hill's Milton and the English Revolution.

[3]For the complete argument, see Daniel, "Royal Samson."

[4]Hill writes, "Marvell may have been afraid that Miton would give the game away too easily; or he may . . . have feared that Milton would trivialize his theme" with a faulty political subtext. But "Marvell's Samson is not after all the [supposedly spiteful] Samson of Judges but of [supposedly heroic] Samson Agonistes."

[5]Nigel Smith, citing echoes of Marvell in Milton's writing, states that Milton was familiar with the ode by the time he wrote his letter of recommendation (106).

[6]For the literary friendship, see especially Shiflett 110-188 and McWilliams.

[7]Marvell, like many others, thought the primary emotional appeal of the monarchical restoration was based more on sympathy for the sufferings of the royal martyr than for the sorrows of the exiled son. In 1675, Marvell concludes "The Statue at Charing Cross" with

So the Statue will up after all this delay,
But to turn the face towards Whitehall you must Shun;
Tho of Brass, yet with grief it would melt him away,
To behold such a Court, such a son. (Poems; lines 53-56)

[8]John Gauden, in a letter to Hyde, qtd. in Knachel xxxii. According to Knachel, "With pardonable pride and some exaggeration, Gauden summed up the propaganda role of the book rather eloquently."

[9]For the pre-Restoration connection, see especially A Guild-Hall Elegie (Parker 98). Roger L'Estrange begins No Blinde Guides (1660) by expounding Milton's blindness: ". . . but

in your ICONOKLASTES, you exceed yourself" in violating "the private Agonies" of the King's "struggling soul . . . invading the Prerogative of God himself" (Parker 250); also see Be Merry and Wise (Parker 99). The author of Britains Triumph interprets this behavior as Milton's commitment to "rail" against "his King" (Parker 101). Also see The Picture of the Good Old Cause (1660) and A Brief Chronicle (1663) (Parker 103, 109).

[10]McWilliams argues Marvell's "deeply vexed" (173) literary friendship with Milton. Milton's uses of "revenge" in his English poetry occur in either Paradise Lost or Samson Agonistes, almost exclusively in relation to Satan or Samson.

[11] Dryden is also instructive here, in hls preface to Religio Laici: "Those [sound Anglican arguments] not succeeding, satire and railing was the next: and Martin Mar-prelate, the Marvel of those times, was the first Presbyterian scribbler, who sanctified libels and scurrility to the use of the good old cause" (27).

[12]Tiresias, having been man and woman, decides an argument about sexual pleasure. Is Marvell responding to Samuel Butler's savage suggestion of a sexual liason between Milton and Marvell (Parker 115)? Another myth has Tiresias blinded, then rewarded, by Athene.

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Young Stephen Sondheim's Classic Spin-Offs: West Side Story and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

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Even before I brought them to the edgy Propeller Company's production of *Twelfth Night* in the winter of 2013, my freshman Shakespeare class waxed enthusiastic about the play because they had seen the 2006 teen flick *She's the Man*, the story of a North Carolina Viola who dresses like a boy in order to play soccer for Illyria Prep. Ten years earlier their counterparts asked to study *The Taming of the Shrew*, which they held to be a teen love story just like the 1999 movie *Ten Things I Hate About You*. Students come to Shakespeare not in all innocence, but trailing clouds of popular culture icons just as an earlier generation may have dragged memories of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* to their study of the classical Roman comedian Plautus (254? – 184 BCE).

The modern genius behind two highly influential Shakespearean and Plautine spin-offs is Stephen Sondheim, now past eighty but in his youth the man responsible for two widely influential musicals with historic leanings, one an outrageous farce, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and the other a social tragedy, *West Side Story*. *Funny Thing* is a pastiche of borrowings, enriched by the vaudeville shtick Plautus inspired. *West Side Story* transforms Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet into mid-twentieth century New York City teenagers fated to fall victim to the double "ancient grudge" of racism and economic stagnation.

Born in 1930, Sondheim was twenty-seven when *West Side Story* opened on Broadway with Leonard Bernstein's lush music and Jerome Robbins's balletic choreography. He was thirty-two and the composer of both the music and the lyrics when *Funny Thing* won six of Broadway's Tony awards, including the award for Best Musical. Since then, five Sondheim

retrospectives have crowded New York theaters and his revivals of his musicals have drawn crowds to professional theaters as well as to auditoriums for high school productions.

Just four years ago the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival revived both *Funny Thing* and *West Side*, while in New York the Tony for Best Featured Actress in a Musical went to Karen Olivo, who as Anita in the Broadway revival of *West Side Story* sang these lyrics in reportedly "savage" and "staccato rhythms" (Garebian 74):

> A boy like that who'd kill your brother,
>
> Forget that boy and find another!
>
> One of your own kind—
>
> Stick to your own kind! (Laurents 125)

Sondheim had created that strident lyric at age twenty-six out of a flat line in Arthur Laurents's libretto and had handed it to Bernstein completely "dry," before the composer could conceive its melody. Bernstein's biographer Joan Peyser calls it an "idiosyncratic Sondheim lyric" that "brought forth . . . idiosyncratic Sondheim-like music: . . . tight, circular, based on a small cell" (276). Like Robbins's choreography, Sondheim's lyric is not ornament but episode; it explores character and advances plot.

"A Boy Like That" marks a turning point in the play, for Juliet-Maria counterpoises Anita's verbal attack with a heartfelt, melodious confession:

> I have a love, and it's all that I have.
>
> Right or wrong, what else can I do? (126)

The simple appeal to love convinces Anita to harmonize with her romantic friend:

> When love comes so strong,
>
> There is no right or wrong,

Your love is your life! (126)

It also convinces her to undertake a doomed errand to warn Romeo-Tony to wait for Maria. Because the situation is a recognizable Shakespearean spin-off, it convinces the audience as well. In any other context, to believe that a poor teenaged boy on the lam from a murder rap would wait faithfully to woo his victim's sister after one day's acquaintance displays rank naiveté. Anita makes better sense the first time:

A boy like that wants one thing only,

And when he's done he'll leave you lonely. (125)

The Shakespearean spin, however, overturns Anita's accusation and elevates the hopeful adolescents to the status of tragic heroes.

As the lyricist, Sondheim was the last of the four creators to sign on to *West Side Story*, and he nearly rejected the offer. Back in 1949 Robbins had imagined a *Romeo and Juliet* ballet set in New York's slums, but he called his brainchild *East Side Story* and envisioned a conflict between Christians and Jews during Easter-Passover. He recruited Laurents, who drafted four scenes, and Bernstein, who loved the idea of a tragic musical, but for five years other projects absorbed the three men, and meanwhile New York's low rent district was noticeably speaking more Spanish. In 1954, according to Geoffrey Block, they recast the conflict as a struggle between rival gangs of "the newly arrived Puerto Ricans . . . and the 'self-styled Americans'" (248-49) and recovered their initial enthusiasm. Bernstein had intended to write the lyrics as well as the music, but when he became overwhelmed by his own *Candide* as well as by Robbins's demand for an extensive ballet score, Laurents recruited Sondheim, having heard the young man perform his uncompleted work, *Saturday Night*.

Sondheim told Craig Zadan that Laurents blurted, “I didn’t like your music, but I did like your lyrics a lot,” and Sondheim agreed to audition for Bernstein simply “because I thought it might be very glamorous to meet Lenny.” Later Bernstein said he immediately recognized “a real, honest-to-God talent,” though with professional sensitivity he admitted, “the music wasn’t terribly distinguished.” Sondheim, however, “told him that I didn’t want to write just lyrics. . . . To co-write the lyrics . . . made me even more depressed” (Zadan 11-12). Before Bernstein could make his offer, Sondheim spoke with his own mentor, the lyricist-librettist Oscar Hammerstein II. At fifteen, Sondheim, the child of a bitter divorce, had been Hammerstein’s family guest at the New Haven try-out for *Carousel*, and the musical brought him to tears. The same year he showed Hammerstein his own musical, written with two high school classmates, and Hammerstein, after pronouncing it “the worst thing I’ve ever read,” gave his protégé an instructive critique: “how to structure a song like a one-act play, . . . how to build songs, how to introduce character, . . . how to tell a story” (Zadan 4). Now, over ten years later, Hammerstein persuaded the reluctant Sondheim to seize this opportunity to work with gifted artists on a ground-breaking project. As the Bernstein-Sondheim collaboration evolved, Sondheim recalled, “Lenny put in a lot of time on the lyrics but when I sat down to write, it was I who wrote them” (Peyser 269). When out-of-town critics failed to mention the unknown Sondheim as his co-writer, Bernstein required the publisher to remove his own name as lyricist (Zadan 27). Two years later, while creating the lyrics for *Gypsy*, Sondheim and new collaborators had begun the musical they called *A Roman Comedy*, for which at last he wrote lyrics and music together. He dedicated it to Oscar Hammerstein—posthumously.

With *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way* to the Forum Sondheim put his own spin on Hammerstein’s song-writing strategy: his songs, like little plays, still tell the story, but they self-

consciously mock Hammerstein's warm sentimentality. The attitude is a spin-off from Plautus, though it is filtered through the didactic interpretations of Plautus that Renaissance grammar schools imposed upon schoolboys, including Shakespeare (Miola 7-8), who later transformed Plautus's one-dimensional courtesans and con men into sympathetic characters. Sondheim names his stock character trickster slave Pseudolus after one of Plautus's title characters, and the name of his foolish old man, Senex, literally means the comic stock character of a foolish old man. Like the athletic dances of the women advertised by the stock procurer, Marcus Lycus, their songs would jar with the romance of *Carousel* or *Oklahoma!*. "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," for example, with its suggestive verbal play and escalating encore choruses, characterizes Senex as he advertises his delight at the prospect of sexual conquest—to two slaves, a procurer, and the audience—who all salute his hopeful prospects. At the same time it serves the plot by drawing out the comic suspense of a scheme for the Hero to elope with his beloved Philia, a virgin misplaced among Marcus Lycus's entourage.

Biographer Joanne Gordon anatomizes the "Maid" song as "the burlesque technique of developing a humorous situation by repetition. . . . With each chorus a new character joins in the fun until a line of lechers prances across the stage singing with a vaudevillian strut [and] . . . a series of triple rhymes" (26), a poetic device that proclaimed absurdity back in W. S. Gilbert's patter songs. The characterization of this offstage maid, this "congenial menial," like that of all the other women in *Funny Thing*, is a pure creation of collective male fantasy, especially when she is

> Wriggling in the anteroom,
> Jiggling in the living-room,
> Giggling in the dining-room,

Wiggling in the other rooms. (Shevelove and Gelbart 60)

The cumulative, self-congratulatory clever design deconstructs both the Hammerstein illusion whereby characters burst into spontaneous song at moments of heightened emotion and the classical comedy's tradition of non-stop farce. The plot is so entangled admitted Burt Shevelove, who co-wrote the libretto, that the audience requires songs in order to reflect. Without them, "it would exhaust you and you wouldn't get any breathers, any savoring of certain moments" (Zadan 77). With them, the audience pauses just long enough to notice that the jokes are so old they're classical; they find pleasure in this musical not so much in empathy for its one-dimensional characters as in delight at its jigsaw-puzzle plot and its flashy, original lyrics. As audiences recognize the send-up of sentimentality, they feel smart.

I hope they recognize as well that the play's objectification of women is another spin-off of a classical cliché, as its exaggeration of old stereotypes should assure them. Senex's wife, Domina, is overbearing, Philia is brainless, and Lycus's cheerful girls literally are commodities. Fortunately, Sondheim's lyrics mock this narrow old formula characterization of females. For example, Domina's comic torch song regarding Senex's fancied philandering begins furiously, "that dirty old man is here somewhere," but it ends equivocally:

Where is he,

That dirty old man divine?

I love him,

I love him,

That lecherous, lewd, lascivious,

Loathsome, lying, lazy,

Dirty old man of mine! (108-09)

Elaborate alliteration betrays the absurdity just before a sentimental audience might pity Domina as she sings the blues. More absurd are the amorous efforts of Miles Gloriosus, his name and shallow character lifted straight from Plautus, along with his funniest line, “I am a parade” (Shevelove and Gelbart 4). Why, “being a man of conquest, [whose] heart was set on a virgin,” as Lycus explains, does Miles expect to buy a wife from a brothel? The exploitation of women can only be comic if the butt of the joke is the exploiter himself, and Miles Gloriosus, the braggart soldier, is a standing joke on vainglorious virility.

The character of Philia, whose name means amity, also exists to debunk the conventions of love songs, as Sondheim’s lyrics immediately indicate. “I’m lovely,” she explains.

> All I am is lovely,
>
> Lovely is the one thing I can do. (45)

The disclosure leaves her, as one critic observes, “virtually at the limit of her grammatical perceptions” (Banfield 97), but she reiterates her simplicity by rhyming “sew” with “oh”:

> Oh,
>
> Isn’t it a shame?
>
> I can neither sew
>
> Nor cook nor read nor write my name.

Meanwhile, the romantic lead Hero—whose name means hero—far from being discouraged by the illiteracy of his new-found love object, continues the duet in the mindless preoccupation with lust that Senex and Miles further illustrate. His corresponding stanza extends the patently silly rhymes to include “now” with “thou—Sand.”

> Now
>
> Venus would seem tame,

Helen and her thou-

Sand ships would have to die of shame. (46)

The boy's classical education—like his anachronistic allusion to Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*—is wasted on Philia, but the audience enjoys feeling clever at recognizing both his allusions and his libidinous gullibility. Lest anyone could imagine the love song is earnest, the comic slave Hysterium reprises it in drag. Shevelove insisted, "You're not *supposed* to care anything about the kids," (Zadan 75), a classic spin that astounded audiences prepared for something like Hammerstein's "If I Loved You" or "People Will Say We're in Love."

To clarify the innovation, Sondheim wrote "Comedy Tonight." Now one of his two most recorded numbers (Swayne 198), in 1962 it was the last-ditch introductory lecture that saved the show. *Funny Thing* was foundering in try-outs when the writers called in Jerome Robbins for advice. Robbins promptly told Sondheim to jettison the innocuous opening number, "Love is in the Air," and insert what one critic calls "a baggy-pants comedy number" (Grant 272) and Sondheim describes as "a bouncy song with a neutral lyric so that [Robbins] could stage a collage of low-comedy vignettes against it" (in Shevelove and Gelhart 141). Robbins's stage business introduced the crude classic style of Plautus along with all of the monodimensional characters, but the pile-up of rhymes advertised Sondheim's ebullient, cerebral wit:

Pantaloons and tunics!

Courtesans and eunuchs!

Funerals and chases!

Baritones and basses!

Panderers!

Philanderers!

Cupidity!

Timidity!

Mistakes!

Fakes!

Rhymes!

Mimes! (23-24)

—and my favorite catalogue of domestic comedy's dramatis personae:

Bring on the lovers, liars and clowns! (19)

Though George Abbott received sole billing as director of *Funny Thing*, according to Sondheim, it was Robbins's intervention that made "the entire show . . . clearly a hit . . . and it was all a matter of the opening number" (Zadan 81). "Comedy Tonight" exists because of Robbins's collaboration.

All musicals are collaborations. "I love the family feeling," Sondheim told Frank Rich forty years later. "I don't think I could ever write a play, because I'd be too lonely" (par. 65). The first of the *Funny Thing* collaborators, Burt Shevelove conceived of a Plautus musical in the mid 1930's during his university days, and fifteen years later he recruited the younger Larry Gelbart, whom he had met while producing comedy-variety programs for early television. As Gelbart explains, after enlisting Sondheim, they wrote ten drafts over four intense years (Shevelove and Gelbart 1-5), collaborating with Plautus just as the creators of *West Side Story* had collaborated with Shakespeare. To both works Sondheim contributed extraordinary, memorable verbal playfulness.

In *West Side Story* Sondheim creates every bit of the humor. Shakespeare's Mercutio, as Stephen Greenblatt remarks, "gives voice to an irrepressible spirit of mockery" (897), but his

West Side Story chorus of counterparts, in spite of their fanciful names and Laurents's invented street slang, are intense without interruption—except when they sing, and then some of the musical's unrelenting social critique grows comical. After the luxuriant strains of "Tonight" fade with their rapturous metaphors of "shooting sparks" and "suns and moons all over the place" (Laurents 42), Anita leads a trio of Puerto Rican women at mocking their contradictory attachments to their values of origin and to their dreams of prosperity in "America":

> I'll bring a TV to San Juan—
>
> If there's a current to turn on.
>
> Everyone there will give big cheer!
>
> Everyone there will have moved here! (53-54)

Contrasting tones highlight the futility that links the erotic fantasies of the lovers to the economic fantasies of the working women, and the sequence transports the audience from ecstasy to irony as does Shakespeare's play.

The funniest song, "Gee, Officer Krupke," stands in the second act between the fervently idealistic duet and dream ballet, "Somewhere," and Anita's outrage in "A Boy Like That." As the musical rushes toward its final catastrophe, it abruptly stops to travesty current sociological theories regarding the economically, politically powerless juveniles who define the dramatic action. Playing caricatures of themselves and of the oppositional authorities who censure them —police, judge, psychiatrist, and social worker—the young Jets entertain themselves and the audience with derisive hilarity:

> My father is a bastard,
>
> My ma's an S.O.B.
>
> My grandpa's always plastered,

My grandma pushes tea,

My sister wears a mustache,

My brother wears a dress.

Goodness gracious, that's why I'm a mess! (116)

Sondheim observed that this stanza "brought down the house every night because the form helps make it funny" (Zadan 219); it exploits the cumulative power of the comic list, a device that served him well again in both "Comedy Tonight" and "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid." The other cause for laughs spins right out of Shakespeare: in the same way that Tybalt's threat of violence elevates the anxiety behind Mercutio's onslaught of wisecracks, the five long stanzas and choruses of "Gee, Officer Krupke" raise the play's emotional temperature while its singers seem to ignore it. Ironically, the song nearly missed the show.

When Arthur Laurents proposed the number in rehearsals, he was nearly rejected until he appealed to his Elizabethan source. "They all said it was a cheap musical comedy number. But I tried to be a little intellectual and talked Shakespeare's clowns and I felt it was really necessary" (Zadan 21). Sondheim, who initially believed the song would "detract from the serious developments in the drama" (Block 254), at first wanted to place it in Act I—where it appears in the 1961 film adaptation—but his subsequent viewing the movie convinced him of the wisdom behind the original decision to place his most exuberant comedy on the cusp of the dark denouement.

The brashness of Sondheim's "Officer Krupke" lyrics illustrates another element of his stylish distinctiveness, its combination of edginess and innocence. As the young men's bravado rises with their fear, the song ends just on the edge of obscenity:

Gee, Officer Krupke,

What are we to do?

Gee, Officer Krupke—

Krup you! (118)

Though archival notes indicate that at an earlier point the song concluded with a cruder and more obvious phrase (Banfield 33), Sondheim here relies on implication rather than direct lewdness, though Bernstein's bold tritone harmonies punch out the danger lurking in the lines. The lyricist's technique is not blandly G-rated, but strategic. When used rarely, filthy language is emphatic: it abruptly raises the level of tension in a scene as it does in a conversation. Repetition rapidly grows dull and rouses disgust, so Sondheim would have bored his audience had he bludgeoned them with language that was less witty, if more realistic. The Jets are a gang of young toughs who jeer at authority as they cheer one another, yet their songs must strike the right chord with a more linguistically refined audience who value the singers for their cleverness.

The edgy lyrics of Sondheim's opening "Jet Song" introduce the boys as defiant, self-fashioning smart-alecks in an escalating vaunt that, like "Gee, Officer Krupke," slides right up to the censorship line:

Here come the Jets,

Yeah! And we're gonna beat

Every last buggin' gang

On the whole buggin' street!

On the whole!

Ever—!

Mother—!

Lovin'—!

Street! (15-16)

These are not sissies or prudes but daring young men clever enough to portray themselves in language that shows off their self-restraint while it brags that they could explode into violence at any instant.

By filtering obscenity through euphemistic slang in his lyrics, Sondheim elevates its shock value when it finally appears, late in Laurents's dialogue. As Anita seeks Tony among the Jets, they assault her with sexist, racist slurs: "Bernardo's tramp! . . . Bernardo's pig! . . . ya lyin' Spic—! . . . Gold tooth! . . . Spic! Lyin' Spic!" The words sound especially crude in contrast to the wittier, reticent lyrics. With Mercutio-Riff dead and Romeo-Tony cowering in the basement, the remaining Jets are merely crude and cruel, impatiently daring one another to act on their frustration. The Jets' song lyrics had conveyed the self satisfaction of ironic restraint. Now their indecent, redundant phrases presage their descent into brutality. Stage directions introduce animal metaphors to describe "a wild, savage dance, with epithets hurled at Anita, who is encircled and driven by the whole pack [until] . . . she falls in a corner" (134-35). Reviewing the 2009 New York revival, the *Times* claimed, "That moment, which the cast members now refer to explicitly as a rape, has become more violent" (Bloom, par. 13). Despite her earlier proclamation that "your love is your life," Anita's vengeful betrayal of the lovers becomes credible in the context of the play's abruptly threatening language and choreography: "Tell the murderer Maria's *never* going to meet him! Tell him Chino found out and—shot her!" (135). Absorbed by the verbal intensity and convinced by the driving force of the Shakespearean original, the audience overlooks the fact that the Jets probably have no idea what Anita means.

Tony's instantaneous, death-defying passion for Maria, like Romeo's for Juliet, is known to only two other characters and the audience.

Spin-offs mark almost all the musicals of Stephen Sondheim's extensive career. Like Shakespeare, he appropriates earlier works, collaborates with other creative artists, and gives each play the stamp of his poetic genius. Especially with Sondheim's witty early spin-offs, an audience's recognition of the older text under the palimpsest guides interpretation of the new play, while it highlights those memorable elements that often prove astoundingly original.

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The Ambiguous Portrait of Trolls: Defining Trolls in Icelandic Saga and J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit

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Through such films as the Norwegian dark-fantasy mockumentary *The Troll Hunter* (2010) and the role-playing video game, *Skyrim* (2011), trolls have entered pop cultural consciousness and remain large elements of the fantasy genre today. They appear in video games such as *World of Warcraft* (2001) where game makers portray them as creatures with long tusks that practice voodoo and speak with Jamaican accents. Other depictions, such as that of *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997), show them as magical creatures with great strength that are typically employed to guard important treasure (such as Professor Quirrel's contribution of a troll to guard the Sorcerer's Stone). Perhaps no other author has had such a large influence on bringing the fantasy genre to the forefront of scholarship as J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien appears to have struggled with the concept of trolls in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Undoubtedly, trolls have come a long way from their Nordic roots in Icelandic saga and Old Scandinavian folktales; however, the portrait of these creatures remains just as ambiguous as their origins. Through an examination of trolls in Icelandic sagas, Scandinavian folktales, and Tolkien's works, one can begin to reconstruct a map of how trolls have developed into the recognizable creatures that they are today.[1]

In order to begin an examination of trolls, one must first begin developing a working definition of these creatures. The *OED* describes trolls as "one of a race of supernatural beings conceived as giants, now in Denmark and Sweden, as dwarfs or imps, supposed to inhabit caves or subterranean dwellings" and the offshoot word *Trollman* is "a magician or wizard"—a few details which this paper shall return to later ("troll"). This definition certainly provides the word

with its Nordic origins; however, it fails to provide a further examination into the complex origins of trolls. The definition of trolls as "giants" instead leads one first to examine Snorri Sturluson's *The Prose Edda*. Compiled sometime during the 13th century in Iceland, the stories tell of the frost giant Ymir and the creation of the world: "Then, from under his left arm grew a male and a female, while one of his legs got a son with the other. From here came the clans that are called frost giants. The old frost giant, him we call Ymir" (Sturluson 14-15). Here the armpits and legs of Ymir give birth to the giants and their ancestors. Beyond the tales of the giants themselves, *The Prose Edda* only makes a fleeting reference to trolls. *The Prose Edda* reads, "An ogress lives to the east of Midgard in the forest called Jarnvid [Iron Wood]. The troll women who are called the Jarnvidjur [the Iron Wood Dwellers] live in that forest. The old ogress bore many giant sons, all in the likeness of wolves, and it is from here that these wolves come" (20). While the text mentions "troll women" as living in the Iron Wood of Middle-Earth, the properties of these characters remains unclear. The word can either function as a noun (as a specific creature) or as an adjective—the reader cannot tell if *troll* simply describes the nature of these forest dwelling women or if the term "troll women" describes a specific type of ogress.

This problem becomes even more evident in the examination of the Icelandic Sagas. Ármann Jakobsson notes that "Katja Schulz lists seventy-two examples of the word troll in Sagas of the Icelanders and ninety-six in Legendary Sagas, in addition to sixteen examples from skaldic verse" (*The Trollish* 43-44). In the Old Norse context, the word troll proves to be extremely versatile because of its loose definition. Jakobsson himself recounts thirteen specific different types of uses of *troll* in Icelandic saga in detail; I have reduced this list to just nine uses in order to provide an overview: [2]

1. Can hold the same meaning as post-medieval Icelandic folktales, synonymous with *jǫtunn* or mountain-dweller
2. Associated with magical powers (sometimes normal humans)
3. Used descriptively or metaphorically to indicate physical characteristics such as great force, strength, or size, or even magic abilities (an antagonist who is difficult to vanquish is often called a troll)
4. Often used to describe not only giants, but also witches, malignant spirits, and ghosts
5. Conjured Animals (or possessed animals by magicians or evil creatures)
6. Can contain religious connotations as in describing heathen demigods or serving as antagonists of Christianity. Trolls, along with various other creatures, are seen as helping to fill the ranks of the Devil
7. The brunnmigi in *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* (creature that urinates in wells means "well-pisser" in Old Norse, but it is unclear if troll refers to a supernatural creature or has just outlandish and antisocial behavior)
8. Indicates certain characteristics or behavior such as an immunity to iron, extraordinary battle prowess, a person biting another in the larynx, or even cannibalism.
9. Berserks who undergo metamorphosis in battle (associated with shape-shifting)

Jakkobson's list provides an interesting and even more complicated look at defining trolls. It becomes quite difficult to distinguish the actual depiction of trolls since they can refer to such a wide variety of creatures or attributes. In the sagas, it often becomes unclear if the specific

creature referred to is actually a troll or simply has troll-like qualities, such as in the case of the brunnmigi from *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*.

A few sagas also present the creature of "she-trolls." Martin Puhvel says that the female trolls "display a power and ferocity that make them appear more fearsome and dangerous than their male kin or mates," and he attributes the phenomenon of she-trolls to the influence of Celtic folktales of "the vengeful hag" (175, 178). These she-trolls appear in such works as *Grettir's Saga* and *The Hrafnista Sagas*. In *Grettir's Saga* (later Sagas of the Icelanders 1310—1320), the main character Grettir, an anti-hero and sociopathic outlaw, participates in such acts as thievery, rape, and even associating with trolls. In one particular encounter, he fights a she-troll that haunts the farm of Sandhauger. As he chases her, she tries to escape by diving into a cave under a waterfall. The text reads, "Grettir said that the she-troll dived down into the gorge when she received the wound, but the men of Bardardale claim that the day dawned upon her as they were wrestling, and that she died when he cut off her arm—and there she still stands on the cliff, turned to stone" (*Grettir's Saga* 138). This passage portrays two important ideas: she-trolls have exceptional battle skills and the sunlight can turn these creatures into stone—a concept to which this paper shall return in the discussion of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. However, the concept of a troll's cave as underneath a waterfall or lake crops up similarly in *Arrow-Odd's Saga*, in which they "got an ogress from underneath a huge waterfall, full of spells and sorcery, and put her in bed with King Harek, and he got a son by her. He was sprinkled with water and given his name, and called Ogmund" (*The Hrafnista* 97). Caves underneath waterfalls prove to be typical troll habitats.

In the case of *Arrow-Odd's Saga*, the motif of trolls reproducing with humans proves not to be an isolated event. In *Bárðar Saga Snæfellsáss* (1280-1390), an Icelandic Family Saga,

Bárðr contains mixed ancestry. His mother was human, but his father was part troll and part giant, and Dofri the "mountain-dweller" of Dovrefjell raised him. As Jakobsson notes, "Icelandic attitudes toward the past were transformed during the 13th and 14 centuries. The heroes of the past gained greater credence and the fashion of the age was to trace one's ancestry to prehistoric giants" ("History" 55). In this saga, no clear distinction exists between the trolls and humans as the Icelanders considered them "part of the fourteenth-century reality" (69). Jakobsson's research further establishes trolls and giants as important cultural figures in Iceland during this time.

At some point after the composition of the Icelandic sagas, trolls became associated with a particular type of creature. This can be seen in an examination of Norwegian Folktales. Pat Shaw and Carl Norman state that, "The Tales, or *eventyr* as they are called, wandered to Norway probably during the Middle Ages. They were absorbed into existing lore, undergoing constant change through generations of storytelling" (Asbjørnsen and Moe 7). Through the oral tradition of such folktales, trolls became associated with certain characteristics. They frequently lived in heavily wooded areas, and they are often found cooking something (such as mutton) by the fire. Although trolls are typically old and strong, they are dumb and frequently outwitted by a young protagonist. One such tale, "The Boy who Met the Trolls in Hedal Woods," recounts the story of two boys who become lost in the woods and seek shelter in a cave where they find three trolls. The trolls have only one eye that they pass and share between them, while shouting "I smell the smell of Christian Blood here!" One of the brothers cuts the troll's ankle so he drops the eye, and the children ransom the eye for buckets of gold and silver. The tale reads, "'If we don't get our eye back this very minute, you'll be turned to stick and stones!' shrieked the Trolls. But the boy felt there wasn't any hurry; he was afraid neither of boasting nor magic, he said. If they don't leave him alone, he would chop at all three of them so they would have to crawl along the hill

like creeping, crawling worms" (12). Besides the cocky sadistic nature of the little boy, two characteristics of trolls remain notable and show at least some consistency between the folktales and the old Icelandic sagas. First, the trolls remain as anti-Christian figures. This explains the OED's association with imps or lesser demons which are also assigned the roles of "evil" creatures. Second, this passage acknowledges the possible use of magic, lending credence to their association with other fantastic beings, such as witches.

While trolls in Norwegian folktales often are hideous creatures with such features as having one eye or multiple heads, the trolls of Swedish folktales have slightly different elements. In his introduction to *Swedish Folk Tales and Legends* (1978), John Lindow notes that, "Unlike their counterparts in the illustrations accompanying the modern editions of fairy-tales, the trolls of Swedish popular belief were no larger than normal and generally not of hideous appearance. They looked very much like men and women one knew, the primary differentiating factors being that one did not know them and that they were not Christian" (33). An example of this comes from the story "Communion Wine in the Troll Food." The tale tells of two inebriated young men who stumble across a beautiful young woman washing herself by the mountainside. They end up promising to play musical instruments at her wedding. However, once they are sober they realize that they made a mistake, and that this was actually a troll wedding. Upon the parson's advice, they slip communion wine into the troll food. The tale reads, "They did what the parson had told them—and when the trolls tasted the wine in the food, they went crazy and there was such a brawl that all the trolls killed each other" (95). While normally, society would scold the young men for their drunkenness and missing church, the men are excused because the traditional folktale format must allow the Christian men to overcome the anti-Christian outsider. Something

that both the Icelandic Sagas and the Scandinavian folktales have in common is that the word *troll* always remains a derogatory word in reference to some sort of alien "other."

As a medieval scholar, Tolkien drew upon many of these sources, and he was well acquainted with Icelandic Sagas and Scandinavian Folklore. William, Bert, and Tom, who appear in "Chapter 2: Roast Mutton" of *The Hobbit* (1937), are the most fully developed depiction of trolls in all of Tolkien's work. In the novel, Bilbo Baggins and his company come across three trolls in the forest. These trolls, much like their Norwegian folktale ancestors, are large, ugly, dim-witted creatures. Tolkien's trolls speak in cockney accents and continually call each other names like "lout," "fat fool," and "booby" (37, 40). In accordance with the light-hearted tone of a children's book, the trolls prove to be extremely comical, which thereby breaks the tension as they discuss the proper way to cook a dwarf. Tom Shippey, author of *The Road to Middle-Earth* (2003), provides a possible source for this scene in "The Brave Little Tailor," where,

> . . . a tailor kills seven flies at one blow, and is so emboldened that he starts a career of violence and monster killing. He bluffs his way through a contest of strength with one giant, and he frightens off a whole gang of them: 'each of them had a roast sheep in his hand and was eating it.' Sent by the king to catch two more, he hides up a tree and throws stones at them till they quarrel and kill each other. (75)

Eventually, Gandalf comes to their aid and the trolls turn to stone just as the sun comes up. *The Hobbit* reads, "Will never spoke for he turned to stone as he stooped; and Bert and Tom were stuck like rocks as they looked at him. And there they stand to this day, all alone, unless the birds perch on them; for trolls, as you probably know, must be underground before dawn, or they go

back to the stuff of the mountains they are made of, and never move again" (Tolkien 41). Of course, Tolkien's voice here proves to be entirely ironic, for the reader most likely does not know that trolls "must be underground before dawn." Shippey says that, "As it happens, the belief about being underground before dawn is as traditional as belief in trolls and dwarves at all, going back to the *Elder Edda* and the end of *Alvíssmál*, where Alvíss the dwarf is kept talking till daylight by Thorr, and so turned to stone" (75). While the dwarf Alvíss turned to stone, it seems more likely that Tolkien, as a medieval scholar, would also be aware that trolls themselves already have the lore of turning to stone as seen earlier in the discussion of *Grettir's Saga*.

Outside *The Hobbit*, Tolkien sporadically mentions trolls throughout the lore of middle-earth. *The Silmarillion* recounts, Melkor, the evil Ainur, as creating trolls even before the first-age. At this time, they were much like the stone-trolls in *The Hobbit*: they were terribly stupid and turned into stone during daylight. During the War of Wrath, Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs, uses troll bodyguards (232). While many of them died during the First Age, at least a few of them escaped and served as servants of Sauron during the Second and Third Ages. In the Third Age, Sauron created the Olog-hai, a superior breed of trolls. Tolkien notes in his appendices of *The Return of the King* that,

> The Olog-hai were in fashion of body and mind quite unlike even the largest of Orc-kind, whom they far surpassed in size and power. Trolls they were, but filled with the evil will of their master: a fell race, strong, agile, fierce, and cunning, but harder than stone. Unlike the older race of the Twilight, they could endure the Sun, so long as the will of Sauron held sway over them. They spoke little, and the only tongue that they knew was the Black Speech of Barad-dûr. (458)

Sauron ends up using the Olog-hai in the Siege of Gondor and the Battle of Pelennor Fields; the Dark Lord's armies frequently use them to move and carry large siege equipment. In the Mines of Moria, In the Battle of the Black Gate, Pippin ends up killing a "hill-troll," which is most likely an Olog-hai serving under the dark forces of Mordor. *The Return of the King* (1955) reads, "The Pippin stabbed upwards, and the written blade of Westernesse pierced through the hide and went deep into the vitals of the troll, and his black blood came gushing out. He toppled forward and came crashing down like a falling rock, burying those beneath him" (176). While this passage certainly shows the heroism of Peregrin Took, it also clearly depicts the evilness of trolls with their "black blood," as well as their massive stature as it comes "crashing down like a falling rock."

Another passage that deserves discussion comes from Treebeard's comparison of ents to trolls in order to explain to Merry and Pippin their immense strength. Fans and critics of *The Lord of the Rings* have put much stock in Treebeard's characterization of trolls. He says, "Maybe you have heard of Trolls? They are mighty strong. But Trolls are only counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents, as Orcs were of Elves" (*The Two Towers* 91). This would lead the reader to believe that trolls were somehow corrupted versions of ents; however, this idea proves inaccurate upon further elaboration from Tolkien himself. In one of his letters, he wrote that,

> Treebeard is a *character* in my story, not me; and though he has a great memory and some earthy wisdom, he is not one of the Wise, and there is quite a lot he does not know or understand. He does not know what 'wizards' are, or whence they came (though I do, even if exercising my subcreator's right I have thought it

> best in this Tale to leave the question a 'mystery', not without pointers to the solution). (The Letters 207-208)

While Tolkien leans on the idea of Treebeard's ignorance and rationalizes the desire to maintain a certain sense of "mystery" in his tale, as one reads further into Tolkien's letter it becomes increasingly clear that Tolkien himself did not know their exact origins. He says, "I am not sure about Trolls . . . But there are other sorts of Trolls beside these rather ridiculous, if brutal, Stone-trolls, for which other origins are suggested" (208). While this discredits Treebeard's interpretation and Tolkien's definitive knowledge about his own representation of trolls, it does provide a hint of insight that the varying types of trolls have different origins.

Looking at the Icelandic Sagas, Scandinavian folktales, and Tolkien's works, allows one to draw several generalizations about these creatures. Trolls are descended from some type of "evil creature," whether from the frost giant Ymir or the Dark Lord Morgoth of Middle-Earth. Most trolls are ugly, physically or spiritually, and take the form of two-legged humanoids. They participate in any number of unsavory acts from cannibalism to pissing in wells, and their inherent stupidity allows the real enemy to manipulate them into weapons of war. In general, fantasy allows an un-likely innocent hero to overcome a situation of great peril. These factors allow trolls to thrive in the fantasy genre as instruments of evil. While trolls contain a rich and interesting lore embedded in their Nordic roots, the scholarship remains hesitant to analyze this important, albeit ambiguous, figure that continues to enthrall fans of the fantasy genre.

Endnotes:

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[1]The primary sources The Hobbit (H), The Fellowship of the Ring (FR), The Two Towers (TT), and The Return of the King (RK) are all denoted in their in-text citations with their associated abbreviations.

[2]This condensed list is summarized from Jakobsson's "The Trollish Acts of Þorgrímr the Witch: The Meanings of Troll and Ergi in Medieval Iceland" pages 44-52.

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Reading Pleasure and Virtue in the Sixteenth Century: Early Print History of Stephen Hawes' Example of Virtue and Pastime of Pleasure

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As my title suggests, the question I wish to explore here is fairly simple: what does examining early printed editions of Stephen Hawes' poetry, alongside how other writers refer to Hawes, reveal about the sixteenth-century reception of his two long works *The Example of Virtue* and *The Pastime of Pleasure*? But, before delving into the evidence, I wish to offer a preamble of sorts. In the summer of 2012 I was one of sixteen participants in a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) seminar entitled "Tudor Books and Readers: 1485-1603," co-directed by John King, professor emeritus of The Ohio State University, and Mark Rankin, professor of English at James Madison University in Virginia. Based on the fundamental assumption that scholars and teachers of the humanities benefit from direct contact with material remains from the past as they work out interpretations of those materials in the present, the five-week seminar met in Europe, beginning in Antwerp—a center of the early modern book trade—and passing through London in the first week before settling into Oxford for the final four weeks. As a medievalist, I brought to the seminar an interest in classicism, training in paleography, calligraphy, and codicology, and a long-standing curiosity about early printed book production. In this present study I report results and conclusions from some of my work on the NEH seminar.

Focusing in what we might call the long sixteenth century, the seminar used the nearly 118-year reign of the Tudors to frame our exploration in time. The Tudors served us well as Henry VII's ascension to the throne following his defeat of King Richard III at Bosworth Field

coincidentally nearly coincided with the establishment of printing in England. And Henry VIII and his offspring who sat on the throne after him embraced the benefits and likely cursed the challenges this technology enabled as they all used the press to advance policy but also instituted censorship, seeking control over what made print. When Henry VII came to the throne, printing had been established in England for nine years.1 William Caxton, an English merchant-adventurer and sometime diplomat for King Edward IV, learned printing in Cologne, Germany, in the early 1470s before setting up shop in Bruges, Belgium, in 1472, where he published the first printed book in English, his own translation of a French courtly romance on the Trojan war *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*. Seeing an opportunity, Caxton moved his press to Westminster in about 1476, thereby establishing the first hand-press print shop on English soil. Others soon followed suit, and when Caxton died in 1492, his chief typographer Jan van Wynkyn de Worde took over his press, which he ran until his death in1534. Wynkyn de Worde maintained his operation's association with Caxton as evident in his printer's mark, which kept Caxton's signature W C.

Turning to Stephen Hawes, we do not know that much about him in spite of his connection with Henry VII's court.2 Likely born in Suffolk, East Anglia, Hawes may have matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1493 (an SH is mentioned in the College's roll but could have easily been someone else). One point is certain, however; by 1502, he was a groom of Henry VII's chamber—one of his courtier-servants—and in 1503 was granted four yards of black cloth for the funeral of Henry's wife, Elizabeth of York. On January 10, 1506, the royal account shows a payment of 10 shillings to Hawes for a "ballet that he gave to the king's grace" (qtd. in Gluck and Morgan xiii). Because Hawes is not mentioned in court records at the time of Henry VIII's coronation in June 1509, our poet likely left the court at Henry VII's death on April

21st of that year, but he may have left as early as January 1507 to serve as rector of the church at Withern, Lincolnshire, where a Stephen Hawes was installed (if so, he was dead by January 10, 1510). He was not noted as present for Henry's funeral either, but we cannot make too much of absence in records such as these. The next royal record of a Hawes occurs in 1521 with another account payment of £6, 13s. 4d. to a "Mr Hawse for his play" (qtd. in Cannan 189). Apart from court records, on Janurary 16, 1523, the will of a Stephen Hawes was proved in the arch-diaconal court of Suffolk. In it he left all his property, located in Aldborough, to his wife Katherine. Though biographical details are sparse at best, and many we do have may not even refer to our poet, Hawes was quite active in the first decade of the sixteenth century, producing a number of shorter poems in addition to his more ambitious narratives *The Example of Virtue* and *The Pastime of Pleasure.*

Both *Virtue* and *Pleasure* are instances of a then widely and wildly popular narrative genre referred to today as dream-vision.3 In a dream vision text, the first-person narrator recounts a remembered event in which he or she dreams of an encounter with other people or beings. Through observations and dialogue, the dreamer-narrator—or the text's audience—gains insight of some kind through the experience. Upon waking to the everyday, the dreamer-narrator returns to himself or herself, often with new knowledge but occasionally without, leaving it up to the audience to work out the event's significance. Texts such as the Old English "Dream of the Rood," Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's medieval bestseller *The Romance of the Rose,* Geoffrey Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *House of Fame*, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* illustrate the genre. According to colophons preceding each poem, Hawes composed *Virtue* in the nineteenth year of Henry's reign (August 1503-August 1504), and Pastime in the twenty-first year (August 1505-August

1506). In *Virtue*, a 2129-line poem in rhyme royal, Hawes uses the dream-vision form coupled with personification allegory to explore the education of the Christian layman. Youth, his dreamer-narrator, undertakes a range of adventures before being renamed Virtue, under which moniker he defeats a three-headed dragon (representing the Three Temptations: The World, The Flesh, and The Devil) to win the hand in marriage of Cleanness, with whom he shares a beatific vision at poem's end. Using ideas worked out in this poem, and employing personification allegory again, Hawes takes up the theme of education proper to the active life of a Christian prince in his 5816-line *Pastime of Pleasure*, an extended exploration of not only education but also death and the Boethian idea of the second death when one's fame dies (*Consolation* 2.m7). Here, at Fame's instigation, the dreamer-narrator Grande Amoure undergoes training in the liberal arts and chivalry in an effort to gain his beloved Belle Pucell, whom he eventually marries. After a long life, Grande Amoure dies, is buried in a temple, and the narrative closes with disquisitions by Fame, Time, and Eternity herself. In both poems, Hawes is concerned with the ends of education, which for layman and prince alike is intellectual freedom and ultimately salvation.

As a groom of the chamber, Hawes would have first published his poems in manuscript for consumption at court. Fashioning himself as a sort of second John Lydgate, the prolific court poet-monk writing100 years earlier, Hawes in fact presents *The Pastime of Pleasure* to Henry VII by alluding to Lydgate's dedication of his long epic *Troy Book* to Henry V (26-35). The dedication manuscript copy of this poem, unfortunately, does not exist, nor do any complete manuscript copies of Hawes' poetry. Other than a few fragmentary bits in manuscript, Hawes' poems are now extant only in printed editions.4 By 1509, Hawes had entered into an arrangement with Wynkyn de Worde to publish *The Example of Virtue*, a relationship that

continued until after Hawes' death whenever that was (Edwards, "Poet" 82-8, and "Hawes" 170). Unlike his master Caxton, who in addition to printing Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate provided many of his own texts for printing in a sort of self-publishing venture (Coldiron 160-9), Wynkyn de Worde printed only works written or translated by others. His business model, as we might say today, involved in part entering into relationships with poets like Hawes presumably when he thought he could market a text (Edwards, "Marketing" 119-20. His hunch about Hawes' *Virtue* must have been sound as the 1509 edition, a print run of something like 700-1200 copies (Gaskell 160-3), has only one extant copy today, now located at Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. The printer and poet's next collaboration also occurred in 1509, the year of transition between Henry VII and Henry VIII. As it progressed, 1509 became an *annus mirabilis* of sorts not only for a nation both grieving the loss of an old king and rejoicing at the rise of a new one but also for Wynkyn de Worde and his poet-collaborator Stephen Hawes. That summer, London experienced a significant influx of visitors as British subjects from throughout the island converged on the city to join the festivities marking Henry VIII's coronation. Ever the businessman, and sensing an opportunity, Wynkyn de Worde published a then-for-him-record 24 separate titles that year (Duff par. 44), including five from Hawes' pen: *The Pastime of Pleasure, The Conversion of Swearers, An Elegy on the Death of Henry VII, The Example of Virtue, and A Joyful Meditation*, the poet's celebratory poem marking Henry VIII's coronation.5 Six years later, in 1515, he published *The Comfort of Lovers* for the first time; sometime before 1517, he had sold out of copies of *The Pastime of Pleasure* so he published a second edition of that poem, and then a third edition of *Virtue* in 1530. Wynkyn de Worde was Hawes' sole publisher until 1531 when John Skot printed an edition of *The Conversion of Swearers*. In the early-to-mid 1550s, William Copland printed another edition of *The Conversion of Swearers*, and John

Wayland and Richard Tottel brought out separate editions of *The Pastime of Pleasure*. In each case, the publication record attests to continued and renewed interest in Hawes' works: people wanted to own and read his books. And they must have read them to death considering the low survival rate of copies.

While printing records and surviving editions give us a view on readership, references and allusions to an author in the writings of subsequent authors also traces reading. Just as Hawes himself was reading Chaucer, John Gower, and especially John Lydgate, as evident in the intertextual echoes in his poetry, so later authors were reading him. For instance, a cadre of poets associated with Wynkyn de Worde towards the end of his career refer or allude to Hawes in their own poetry. The earliest of these, Thomas Feylde, provides the firm terminus ad quem of Hawes' life when he writes in his 1529 poem *A Controversy between a Lover and a Jay:*

> Yonge Steuen Hawse whos soule god pardon
>
> Treated of loue so clerkely and well
>
> To rede his werkes is myne affeccyon
>
> Which he compiled of Labell pusell. (22-5, line numbering mine)

Similarly, a year later, Robert Copland—father of William Copland who again printed Hawes' *Conversion of Swearers* in 1551—writes in a prologue to Wynkyn de Worde's edition of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* a eulogy of sorts linking Hawes to Lydgate and Chaucer himself:

> Chaucer is deed the which this pamphlete wrate
>
> So ben his heyres in all suche besynesse
>
> And gone is also the famous clerke Lydgate
>
> And so is yonge Hawes / god theyr soules adresse (9-12, line numbering mine)

And William Neville specifically refers to an elephant and castle image drawn from *Virtue* in his 1531 allegorical love poem *Castell of Pleasure* (226-9; see Edwards, "Neville's" 487) while in his 1533 satirical poem *Spectacle of Lovers* William Walter alludes to *Pastime* (3570-3728) with a Samson-Virgil-Aristotle image (Edwards, "Walter" 450-1). Poets, of course, were not the only ones reading Hawes. John Bale, for instance, writes about Hawes in his 1549 edition of *Scriptorum illustrium* praising the poet for his learning, morality, and wisdom (632). Some 70 years later, John Pitts nearly repeats Bale verbatim in his assessment of Hawes (685-6). And finally, the late seventeenth-century antiquarian and Oxford man-about-town Anthony á Wood notes that Henry VII valued Hawes for "his facetious discourse, and prodigious memory; which last did evidently appear in this, that he could repeat by heart most of our *English* Poets, especially *Jo*. *Lydgate*, a monk of *Bury*, whom he made equal in some respects with *Geff*. Chaucer" (1: cols. 5-6). Concerning *Pastime of Pleasure* in particular, á Wood continues: "It is adorned with Wooden Cuts to make the Reader understand the Story better, and Printed in an old *English* character. But such is the fate of Poetry, that this Book which in the time of *Henry 7*. and *8*. was taken into the Hands of all ingenious Men, is now thought but Worthy of a Ballad-mongers Stall." And, indeed, so have Hawes' fortunes remained, with the only recent editions of his work being the Early English Text Society critical editions of 1928 and 1974.

When Hawes published *Virtue* with Wynkyn de Worde in 1509, the printer had been experimenting for some time with typeface design—he is known as the father of English typography—and with using woodcut illustrations much in the way many manuscript books, his competitor technology, had mastered centuries earlier: to comment visually on text and to mark textual division (Hodnett 307-9). Woodcuts in early printed books, however, often puzzle modern readers as frequently they seem unrelated to the text. Printers used and re-used woodcuts

on hand with such regularity that one can begin to trace an image's use from book-to-book, print house-to-print house, over the course of several decades. Examining *Virtue*, though, it seems evident Hawes and Wynkyn de Worde collaborated closely on design in part to direct reader response and shape reader reception: they deploy thirteen woodcuts, only two of which repeat so the book uses 11 distinct images (Mead cxiv-cxvi; Hodnett 24-5; Edwards, "Poet" 82-8). All seem made specifically for this book as each is tied directly to the text and each is the earliest known instance of use. In all but two cases, they use the images to introduce major textual divisions, which are also marked "Capitulum" and numbered. The first woodcut in the book serves as frontispiece and title page: it depicts a winged King of Love sitting on a throne in the middle of a hall. Crowned and clothed only with a loin cloth and with armor on his left leg, he spreads his wings and glances downward to his left while holding a fiery-brand in left hand and a dart in his right symbolizing love's ardor and sudden onset respectively—passionate love at first sight. Yet, the love Hawes explores in *Virtue* signifies not romance but something near to educators' and students' hearts: the passionate pursuit of knowledge—the Love of Learning. The facing section of text, a colophon-advertisement of sorts on page 3, details the poem's first publication: a presentation to Henry VII. Just as this distinctive frontispiece orients readers to the text's central theme, most woodcuts in the text signal significant breaks and visually set up the ensuing section of the poem. In the opening marking the break between chapters four and five, for instance, a half-page woodcut depicts personified Sapience—Wisdom—in a school room. Sitting at a desk on which she is holding open a book, and surrounded by books on shelves above, Sapience momentarily pauses from reading and turns to her left to hear two school boys recite lessons, as indicated by their gestures: a third school boy sits on a stool in the image's foreground while writing on a scroll. Much in the way medieval images depicting readers

function, this image is reflexive: just as Sapience herself pauses from reading to listen to boys recite, the reader holding the book pauses momentarily to study this image of paused reading before moving with the narrator via reading into Sapience's house in the narrative: the subject of chapter five. Similarly, the opening signaling the start of chapter six is marked by a two-thirds-page woodcut depicting personified Nature sitting in the center of a room and leaning on a pillar. Four human and four animal figures surround her—the quick and the dead—and Death himself looms behind the pillar: the natural end of all. This image, too, orients readers to the content of chapter six. The text's final woodcut depicting the marriage of Youth and Cleanness visually sets up the narrative's culmination in chapter thirteen, when Virtue and Cleanness assume their place in the heavenly court.

Presumably satisfied with the Virtue experiment, Hawes and Wynkyn de Worde mount an even more ambitious program of 31 woodcuts for *Pastime of Pleasure*. In this case, they generate images from three sources. First, they again make several text-specific woodcuts to function as visual commentary. For instance, the narrative's dramatic opening woodcut depicting a flaming Fame on horseback, attended by two hounds, approaching the dreamer-narrator is original to Pastime. Second, they do what many artists do: steal from themselves, as the Sapience woodcut repeated three times to illustrate Grammar, Rhetoric, and Invention respectively demonstrates (chapters 5-7). Such repetitions function not only as commentary on Pastime but also as visual intertexts between the two poems for those readers familiar with both. And third, they draw on Gregorius Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica*—an encyclopedic text Hawes used in writing *Pastime* (Mead lxiv-lxxvii)—for images to illustrate Philosophy and the Liberal Arts on the frontispiece and page 19, Geometry on page 98, and Astronomy on page 103.6 Finally, just as they open with an original image, so they close with a series of three more depicting Fame,

Time, and Eternity. In each case, the woodcut images in both *Virtue* and *Pastime* function almost like emblems, orienting readers to the text. As Anthony á Wood noted nearly two hundred years after the poems' first printings, the woodcuts "make the Reader understand the Story better" (1: col. 6). In a sense inviting the viewer first to read themselves, and then read the text, these images also serve as memorial cues for re-reading much as one might see in stained glass or plastic art. The layout and woodcuts Hawes and Wynkyn de Worde developed for *Virtue* and *Pastime* became fairly standard for each in later editions: Wynkyn de Worde's 1530 edition of Virtue and Tottle's 1555 edition of *Pastime* each repeat, with a few changes, this layout and design as though seeking to meet the readers' expectations initially shaped by the 1509 editions. Only John Waylande's 1554 edition of *Pastime* veers from this design, jettisoning woodcuts entirely in favor of headings to signal text breaks: perhaps he did not have access to the woodcuts themselves, perhaps he was seeking to shape reader response and move reader reception of the text in a different direction.

Jan van Wynkyn de Worde and Stephen Hawes used woodcut images in *The Example of Virtue* and *The Pastime of Pleasure* to enhance, even shape, their readers' experience of the text. Initially orienting readers to textual divisions and content, the woodcuts also functioned as emblematic memorial cues and invitations to re-read the text. If one wanted to remember both what happens and why in the given poem, a simple review of its images would trigger knowledge—a mental re-reading via recollection if not an actual re-reading of the text. Together with what the printing record suggests about popularity and how other writers allude and refer to Hawes, the woodcuts and designs reveal aspects of not only artistic intent but also reader reception of Pleasure and Virtue in the sixteenth-century.

Endnotes:

1. I base my summary of Caxton's career on Blake (1-49), Coldiron (160-9), Gillespie (27-36), and Hellinga (12-40).

2. I base my summary of Hawes' career on Edwards ("Hawes" 166), Gluck and Morgan (xi-xiv), Hasler ("Hawes" 6; *Court Poetry* 108-9), Mead (xiii-xv), and Wakelin (54-5).

3. Dream-vision has drawn much scholarly interest. For studies of dreaming, vision, and the dream-vision genre in medieval and early modern cultures, see Adams, Akbari, Depres, Kruger, Lynch, Newman, Nolan, Piehler, Russell, Schmitt, and Spearing.

4. I base this review of Hawes and de Worde on Edwards ("Hawes" 166; "Poet" 82-8), Gluck and Morgan (xi-xiv), Hasler ("Hawes" 6-9; *Court Poetry* 108-10), and Mead (xxix-xxxi).

5. Evidence for the following publication history is available in the *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)* as well as Early English Books On-line (EEBO). Gluck and Morgan (xv-xxii) and Mead (xxix-xl) also review the publication history.

6. Mead seems to be the first to have noticed the visual repetition from Reisch's book. The *Margarita Philosophica*, first printed in 1496 in Heidelberg, came out in multiple editions in the sixteenth century, including the 1503 Freiburg edition Hawes and de Worde likely used. Written as a dialogue between *a magister et discipulus*, the text opens with the student asking the master what he seeks in books with swift eagerness and "indefesso labore" [unflagging labor]: "Philosophiam quero" [I seek Philosophy] is the initial cryptic reply to which he adds an encyclopedic twelve-book treatise addressing the seven liberal arts and rational, natural, and moral Philosophy. The 1503 Freiburg edition has 301 folios (602 pages) and is filled throughout with woodcuts of all sizes (from full page to marginal images illustrating, for instance, geometric shapes, measuring instruments, etc.). Echoing scientific manuscript book conventions, Reisch includes printed marginal glosses along with careful division of the text into books, treatises, and chapters. The printer marks each book—except for *Grammatica* and *Geometria*—with a full-page woodcut illustrating the subject personified, accompanied by figures and text. Hawes and de Worde draw on three images in particular: the frontispiece, geometry (bk. 4, tr. 2, ch. 3), and astronomy (bk. 7, tr. 1, ch. 1). Mead includes copies of each (lxv, lxvi, lxix).

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"'Nor Shall Death Brag': Life Beyond the Zombies in Carrie Ryan's "The Forest of Hands and Teeth"

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I have frequently noted in my Introduction to Literature classes that students who have read literature in the past are more on board with reading literature in college, even in a general education setting that involves exclusively non-English majors. As obvious as that observation may be, it is perhaps worth notice because, frankly, there seems to be a lot of crap out there in the teen fiction world. Most notorious of late has been the supernatural block of vampire, zombie, witch, and other gothic/supernatural novels, part of a larger trend of "dark" fiction, including the recent *Hunger Games* phenomenon, most of which play to adolescent women's erotic identity. Whatever their shortcomings, also at the center of these texts is a contemporary instantiation of age-old questions involving the meaning of human existence. The monstrous has always provided territory for re-thinking assumptions about human superiority, goodness, and survival, and that is certainly true of post-apocalyptic stories. I will be discussing a novel that fits into the "zombie post-apocalypse" category, Carrie Ryan's *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*. While Ryan encourages in young (predominantly female) readers a juvenile and predictable vision of love, she simultaneously lays for them a literary groundwork for more "advanced" textual exploration. My overall contention is quite simple: juvenile (primarily female) readers are brought subconsciously and even consciously to understand that literature is an ongoing conversation, and are therefore reasonably well prepared to make the jump later to discussions of interpretation, genre, intertextuality, and theme. More particularly, I am interested in the novel's unusual incorporation of Shakespeare's sonnets as an icon of the preservation of individual and cultural memory. At one point in the novel, the protagonist Mary comes across a

little edition of the sonnets, in which she places a postcard of New York she has also discovered. The marriage of these two artifacts—both rarities in Mary's bleak future world—clearly points to the capacity for writing to save humanity. In Ryan's novel, the sonnets in fact provide the key for unlocking a system of paths that lead to an ambivalent freedom from the confinement of Mary's zombie-encompassed village, establishing a tension between the liberating and the constraining pulls of writing.

First, the complaining. *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* suffers greatly from the choice to center its perspective upon a young female of the now-ubiquitous Bella-type. Apparently the teenage goal is, above all, to be important, regardless how much of an asshole one has been along the way. One can understand the appeal to this generation of *The Social Network*, which features the male counterpart of this personality. The authorial decision to mire us in the supposed thought processes of an emotional mentality that is at times more annoying than the actual moans of the undead leads to such inevitable revelations as "I can't stop the heat, the rage from curling in my stomach" (165) and "My mind swirls with the knowledge that my nearness affects him, that I am not the only one who feels this heat" (57). This major limitation acknowledged, it is also true that Ryan creates a world that is compelling and memorable, and even the romantic drama is worked into a more sophisticated meditation on individual and collective legacy.

The Forest of Hands and Teeth participates in the basics of zombie fiction: something has caused people to "return" after dying, the zombies infect others by biting them, and decapitation or significant brain injury dispatches the walking dead (called Unconsecrated rather than zombies). The novel presents a post-apocalyptic reality in which the zombies vastly outnumber the remaining humans, so much so that Mary's town is sectioned off from the surrounding forest

by fences and no one has contact with the world beyond those barriers. (The possibility is raised early on that those in the town may be the last people alive.) Teenaged Mary dreams of reaching the ocean her mother told her about in her younger days; as with Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, there is no assurance that the ocean, if it even exists, holds any promise of a better life, and between the protagonist and the putative sea lies a potentially endless forest chock-full of the Unconsecrated.

As with *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*, and earlier teen supernatural efforts such as the Sweep series, a fair portion of the novel is devoted to adolescent romantic concerns. I will spare the audience the divagations of Mary's love life, but in brief she gets betrothed to young Harry while really desiring, in a very fleshy way, his younger brother Travis. Mary undergoes a Binding ceremony with Harry—a religious and cultural moment that emphasizes commitment to human survival through procreation. As with Shakespeare's early sonnets, there is an insistence upon the need to couple and produce. Sister Tabitha, head of the town's overseeing religious body, rejects Mary from life in the virginal Sisterhood, explaining that Mary is "needed more out there as a wife and mother than in here as a Sister" (76) and later elaborating, "Our ancestors knew that in order to survive we had to persevere . . . That creating each new generation was the most important task beyond keeping the village safe and fed" (113). The reader is frequently reminded of this emphasis on children. Mary's friend Beth loses a child. Mary herself is a child without parents. Along the central journey, a young child accompanies the newly partnered teenagers. The most solemn and celebratory time in the village's year is the Handfasting, when young men and women choose their marital partners.

Ryan's novel couples this push for offspring with the other answer to human preservation put forth in the sonnets, memorialization through writing. After Mary witnesses the death and

return of her infected mother, she is compelled to enter the Cathedral for some time with the understanding that she will join the Sisterhood. While there, she learns of a secret visitor that the Sisters keep hidden from the public, and with whom Mary has a conversation through a wall, learning that this young woman came through the gate leading to a fenced pathway the town's citizens are forbidden to enter. Mary soon discovers that the mysterious newcomer has disappeared, and goes to her room to investigate. As Mary breathes on the window, the name "Gabrielle" and the letters "XIV" appear. These signs open onto the novel's central concern with the maintenance of identity and memory through writing.

Through the first third of the novel, Mary wonders about the pathway that leads out of the village. In the climax of this section, a breach of the town's main fences leads Mary, her brother Jed, Jed's wife Beth, Harry, Travis, and Mary's best friend Cass to break through the forbidden gate and embark on the maze beyond, which they travel for several days always surrounded by Unconsecrated outside the fence. At one point Mary notices letters on an old trunk near another gate: "X-V-I-I-I". The reader of course understands the Roman numeral, but this system has apparently been lost to Mary's civilization. Mary is reminded of Gabrielle's mark on the window, and later, after seeing similar markings on other gates, she comes to one with "X-I-V" on it. She convinces the group to take that path, and although they endure no little danger and become divided (thereby allowing for further romantic development between Mary and Travis), they do find another village with food and supplies, relieving their immediate needs and confirming that other people have at least recently existed elsewhere. While holed up in this new village, Mary discovers a small book and some photographs of New York City. For some time Mary marvels over a New York with skyscrapers and the sheer volume of people that must have been around to fill them. Eventually, she turns to the little volume and "trace[s] the elegant

letters on the first page, not understanding their meaning: *Shakespeare's Sonnets*" (260). Mary turns to the beginning of the sonnets and discovers "over the first block of text is the letter I. On the next page, over the next block of text are the letters *II*" (260). Mary realizes the significance of the letter pattern and the basic application of these numbers to the system of paths.

There are a variety of reasons why Ryan would have chosen Shakespeare's sonnets as the text to provide the key to the gates and paths. Generally, of course, a number of gothic teen novels brush up against "great literature" to establish their own literary credibility. And since Shakespeare has remained quite marketable, as well as a staple of high school curricula, we should not overlook mercenary and pragmatic motives. Most obviously, there is the pragmatic concern of incorporating a text with Roman numeral headings. But while the sonnets do provide an easy example of Roman numerals in order, it is also true that the sonnets are the least narratively coherent text in the Shakespeare canon, so Ryan is able to suggest an overarching order while simultaneously resisting closure. Naturally, openness and enclosure haunt a novel in which the characters are literally fenced in. Ultimately, the sonnets provide an ordered code that allows Mary to travel fenced-in paths to a place of relative freedom: the ocean.

The sonnets crystallize for the reader the thematic core of the novel. When Mary actually gets time to read some of the poems, she first looks at Sonnet XIV, recalling the letters left on Gabrielle's window, and finds that it "talks of judgment and plagues and good and evil and truth and doom" (260). The infection of the Unconsecrated has certainly reached plague proportions, and Sister Tabitha proposes that the resurrection of the undead stemmed from God's judgment: "The exact cause of the Return may be shrouded in mystery, but we do know they were trying to cheat God. Trying to cheat death. Trying to change His will" (63). Then, remembering the XVIII carved in the trunk near her own village, Mary turns to that sonnet: "One line jumps from

the page, making me catch my breath: 'Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade'" (260). As suggested above, the novel's post-apocalyptic setting naturally puts human survival at the forefront of concerns. In this regard, the novel's erotic core goes beyond the palpitations of teenage daydreaminess and, like Shakespeare's sonnets, focuses on reproduction as one solution to the problem of human legacy. More to the point, though, as the acquisition of a book highlights, and as underscored by the famous closing couplet of Sonnet XVIII, the novel also advances Shakespeare's alternative answer to the passing of the human: writing.

The Forest of Hands and Teeth opens with a reflection on story: "My mother used to tell me about the ocean . . . She once showed me a picture that she said was my great-great-great-grandmother standing in the ocean as a child . . . In my mother's stories, passed down from her many-greats-grandmother, the ocean sounded like the wind through the trees and men used to ride the water" (1). The mother's tales figure prominently, holding open for Mary the possibility of something more than the walled-in existence that seems, at times, futile. Just as importantly, the stories offer the possibility for human preservation through memory, which is really Mary's central anxiety: not that she will die, but that *memory* of her and of her culture will die. In the center of the novel, Mary's borrowing of clothes and other items once possessed by the previous owner of a house beyond Gate XIV leads her to lament, "Who are we if not the stories we pass down? What happens when there's no one left to tell those stories? To hear them? Who will ever know I existed? What if we are the only ones left—who will know our stories then? And what will happen to everyone else's stories? Who will remember those?" (207).

Graphic writing holds an important place in Mary's home village, despite the absence of actual books other than the Scripture and a genealogical record. Scriptural passages are carved into the woodwork of all the doorways (excepting, ironically enough, those of the Cathedral).

Mary regularly passes her hand over these words as she enters and exits her house and other buildings; there is a ritualistic, ordering quality to this behavior. That Scripture exists on these liminal spaces of course suggests religion's (and writing's) power to contain. The oldest Sister, Tabitha, makes this explicit: "I know I must sound harsh, Mary . . . But what is a village without order?" (67). During her time at the Cathedral, Mary finds that the Sisters have been keeping secrets from the townspeople, and that they have access to the gate through which the townspeople are never supposed to travel. That is to say, the Sisterhood retains access to physical and intellectual freedom but withholds that freedom from the town for the sake of preserving social order, very much akin to the methods of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor. While this is the intention of the Sisters, the writing on the threshold suggests also the opposite possibility: that writing could allow one to cross boundaries. Indeed, when Mary later arrives in the town beyond Gate XIV, she realizes that the doorways have no writing and tries to imagine God without the mediation of the Sisterhood. While this discovery on one hand suggests that writing is always mediation, and therefore confinement or limitation—as with the Shakespearean claim that verse is "but a tomb"—the absent Scriptural writing in this new village is replaced by the Shakespearean sonnets, and it is this writing (as it was the writing of the number XIV before), that allows her to continue her journey to the ocean. Writing thus becomes a tenuously balanced marker between order and freedom.

Ryan playfully incorporates this duality into the formal construction of her novel, as the discovery of the first gate-marker, XVIII, comes in Chapter XVIII (in Roman numerals). It is as if the chapters themselves are the pathways that must be traveled, contained units that nonetheless offer to propel the reader beyond their boundaries. This liberation occurs not only through the narrative that leads the reader to the novel's conclusion, but also through a non-linear

interaction between some of the chapters. For example, when Mary sees the XVIII, she remembers Gabry's "XIV"; given the connection between Gate XVIII and Chapter XVIII, the attentive reader is driven to look back at Chapter XIV, only to discover that this was the chapter in which Gabrielle herself, having been turned to a high-speed Unconsecrated called a Breaker, has breached the fence and thereby opened up Mary's route to the world beyond the village. Moreover, these numeric hints prompt the reader to look at corresponding Shakespeare sonnets. Mary does this herself for the two key sonnets, XIV and XVIII, but the mention of other specific gate numbers evokes the possibility that other sonnets merit further scrutiny.

To return to the preservation themes central to the sonnets, procreation and written memorial, Ryan's novel participates in the usual teen drama in a way that effectively establishes a connection between adolescent self-absorption and the self-interested impulse behind the sonnet tradition. When Travis presses Mary on her obsessive concern with the former occupants of the house in the village beyond Gate XIV—"Tell me why this matters to you so much"—she responds, "Because no one will ever know about me . . . When they come to our village, who will know about me?" (207). Thus, while the New York image placed within the book of sonnets speaks to the desire to save humanity, at the heart of Mary's behaviors is her push for her own survival. Indeed, all of Mary's companions are in some way sacrificed for her individual cause along the way. (Most notably, Travis fatally throws himself into the Unconsecrated in a rescue attempt, and Mary's brother Jed dies in an effort to allow her to make it to the ocean after she has selfishly decided to go against the group judgment and exit the fenced area in the hope of reaching her goal.) In this regard, it is significant that her dog bears the name Argos, as the journey (like that of Odysseus) ultimately succeeds in getting only one person to the finish line. Many readers of the novel complained in online posts about Mary's self-centeredness. But this

privileging of the legacy of the protagonist over the wants and needs of those around is in keeping with the sonnet tradition, where the persona's own emotional experience and intellectual legacy through written record trumps the actuality of the beloved. At one point, Travis asks if Mary could choose him over her pursuit of the Ocean, and Mary is unable to give him the answer he wants. At the very end of the novel she winds up alone on the beach, her brother Jed having lost his life in the attempt to protect her after Mary entered the forest, bolting toward the possibility of the Ocean. As it turns out, the Ocean is there, and Mary is discovered by a lighthouse keeper, so there is further civilization, but Mary's own village has apparently been wiped out, and she has abandoned its remaining few members (presumably also to die as they search aimlessly along the paths).

Mary is discovered by a lighthouse keeper, so further human existence is confirmed. But the novel ends on an ambivalent note: while Mary realizes her dream (including a brief dip in the Ocean), she does so alone. And when she first wakes on the beach, the lighthouse keeper is about to decapitate her, assuming she is one of the returned dead that litter the beach after the previous night's storm. The Ocean is there, but so are the *Mudo*, the lighthouse-keeper's name for the Unconsecrated. This new term, *Mudo*, meaning speechless, distinguishes the human speech act as pivotal in the survival of what is properly human suggesting again the importance of speech preservation through writing. But the *Mudo*, or the Unconsecrated, occupy the forest, and we might remember that the writing in the novel is always associated with wood, whether on paper (as in the case of the sonnets), or the markings of the gates on the wood trunks, or (most notably) the carving of scripture on the wood of the doorways. So while writing allows for human memory to survive through speech, it simultaneously stands as a reminder of the uncivilized forest overrun with unconsecrated that Mary wanted to escape in the first place. In

its narrative and associative capacities, writing liberates, but as memorial, writing keeps us bound to that which we would leave behind.

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Dreaming the Divine: Dream as Confession in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*

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Medieval authors have often employed the dream motif, from the Arthurian legends to the popular dream vision genre in the later Middle Ages. A.C. Spearing explains, "The dream-framework may be used for a number of different purposes, and in some cases, no doubt, it is no more than a literary convention, taken over through sheer inertia on the poet's part," yet the dream motif most often becomes a divine encounter in medieval drama (4). Many scholars, such as David Aers and Anne Hudson, approach medieval drama by examining the sacrament of communion, and fewer scholars, like Julie Paulson, focus on the sacrament of confession in these plays, while critics leave the subject of dreams virtually untouched in the field. Therefore, through a lens of New Historicism, I argue that the dream scene in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* acts as a reinforcement of the Church's orthodox teachings on confession through the liminal space in which the dream takes place, the authority figure that provides guidance in the dream, and the transformative quality the dream enacts. This reinforcement of doctrinal Church belief thereby explicitly rejects the Lollard heresy's antisacramentalism.

The cultural environment in which we find *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* shows a power struggle between the Church and the Lollard heresy, as the Lollards attempt to subvert Church doctrine. John Wycliffe, a 14th-century theologian, believed that the Church needed restructuring in several areas, including a vernacular translation of the bible, and Wycliffe's followers became known as Lollards. Employing these reforms, however, meant that the Church would have less power over the laity—a power that the Church did not want to lose. Anthony Low notes that "[t]he concept of social control assumes that the purpose of religion is to manipulate people by internalizing the rules that support leaders in power," these leaders being the leaders of the Church who opposed the Lollard heresy (2). The Lollard heresy represents the first homegrown

heretical movement against the medieval Church in England, thereby posing a significant threat to the Church as both a religious and political entity. The Church thereby responded to this threat by attempting to internalize Church doctrines into the English population. As Michel Foucault explains, "[y]our existence will be maintained only at the cost of your nullification," meaning that the only option for the Lollards' rebellious existence is their absorption back into the Church (84).

The Lollards' desire for a vernacular bible was not the least of the Church's problems, however. The Lollards avidly contended for antisacramentalism in Christian theology among other concerns, as Katherine C. Little explains:

> "The renewed interest [in Lollardy] has generated a complex description of the Wycliffite heresy, from their views on images, the Eucharist, and the disendowment of the clergy to their participation in a more widespread anticlericalism, in class for the translation of the Bible into English, and in the 'laicization' of English Religious writings." (1)

Little's description offers us several points of contention that the Lollards held against the Church, the two largest being antisacramentalism and anticlericalism, both of which could have directly affected the sacrament of confession. On the one hand, in a Lollard system, confession would no longer be a sacrament, since the Lollards believed that "…only contrition ('sorowe of hert') can absolve sin, not the priest" (49). On the other hand, the priest would no longer be necessary for the absolution of sins, which removes the priest almost entirely from Church proceedings. The Church could not allow this Lollard anticlericalism to stand, and employed numerous mechanisms to combat it, including, I am arguing, popular literature such as medieval

drama. These literary endeavors instead reinforced orthodox Church doctrine concerning confession.

The play's origin—York, a city in northern England—also supports the conclusion that the dream scene in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* acted as a defense against the Lollard heresy. Kate Crassons explains that York's Corpus Christi theater "emphasizes Christ's unifying power" (233). She further asserts that many of the plays included in York's Corpus Cristi cycle show Christ's wishes for his followers: "Christ also demands that they [medieval citizens] pay attention so that they will not neglect…the penitential work of recognizing for themselves the crucifixion's significance" (247). We see the citizens of York viewing themselves as a single, unified community in which social disruption was not an issue, as Crassons further states that "This notion of community…is not particularly unusual in medieval culture, given the reality of legally sanctioned practices such as the burning of heretics," which would certainly include Lollard heretics (248). The stage therefore acts as a mechanism to instill doctrinal Church beliefs and assist internalization of the orthodox teachings of the Church in English citizens, thereby addressing the Lollard heresy in a seemingly subtle way that still allowed a medieval audience to understand the reference.

These orthodox teachings on confession can be seen in the private space in which Joseph's dream occurs. Wendy Scase notes, "[t]he Lateran Council of 1215 had imposed annual confession to a priest as an obligation on all Christians," yet the "…interpretation and implementation of the decree raised issues of priestly power and the nature of the church" (17). The Church gained power over the English population through confession, and in addition to obligatory confession, the Church further suggested a private confession between penitent and priest. Low notes, however, "There was no canonical requirement for visual privacy [during

confession], but custom recommended it" (5). Though this confessional privacy is little more than customary to Low, Thomas Aquinas claims that privacy during confession was a strict theological construct. He explains, "absolutions of the kind made in public are not sacramental absolutions, but prayers intended for the remission of venial sins" (15). A public confession, according to Aquinas, alleviates only superficial sins, whereas a private confession gave the penitent a more full confession meant for the removal of all sins with the priest's absolution.

This theological construction of private confession was in place long before the convenient privacy of the confessional booth, however. The confessional booth provides a physical space in which a penitent could privately divulge sins to a priest to complete the "sacramental absolutions," as Aquinas mentions. To ensure that privacy for Aquinas' full confession, Sara Mills explains, "the priest and the penitent had to be separated from one another and from the rest of the congregation" (50). The physical separation provided by the confessional booth offers the privacy deemed necessary for full confession. This privacy was a challenge to medieval church-goers, however, as the confessional booth was not a medieval construct. Confessional booths came to prominence post-Reformation through Vatican II, and Foucault notes that "the first reference to a confessional is in 1516," far after this play's original performance (181). Medieval priests therefore needed to construct their own privacy with which to conduct the annual confessions.

With the absence of physical spaces of privacy, priests relied on their own constructed privacy for full confessions. Again, with the decree from the Lateran Council, the Church obligated all members to confess their sins to a priest once a year, and these full confessions required privacy by Aquinas' explanation. Low notes that "…material circumstances made confession seem more communal than after enclosed confessional booths were installed," as

whole towns appeared to offer their confessions to the parish priest, usually on Maundy Thursday. Penitents formed lines and waited for their turns with the confessional priest who listened to each individual. Low explains that, "the lines looked crowded, but the confessions, although visible to those waiting their turn, are well spaced to preserve privacy" for each penitent. Thus, a certain degree of aural privacy is given to each penitent in his or her interaction with the priest, yet the priest also ensures visual privacy for this confession—somewhat. Low describes that this visual privacy is given to each penitent when the confessional priest "presses his…hand against the side of his head, signifying that he is listening intently to the penitent's words and offering a degree of visual privacy" (5). The space separating the confessing penitent from his or her peers, along with the visual privacy offered by the priest's raised hand, allow for this construction of privacy to provide a full confession for each penitent. [1]

In medieval dream literature, this privacy is most commonly found in liminal spaces far removed from the judgments of society. Constance B. Hieatt explains, "The dream setting is…used as a setting where the unreal and imaginative, because they are possible, cannot be judged by the standards of waking reality," meaning that the settings reflect a place where seemingly impossible situations can happen, yet those situations can be judged only by the dreamer's state of sleep (18). Spearing further notes that this liminal space entailed "an ideal and often symbolic landscape," but most commonly, the dream vision genre shows the dreamer or narrator walking alone through a forest, such as *Pearl, The Floure and the Leafe*, or Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (4). Entering the liminal space in private therefore acts as a catalyst for the dream experience, as Susan Gunn explains, "[l]iminality is also related to pilgrimage and

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[1] Special thanks to Dr. Michelle M. Sauer for assisting in my revisions regarding the constructed privacy utilized by confessional priests.

mysticism, or personal religious experience" (134). We can therefore link the liminal space of the play to the private space of confession in Spearing's ideal and symbolic landscape.

Joseph enters this liminal space in the play, thereby initiating his oracular encounter. He walks away from the city and privately enters the forested area. Spearing contends, "[i]n dreams we undergo experiences in which we are freed from the constraints of every possibility," thereby implying that Joseph must first leave the mundane environment of the city to experience the divine (2). Joseph notes that he will "walke here in his wildirnesse," obliquely describing that he will leave Spearing's "constraints of everyday possibility" in this "wildirnesse" (239). He grows weary as he walks there, however, and lays himself down to sleep, mentioning, "Myn hert so hevy it is" (245). Joseph's grief-stricken state points toward the Middle English dream vision genre, as narrators often fall asleep due to grief in liminal outdoor spaces, such as the Dreamer in Pearl. It is only once he enters this liminal space that an angel appears to Joseph and calls out to him, "Rise uppe, and slepe na mare" (250). The liminal space acts as a fundamental element for Joseph's dream to begin, thereby suggesting that the dream acts as a reinforcement of orthodox Church confession, which also required a private, liminal space during the act of confession.

The orthodox view of confession also required an authority figure to be present during the penitent's confession for the sacrament to be fulfilled. Aquinas notes that a priest is a necessary piece of the sacrament. He explains:

> "…this needs to be applied by a minister of the Church, who stands in Christ's place, to signify that the excellence of the power working in the sacrament is from him…in the sacrament of Penance, as has been said, internally prompted human acts supply matter, which is not supplied by the minister, but by God working

> interiorly; yet this minister furnishes the complement of the sacrament by absolving the penitent." (7).

The priest "stands in Christ's place" as a symbol of Christ's power during the confession, thereby speaking on Christ's behalf as an authority figure. Little further describes how the priest held an instructive role: "confession was understood as instruction…in the official documents circulating around England to educate the laity in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council" (5). The instruction of the priest during confession shows the penitent not only how to prevent sins in the future, but also how to perform penance. Therefore, the priest's role in confession is both authoritative and instructional toward the penitent.

The Church's reinforcement of orthodox confession can be found in *Joseph's Troubles About Mary* by looking at the different types of dreams laid down by Macrobius. Macrobius was considered a leading authority on dreams in the Middle Ages, and he delineates five types of dreams in a single chapter of his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. The most virtuous dream was the oraculum, which Macrobius describes as a dream "in which a parent, or pious man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, *and what action to take or avoid*" (90, my emphasis). Macrobius describes two important features that correlate directly to the Church's orthodox teachings on the necessity of the priest in the sacrament of confession: first, *an oraculum* is a dream in which a figure of authority visits the dreamer, whether that figure is "a parent, a pious man, or a priest," as Macrobius specifically mentions; second, the figure of authority provides instructions or warnings to the dreamer. The authority figure in Joseph's dream, the angel, therefore provides a direct correlation to the priest in the act of confession.

The angel acts as a figure of authority and instruction to Joseph during his dream in the play. The angel appears to Joseph in what Joseph calls a "farly fare," or marvelous business, setting off this encounter as a meeting with the divine (253). The angel then provides an expository speech, as one cannot simply watch a play and know who the character is without some sort of introduction. The angel explains that it is "Gabriell, Goddis aungell full even, / Þat has tane Marie to my keeping" (257-258). The angel says its name, yet it also tells Joseph on whose authority it speaks as "Goddis aungell," just as the priest speaks on behalf of Christ, as Aquinas explains. After detailing its divine authority over both Joseph and Mary, it further provides instructions to Joseph, saying,

> "Leave her not, I forbid you!
> No sin must you mention,
> But to her, fast, now speed you,
> And of her, nought fear you." (261-264)

Gabriel here instructs Joseph not to worry over Mary's loyalty to him in their marriage, and the angel further exerts its authority over Joseph verbally by, "I forbid you." The angel's authoritative stance over the mere mortals of the play, along with the angel's instructive advice given to Joseph, mark the angel as correlative to the confessional priest, thereby reinforcing the link between orthodox Church confession and dreams.

Finally, sacramental confession in the Church had a transformative quality on the penitent, and this transformation can also be seen in the dream scene of *Joseph's Trouble About Mary.* Aquinas notes that confession results "in the removal of certain matter, namely sin, in the sense that sins are said to be the matter of Penance," meaning that the penitent emerges from confession as a changed individual (15). Payer explains that "the Fourth Lateran Council directs

the confessor to act as a skilled physician in healing the sick," implying that the penitent is ill, not physically, but spiritually (23). This analogy works on two levels when described by John D. Richardson and Destin N. Stewart, who confirm that it "not only suggests the healing nature of penance to the sinner but also suggests the need for a skilled 'doctor' to diagnose the severity of the sin and prescribe the proper penance" (476). Richardson and Stewart claim that the priest plays the role of doctor in diagnosing and treating the penitent, suggesting that the penitent is transformed and healed by the act of confession, while simultaneously reinforcing the authority of the priest as a "skilled doctor."

The oracular dream from Macrobius is also a source of transformation in the dreamer. Again, the authority figure in the *oraculum* dream-type tells the dream "what actions to take or avoid," yet Macrobius tells us that "the purpose of the dream is to *teach* us," as the dream imbues the dreamer with knowledge and therefore changes the state of the dreamer upon awakening (92, my emphasis). Steven F. Kruger also notes the educative, and, therefore, transformative nature of dreams, contending that the dreamer is "given oneiric access to a higher moral or eschatological realm, and he or she awakens enlightened, ready to lead an improved live" (124). The true transformation in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* shows Joseph's eagerness to lead an improved life, as Kruger suggests.

Joseph's Trouble About Mary overtly shows the transformative qualities of the dream, thereby reinforcing Church doctrine on confession. As the play's title suggests, Joseph confronts Mary about a particular problem, that of infidelity. His anger at her supposed infidelity causes him to say, "Rekkeles I raffe, refte is my rede," meaning that he rants and raves, and he notes that his reason has left him, as well (146). He therefore decides to walk into the private and liminal space of the forest and falls asleep near a hill where he encounters the authoritative,

instructional figure of the angel. The angel provides instruction to Joseph to return to Mary and take care of her in her pregnant state, and upon his return, we see a direct correlation between confession and the transformative power of the dream. Little explains that it is the penitent's responsibility "to make his or her interior known by putting it into language," leading Joseph to look introspectively at his sins against Mary (61). He returns to his wife and explains his error: "For for I walde have hir þus refused, / And sakles blame þat ay was clere…" (286-287). Joseph thus sees his personal fault in assuming Mary's infidelity, yet he further tells her, "My bakke fayne wold I bowe, / And aske fo[r]gifnesse nowe, / Wiste I þou wolde me here" (293-295). Payer states that, for the sacrament of penance to be fulfilled, the penitent must be "sorry for having offended," and we see here that Joseph's inward sorrow allows for true contrition (52). Through this dream, we therefore see the transformation in Joseph's character, thereby acting as a reinforcement of orthodox confessional practices in the Church.

In conclusion, the dream scene in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* acts as a reinforcement of orthodox Church teachings on confession. Joseph falls into a heavy-hearted sleep in a private, liminal space that evokes imagery of the dream vision genre, just as the penitent was required to speak with the confessional priest in a private space. Joseph's encounter with the angel correlates to the penitent confessing to the priest, as both the angel and the priest offer instruction while exerting God's authority. Finally, both dreams and confessions are transformative, with Joseph ending the dream and the play as a changed man due to his true contrition and "sorowe of hert." The greater implication, however, is that this reinforcement of Church doctrine is necessary due to the Lollard heresy.

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The Tragedy of the Common Cuckold : Richards' Messalina and Its Sources

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In the prologue to his *Tragedy of Messalina* (a play first performed somewhere between 1634 and 1636, and published in 1640) Nathaniel Richards starts by saying that writing a tragedy is not nearly as easy as one might think—and he's certainly right. Since the time of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, dozens of more-than-competent writers have tried to produce successful tragedies, and, while their attempts have often produced fine plays, few of these plays feel like they belong to the same genre as those produced by the 5th century BC Athenian tragedians. Whether it's Hugo von Hofmannsthal trying to recreate the experience of Greek theater for an Austrian audience or Arthur Miller trying to write the tragedy of the common man, there's more often than not a sense of something lacking, something that makes the play fall short of true tragedy.

Generally, what's lacking is that transcendent, transforming phenomenon Aristotle called catharsis—a phenomenon easy enough to recognize, but hard to define, and (for a numbers of reasons) still harder to produce. In part, this is because successful tragedy seems to require playwright and audience to hold a shared, transcendent world view, something like the myths of the Greeks, or the cosmic order that E. M. W. Tillyard suggests makes Shakespearean tragedy possible. In addition, aspiring tragedians run into the problem of protagonist choice—and it does appear that Aristotle was on to something when he insisted that the fall of a pure villain or of a protagonist of ordinary stature wouldn't likely produce catharsis.

Now it would be amazing if a minor poet like Nathaniel Richards had managed to produce a tragic masterpiece in his first (and apparently only) attempt to write for the theater,

and Messalina is no great overlooked masterpiece. But the play is still worth some attention, if only because it is such a good illustration of what works (and what doesn't work) when it comes to tragedy.

In their attempts to find suitable tragic protagonists, writers of the Elizabethan period and their successors in the Jacobean and Carolingian period fairly frequently turned to Roman history—a particularly appropriate choice given the fact that Rome had become for Englishmen (in a way) what Mycenaean Greece had been for Aeschylus and Sophocles. Just as Shakespeare had found Antony and Caesar ideal tragic protagonists, so Richards finds Messalina—who is anything but a perfect example of the Aristotelian tragic hero.

Valeria Messalina was the third wife of the emperor Claudius, her considerably older 2nd cousin. Unfortunately, Tacitus' *Annals of Imperial Rome*, our most reliable source for this period, has survived only imperfectly, and the sections that deal with the first six years of Claudius' reign are missing. The surviving portion of the narrative picks up with an account of Messalina's machinations against former consul Decimus Asiaticus, a man currently enjoying considerable success leading the efforts to incorporate Britain into the empire. Tacitus describes Messalina as motivated partly by jealousy of Asiaticus' lover Poppaea Sabina but (even more) by her desire to latch on to the Lucullan gardens that Asiaticus had so greatly beautified.

In Tacitus' account, Messalina herself falls quickly into the background and the focus becomes the corrupt legal system of Rome, a high-stakes game with the equivalent of millions of dollars (not to mention one's life) potentially forfeit to those unscrupulous enough to frame the innocent. It's at this point that Tacitus introduces us to Gaius Silius (a character who figures prominently in Richards' play) as a high-minded opponent of corruption. "Just as physical illness

brings revenue to doctors, so a diseased legal system enriches advocates," argues Silius (*Annals* 11.6).

Tacitus' account soon moves on to wars and building projects, and Messalina is forgotten--except for a brief passage in which Tacitus' tells us how Messalina successfully pressures the handsomest man Rome to divorce his wife and embark on the extraordinarily high stakes game of becoming the empress' lover. That man: Gaius Silius!

Again, the Tacitus narrative shifts away from Messalina until our adulterous couple goes so far that even the hitherto-oblivious Claudius has to take notice. Silius, thinking open action less risky than continued concealment of their relationship, persuades a reluctant Messalina to go through a more-or-less public marriage ceremony, a preliminary to an attempt of the two of them to seize the throne. As it turns out, Claudius' freedmen (Callistus, Narcissus, and Palas) prove the better at the political game, forcing Claudius to open his eyes. They get Claudius' mistresses (!) to breach the hitherto-unmentionable topic of Messalina's adultery, and Narcissus then stirs the emperors' fears by explaining the probable consequences:

> I do not propose to complain of her adulteries, much less impel you to demand back from Silius your mansion, slaves, and other imperial perquisites. But are you aware you are divorced? Nation, senate, and army have witnessed her wedding to Silius. Act promptly, or her new husband controls Rome! (Annals 11:30).

Claudius' panic at the news doesn't stir him to action, but it at least impels him to let other act. We get a new round of judicial accusations, and one-by-one Messalina's accomplices and her now-revealed former lovers meet their deaths. Silius doesn't even ask for a hearing: only an easy death.

But what of Messalina herself? Claudius hesitates—and hesitates some more. He's furious at the adultery, but she is, after all, the mother of his children. Ultimately, Narcissus takes it on himself to act—apparently without authorization from the emperor. Messalina's estranged mother, Domitia Lepida, now comes to her daughter for a last-minute reconciliation—and to offer the advice that the only thing left to be hoped for is an easy death. Messalina chooses an assisted suicide, and Claudius is soon told of her death. He doesn't know or care whether she had died by her own hand or another—and simply calls for wine and goes on with his party.

Tacitus closes this chapter with one of his brief editorial notes, "The vengeance on Messalina was just. But its consequences were grim" (Annals 11:39).

Suetonius, the other major source for the life of Claudius, give a similar picture of Messalina's character, but treats her story as only another example of Claudius weakness, vacillation, and cruelty.

Now there's not much in either Tacitus or Suetonius to suggest that the story of Messalina has the makings of a great tragedy, and it seems likely that what first caught Richards's attention may have been an anecdote included in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* and amplified in Juvenal's *Sixth Satire*, the satire on women. Here's Pliny's version:

> The only one among the bipeds that is viviparous is man. Man is the only animal that repents of his first embraces; sad augury, indeed, of life, that its very origin should thus cause repentance! Other animals have stated times in the year for their embraces; but man, as we have already1 observed, employs for this purpose all hours both of day and night; other animals become sated with venereal pleasures, man hardly knows any satiety. Messalina, the wife of Claudius Cæsar, thinking this a palm quite worthy of an empress, selected, for the purpose of deciding the

> question, one of the most notorious of the women who followed the profession of a hired prostitute; and the empress outdid her, after continuous intercourse, night and day, at the twenty-fifth embrace. In the human race also, the men have devised various substitutes for the more legitimate exercise of passion, all of which outrage Nature; while the females have recourse to abortion. How much more guilty than the brute beasts are we in this respect! Hesiod has stated that men are more lustful in winter, women in summer (Natural History 10:83).

Juvenal's version of the same story:

> Do the concerns of a private household and the doings of Eppia affect you? Then look at those who rival the Gods, and hear what Claudius endured. As soon as his wife perceived that her husband was asleep, this august harlot was shameless enough to prefer a common mat to the imperial couch. Assuming night-cowl, and attended by a single maid, she issued forth; then, having concealed her raven locks under a light-coloured peruque, she took her place in a brothel reeking with long-used coverlets. Entering an empty cell reserved for herself, she there took her stand, under the feigned name of Lycisca, her nipples bare and gilded, and exposed to view the womb that bore thee, O nobly-born Britannicus! Here she graciously received all comers, asking from each his fee; and when at length the keeper dismissed his girls, she remained to the very last before closing her cell, and with passion still raging hot within her went sorrowfully away. Then exhausted by men but unsatisfied, with soiled cheeks, and begrimed with the smoke of lamps, she took back to the imperial pillow all the odours of the stews (Satire 6:114-132).

Now what does Richards do with all this, and why does he think he's got the stuff of tragedy here? A cursory look at the printed edition of the play gives the impression he's trying to follow his sources closely. His introduction claims the authority of Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Pliny for the authenticity of his narrative. Further, the printed edition features extensive footnotes including (by Samantha Gibbs count) thirteen citing Tacitus, one citing Suetonius, and one citing Pliny.

But, footnotes or no, the story Richards tells follows the Tacitus story line only very, very loosely and there is much in the play that he's invented for which one can find only a hint (and, sometimes, not even a hint) in the original sources.

Building on the slight hint in Tacitus that Silius has a trace of old-fashioned Roman gravitas, Richards presents Silius as, initially, a model of Stoic virtue. The play opens with Silius perusing a book—words, words, words: but, in this case, we know exactly what he's reading. Silius reads aloud, "*Sola virtus vera nobilitas*"—a line from Seneca which Silius translates for us: virtue is the only true nobility. What good is it to be born noble and yet succumb to the vices of a decaying age? No—says Silius. I'll embrace the true nobility (I.i.10-16).

Unfortunately, our noble Silius is about to run into trouble. Two of his friends, Valens and Proclus, try to tempt him away from his virtuous life: none of this book-stuff, Silius—come with us and join the party. Silius counters by warning them that, in the end, their own dissolute lifestyle, is a hollow nothing. Valens and Proclus respond with a challenge: come with us to the brothel. If you can spend the evening there unseduced by any of the beauties, we'll give up what we're doing and devote ourselves to philosophy. Silius agrees, and all three swear by Seneca's book, Silius asking Jove to punish him if he ever proves false to his wife Syllana.

Well, a bit too much hubris there, perhaps. Silius does fine—until a spiked drink makes him pass out and he finds himself waking up in bed with Messalina. Hey, guys: remember never to leave a drink unattended.

Interestingly, while in the original sources Messalina couples lust with avarice, in Richards's play, the avarice disappears, replaced by a deliberate desire to destroy the souls of her male victims. She calls on the furies for power: and pride, lust, and murder are quick to answer.

> Here, here, let Circe and the Sirens' charms
>
> Pour their enchantments. Monarch of flames,
>
> Fill with alluring poison these mine eyes,
>
> That I may win the misty souls of men
>
> And send them tumbling to th'Acharusian Fen (II.i.12-16).

Nor is it just male victims she craves. Messalina sends her servants to bring to court and force into debauchery three Roman ladies well known for their chastity and modesty. Their husbands and fathers are killed trying to defend them, and their last hope is the empress' mother, Ledpida. Lepida hides them for a while, but ultimately she can offer them only one escape: suicide, rather than defilement.

Later in the play, Messalina sends Saufellus, her chief minion in debauchery, to gather 100 vestal virgins to be brought to court, raped, and killed—a spectacle that will add spice to the coming revels. "'Twill prove an excellent closing to the Masque," gloats Saufellus (V.ii.34).

Once again, Messalina is thwarted by her mother who hides the vestals for a time, then prays for their safety. And, lo and behold, the earth opens and swallows Saufellus and his companions one by one.

But it doesn't always require supernatural means to thwart Messalina: good council can do the trick as well. Montanus, a philosophically minded man who despises the court debauchers, falls into Messalina's clutches and is in near despair at his own weakness. His friend Mela (Seneca's brother!) rescues him with wise words and practical advice which Montanus follows. Can't resist temptation? Then get out of Rome altogether. Corcyra is awfully nice this time of year (III.ii.120).

But the best protection against a bad woman is a good woman, and the ultimate foil for Messalina is Silius' wife Syllana. Midway through the play, Silius seems completely ensnared by Messalina. Show me how much you love me, she says: kill your wife. And sure enough: Silius heads out, dagger in hand. But at the sleeping Syllana's bedside, he hesitates and she wakes. Her relief at seeing her husband gives way to grief as he explains that he's come back only to kill her. All right, says Syllana—I'll not stand in the way of your happiness. But one last request: stab me in the heart.

> Farewell, vain world, my life is such a toy,
>
> I will not wish to live, t'abate thee joy.
>
> Yet e'er I go, grant this one courtesy:
>
> 'Tis the last kindness you shall ever give,
>
> Place 'gainst my heart thy deadly pointed steel.
>
> So, now farewell, death is for me most meet,
>
> Strike sure and home, I do forgive thee sweet (II.iii.70-75).

Not bad for last words—but they aren't her last words. Silius casts away his dagger—and he tells Syllana what a wonderful woman she is:

> Th'art the true emblem of a perfect wife,

For whose rare virtue from my soul I wish
All husbands were the same, in that right way
A perfect husband truly ought to be (II.iii.110-113).

But although Silius sees clearly what he is giving up, he still heads back to Messalina, amazed at his own hypocrisy and inability to do what he knows is not only right but far more joyful:

Who do I then, like godless villains, tell
The way't heaven, yet lead the path to hell (II.iii.122-123).

Well, Silius returns to Messalina and they play out their high stakes game. They celebrate their marriage—a very open cuckolding of the emperor, and a preliminary to usurpation of the throne and supreme power. Things don't break their way: the emperor's freedmen outplay them, and Silius, like the rest of Messalina's lovers, has only suicide as an alternative to a less honorable death. But as he dies, the faithful Syllana reappears with good council: even as you die, seek the gods' pardon. Silius does, asking his wife's forgiveness and aid as he faces death:

Forgive me, injured excellence, constant wife.
Take from my lips, dear heart, a parting kiss,
Cold as the dead man's skull. Nay, weep not, sweet:
There is divinity in that weeping eye,
Prayer on thy lip, and holiness in thy heart.
Not all the catalogue of women,
Pick such a phoenix saint forth as thy self.
In thee bright heaven's majestic eminence,
Lives my supporting prop against all ill
To take me up to mercy (V.ii.253-257, 261-265).

Sure thing, Silius, says Syllana—in fact, on your journey to the mercy seat, I'm going with you. As Silius breaths his last, Syllana too commits suicide, not willing to outlive the man she calls her noble husband.

Messalina too has an ally to help her face death in the right way: her mother Lepida. Lepida pleads with Messalina: it is not too late for repentance:

> O be not wholly lost, die resolute!
>
> If thou respect the womb that brought thee forth,
>
> Let thy faults, ripe in act, be blow to air
>
> Through fair repentance (V.ii.397-400).

And though Messalina at first seems trapped in despair, not believing forgiveness possible for one so far gone in depravity, she does at the last repent and meets her death with a lesson for the girls: listen to your mother's wholesome council and you'll be a lot happier.

Now if one approaches this play (as I did) hoping to see Roman history coming alive on the stage, Richards' treatment is a great disappointment. Unlike Shakespeare and Jonson (whose Roman plays are faithful both to the spirit and, usually, to the letter of their ancient sources) Richards' keeps little from the Roman writers beyond the names of his characters and a general outline of the overall story. What Peter Jackson does to Tolkien, Richards does to Tacitus, and Richards probably left some of the Roman history fans in his audience muttering under their breath things like, "A hundred vestal virgins? Come on. Never more than seven at any given time."

It's been argued that Richards' anachronisms and historical errors are deliberate so we'd see the play for what he supposedly really wanted it to be: an exposure of the evils brought to the court of King Charles by his Catholic queen, Henrietta Maria.

Well, maybe. But I suspect that Richards isn't really concerned primarily with either ancient or contemporary history. What he's presenting looks a lot more like a morality play/tragedy hybrid. Messalina and Saufellus (through much of the play) are male and female personifications of the vice lust. Even without physical representations, hell-mouth and heaven's gate frame the action of the play, and the main question is always whether or not each character's final exit will be stage left into the dragon's mouth or stage right into the heavenly kingdom. Lepida, Mela, and (especially) Syllana play roles like that of Good Deeds, Prudence, and Common Sense in a play like *Everyman*. And then there is that typical morality-play issue: can one go so far into sin that repentance is impossible, or can one repent even at the last?

Had this play been written 60 or 70 years earlier, I suspect it would get more scholarly attention than it does, perhaps being considered important to theater history: a major step in the move from plays like *Everyman to Dr. Faustus*.

But after we've seen Marlowe, Kyd, Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster and Ford, this play seems—well, really not all that bad when looked at in its own terms. It's a didactic play—certainly not everyone's favorite kind of theater. But it's well done didacticism, and while Richards' isn't at all faithful to the Roman sources he cites, he is quite faithful to what I would guess is his real source, the Bible—particularly the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs focuses on contrasts, giving special attention to two kinds of women. We have the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, the idea wife and mother. Closely associated with her, Wisdom itself, personified as female, largely because much of the wisdom of Proverbs is the kind of thing one learns at one's mother's knee. And one of the most important things a man can learn from his mother: the kind of woman to look for, and the kind of woman to avoid. Look for the woman with the true, inner beauty. Find a good wife and stick with her, "Let her breasts

satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." Watch out for the adulteress, the "strange woman," and her temptations. Why embrace the bosom of a stranger?

Well, yes. Why? Why do men so often stray? It's a contemporary enough question: and we all know those wonderful women who've been abandoned by their husbands, and we wonder: What kind of fool let a woman like you slip through his hands? And, if a man is honest, the answer is clear enough: if I'm not careful, I could be exactly that same kind of fool.

What's remarkable is that, in dealing with this particularly issue, this badly flawed, historically inaccurate, obscure play by a pretty much unknown author succeeds so well in driving its point home—literally. Just stab me in the heart, Silius. And if catharsis means changed hearts and minds, again, I think the play succeeds rather well. In theatrical terms, the last-minute conversions of Silius and Messalina herself work at least as well as (say) Darth Vader's redemption at the end of the *The Return of the Jedi*. If despair is the sickness unto death, there's the suggestion of a remedy here.

And then there's a well-chosen final image—this time, a fairly faithful echo of Tacitus. Claudius (a background figure for much of the play) gets a dozen lines at the end of the play. He's secure on his throne, and he's exacted his revenge: those who've cuckolded him are all dead. Having escaped one bad woman, he proclaims his determination never to make the same mistake again. "Never shall marriage yoke the mind of Caesar to trust the hollow faith of woman more" (V.ii.436-437).

Dramatic irony of course: the audience knows he'll soon fall into the hands of an even more dangerous woman, his niece Agrippina, and the ridiculous Claudius (soon to be Pumkinified) serves as a nice object lesson: that kind of fool I'm certainly not going to be.

Thomas Rawlins, another aspiring playwright and a friend of Richards, congratulated the latter for figuring out how to turn the Messalina story into a tool for conversion rather than corruption—like the bees, he tells his friend, you've figured out how to suck honey from the weeds. Particular impressive, argues Rawlins, Richards' success in stirring religious thought "though in a theater." Implied here is an important idea. The Puritans are wrong about drama: the stage certainly can be put to wholesome use, and this play is an example. There are some valuable, even eternal, lessons here.

But is Rawlins right? Does the play have any of those kinds of lessons we expect from tragedy, lessons not bound to a specific time and place but that have a universal applicability? Well, I suspect all of us can agree with Richards on at least one thing: it's wise not to leave one's drink unattended.

Burney and the Anti-Captivity Narrative—A Reflection on Genre

Susan H. Wood, Ph. D. – Midland University

Early on in my graduate career at the University of Tennessee, I had the opportunity to hear both Nancy Armstrong (*Desire and Domestic Fiction*) and Michael McKeon (*The Origins of the English Novel*) present their ideas. This was the early 1990's, and Armstrong was doing some very interesting work on realism and the development of photography. McKeon was amidst becoming a celebrity. Preparing for my comprehensive tests, I became very familiar with his book. I have been working on Burney since 1990. in 1991, I wrote my very last graduate essay for a course in early American literature, for which I wrote about a captivity story, and I have continued to work in this area as well, off and on for the past 20+ years. It was while preparing for a sabbatical (Spring 2011) in 2010 that I discovered the book The Imaginary Puritan by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. You may wonder why I was oblivious to it when it was published in 1998, and all I can say is that I was an instructor of composition at this time, really needing a publication, and the research materials where I was at the time were better in other sorts of literature—so I had stopped working with early American and focused my efforts on what our library seemed to possess.

Armstrong and Tennenhouse use a deconstruction of historical assumptions to suggest that the genesis of the English novel is the American captivity narrative. They trace the "origins of personal life" to John Milton and the Puritans, particularly the rhetoric of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson in her providential autobiography of how she was captured by Indians, survived, and was "restored." She wrote herself into being, they say, thus providing the possibility of

existence and power to someone previously not a subject. Armstrong and Tennenhouse's argument is certainly arresting, and their attack on social historians certainly effective, but in their complex dance between Derrida and Foucault, I am left with my own usual questions about genre—what do we gain by believing their theory of genre history over another? In short, they suggest that the source of the novel in English is the American Indian captivity narrative, a genre that appears first in the colonies with the 1682 writing by Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. I find this claim a suspicious attempt at hegemony by American critics! Captivity narrative flourished in America for about 100 years, and in some ways does seem to be the genesis for other forms of "life-writing" such as slave narratives and various pulpy American inheritors. However, the Indian captivity narrative is not purely a non-fiction form. Like many forms of writing in the period 1600 to 1750, all forms of writing also generated mock versions, spurious versions, or simply made-up analogues; this occurs not only due to the use of satire, but also because once a "genuine" work of was seen to be marketable, it caused various "copies" in order to make more money, often masquerading as true, but clearly taking those most sensational elements and elaborating upon them for the "benefit" of the prurient reader. Daniel Defoe, Cervantes, Mme de Cleves—all inhabit this region of fiction that mimics the common, popular forms of literature such as autobiography, travel narrative, criminal autobiography, biography, history, letters, and so forth. Meanwhile, the captivity narrative itself became less and less likely to be as true as it claimed, emphasizing the violence and the otherness of Indians rather than the spiritual and redemptive journey (which is Rowlandson's point). Is there any reason for us to choose Mary Rowlandson, rather that Me de Lafayette, as the progenitor of the English novel? LaFayette published *La Princess de Cleves* in 1678, and even earlier had composed *The Princess of*

Montpensier (1662). French romances were a popular entertainment for literate English people even much earlier than the 1680's.

Anyone intimately familiar with the works of Frances Burney (1752-1840) realizes that her middle-class origins and stodgy family made it highly unlikely for her to be an author at all. Unlike some of her more unlucky contemporararies (Charlotte Smith, Felicia Hemans, Mary Wollestonecraft), she did not have to write, really, for money; her marriage was not horrible, so she did not need to earn a living; and finally, her father really would have preferred she not write at all, so he gave a huge biography project of himself to occupy her after his death. She wrote no novels after that. On the other hand, Frances Burney seems to have felt an absolute compulsion to create and an accompanying zeal to communicate with a public which she was (as a proper lady) not supposed to have any interest in talking with. Burney definitely was familiar with sources as diverse as Daniel Defoe and classical epics such as *The Aeneid*; her knowledge of drama is also well verified by the family circle's inclusion of many actors of note. The clearest progenitor of Burney is Richardson; therefore, our question has to be, was Burney's interest in captivity promoted by captivity narratives, or by Richardson and Defoe's use of captivity? Although I had hoped to refute the Armstrong and Tennenhouse's thesis with excerpts of Burney works, I fear it is an unanswerable question. Let us begin with what Armstrong and Tennenhouse argue:

> By regarding *Pamela* as a continental version of the American captivity narrative, we called attention to the power the novel attributes to the printed word; it is nothing less than the power to create the authorial consciousness from which print henceforth appeared to come and readership along whom it would circulate. In

> telling the story of the English novel in this way, then, we have not really recaptured the origins of the novel. We have used the novel to imagine a moment when words on the page acquired the subtle and enduring power to produce the human source from which they came (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 216).

That many early British novels rehearse the captivity trope is a point well taken. Pamela in her closet, Clarissa on her casket, various Gothic heroines in mouldy castles and locked rooms—the point of the captivity in all these cases is to establish a sensationalist brand of terror not far removed from the Gothic. I would like to point out that for Defoe, the women do not seem captive at all, but to be virtually sailing through their lives, and that for Richardson, women are incarcerated only after their foolish efforts to go into society on their own. The captivity, I am saying, means different things in these novels by men than it did for Rowlandson or for a woman novelist.

To be fair to Armstrong and Tennenhouse, maybe they are not wrong; they certainly end their case with the likes of Richardson, not moving into the late eighteenth-century when Burney wrote. They have many interesting ideas about how the individual person, writing (such as Pamela) was an invention of the Puritans, and thus people like Rowlandson, who invented themselves, therefore, and a subjective position for themselves. However, it seems to me the passage suggests that there were no first-person women narrators prior to Rowlandson, which is simply untrue. Aphra Behn comes to mind. The strongest link they can cite is the similarity between Richardson and Rowlandson because both Mary Rowlandson and Pamela Andrews are imprisoned—one by her Indian captors for ransom in a war with the Puritans, the other in her closet while she attempts to manipulate herself into a tenable position in the household of Mr. B. Burney also uses quite a bit of captivity motif in her books; she owes some debt to Defoe; she

sees her character in *The Wanderer* as a "female Robinson Crusoe." However, the whole scene and atmosphere is inside-out, in Burney.

Burney's heroines have an entirely different movement. Like Rowlandson, all of them are constantly moving in a new arena, a new culture, where they are somewhat thrown upon their own devices. All of the women are entering society for the first time—for Evelina, Cecelia, and Camilla, it is the social introduction of the young girl to "the world" which will judge her and find her appropriate or not for the all-important marriage[women are usually not approved!]; for Juliet, it is entering the world of England as an emigrant from France. Within each plot, this interaction with the world is fraught with dangers to the heroine similar to what one might find in a Gothic novel, but less symbolic. Like Rowlandson, Juliet has various "removes," but these are dictated by economic necessity and personal safety. Still, Juliet reflects something Rowlandson-like when she considers how to use the people and situation to her advantage. In the case of Evelina, she is allowed to become introduced to the world in several identities, and when her proper identity is established, she can "master" society and marry Lord Orville. Evelina is a comedy, so the dark side is only hinted at, but Evelina is in danger of being mis-identified as an adventuress (at Vauxhall) and runs the risk of being ruined before her identity is known. This could be considered quite parallel to Mrs. Rowlandson's story, yet we realize all the Indians must have been careful to not hurt Mrs. Rowlandson because they knew she was more valuable as a hostage than anything else. In each of Burney's three earlier novels, the young, unmarried heroine must find her place (Evelina) realize her subordination (Cecelia), or become reconciled to the evil of the world (Camilla). This world is full of folly, sin, and men. Only by going into this world and being claimed by a man does a woman merit any existence in this world at all (the marriage market plot, which has been much discussed). Mrs. Rowlandson reinforces this—yes,

she is a voice that gets to tell her story, but her role as victim seem to be the reason Armstrong and Tennenhouse see her as a useful prototype for the novel. The fact that Mrs. Rowlandson wanted to tell her story for its religious point seems to have been lost here.

For Cecelia, her story is a tragedy. Cecelia is not able to be independent because she is a female, but all the people who surround her are trying to use her for her fortune—even, perhaps, her eventual husband, Mortimer. His rebellion against his parents ends up involving Cecelia in a way that potentially destroys her independent identity, and her restless movements throughout the story and her eventual madness make perfect sense. Is it significant that this book is not told in letters, and that Cecelia then has less ability to create or retain herself? Yet both Evelina and Cecelica end up married, presumably living "happily ever after"—and yet, Evelina may feel she has prevailed and asserted a new and surviving identity while Cecelia has lost everything except her husband. For Cecelia, the captivity is her fortune and its entail. Because money is how she is defined, she is clearly a kind of commodity to the people around her. It is a rude awakening for her to realize that the money is her freedom, and that the money is actually the sum total of her existence. She has to buy her way into a family and associations by losing this money and her independent existence. Although her case is dramatic, it is not that different from what happened to all upper and middle class marriages at the time. Mrs. Rowlandson is an interesting parallel not because she had a voice, but because as a woman, even a famous author, once she married a different man, she disappeared into colonial New England, completely erased for years.

Camilla is a complex work. In this case, Camilla has been disinherited in favor of her crippled sister, Eugenia. Eugenia's story resembles that of Cecelia in that it includes forced marriage and emotional blackmail for the purpose of an adventurer getting ahold of her money.

Camilla, by contrast, attracts more love than she knows what to do with, and the secrets and confidences of everyone, yet she is never allowed to be happy with it. Always, her lover Edgar is asserting his rather Puritanical and dour objections over all of her activities—which do, granted, pertain to gambling, debts, her sister's elopement, and her cousin Indiana's indiscretion. Camilla spends much of her time getting into "scrapes" and then trying to avoid criticism. This does not seem much like a captivity narrative except that poor Camilla cannot do ANYTHING without worrying about how it appears to everyone else. This eventually causes her to have a nervous collapse in the Inn at Bagshot. Like the other two heroines, Camilla is eventually disposed of in marriage, but like Cecelia, one wonders whether her encounter with society is something she can recover from. It seems they marry and take refuge in a marriage that obliterates their individuality (which is exactly what happened to Mary Rowlandson), but the novel narrative itself exists in order to insist that what was most important about this person's life was this requirement that she encounter society, stop being herself and become someone else, and be assimilated into society. This is definitely NOT what happened to Mary Rowlandson, who seemingly wrote her book to piously compliment God upon her miraculous salvation and help others see their harsh moments in such a light.

Burney calls Juliet, heroine of *The Wanderer* a female Robinson Crusoe. However, there is a foil character in this work named Elinor Joddrell. Elinor is a tragic version of the woman who wants to be an individual, assert her desires, and not become a captive to social convention. The result, for Elinor, is that she is unhappy and rejected, and perhaps captive nonetheless. Juliet, the heroine, who keeps her own counsel, trusts no one, and flits from place to place, supporting herself in odd jobs, is an example of what's wrong with how the world treats women, but her techniques allow her to survive AND to miss the social rejection that befalls poor Elinor

for trying to gain the hero's affections through more and more melodramatic means (suicide attempts, letters, chases, etc). Juliet, thus, is a successful character because she never assimilates and remains an outsider till she can marry herself off to Harleigh, the truth being that lone women are not allowed, and women's "experience" is a taint. In Burney, women merely exchange one captivity for another; freedom does not exist.

In the end, the origins of a genre matter little; what matters is what the form is able to accomplish. Eventually, British women were able to "write themselves" and later still became authors of novels. To say that captivity narrative had impact on Defoe and that he influenced others is likely correct. What Defoe does is cross the line from reportage to pure invention. Most authors wrote to sell copies. Do women authors have a higher calling? Rowlandson wrote in order to make money, perhaps, or save souls, or quell gossip? Many people in early American were taken captive. Not all of them returned home, and even fewer wrote about it. Why are we talking about Rowlandson, and not Aphra Behn?

Burney is a later eighteenth-century novelist. She wrote in a milieu that still looked down upon an assertive, writerly women as a bluestocking or low class. She wasn't a Puritan, and she could not defend her writing on spiritual grounds. In her prefaces, she often tries to half justify and half apologize for having a voice, a fact that many critics have mentioned. It may well be that American literature provided more inspiration to British authors than we have been led to believe. Maybe Burney was busily devouring American writings. Recently, I studied some of the works of American poet Lydia Sigourney, who was termed "the American Hemans," yet it is not at all clear to me that Hemans was not attempting to copy Sigourney's success! The captivity narrative, especially its fictive copy, like "The History of Maria Kittle," may well have inspired some of the more racy writings in early fiction. However, if we look at the respected

tradition of Richardson, Burney, Thackeray, etc., it is not at all clear any of these people read the American potboilers or sought to emulate them.

Therefore, I wish to coin a term "anti-captivity narrative." It seems clear, in Pamela, Clarissa, Evelina, and really all of Burney's works, that "society" captures an individual woman, and it is not a place she can safely remain. All women end up protecting themselves by taking refuge in a self-imposed exile from society in married life. Like Rowlandson on the one hand, maybe they can celebrate their survival of the tribulations of the world that tried to hurt them and drove them to fear, insanity, senselessness, and multiple identities. Like Rowlandson again, they exchange the assimiliation into "society" [native American tribe in Rowlandson's case] for an assimilation into a marriage where their heroics and notoriety both may be forgotten. The only heroic action women are really allowed is survival.

The grandiose claims made by Armstrong and Tennenhouse are impossible to refute—I think they are staged that way. They suggest that our assumptions are wrong, and by simply substituting others, we can discover a whole new possible interpretation of literary history. In one respect, however, I think they are right—a woman writing about a woman's experience was a revolution. Writing about captivity is symbolic of all the captivities women endured, and writing breaks the chains of all those assumptions about who women are.

Endnotes:

1. I wrote on Burney's *The Wanderer* in my dissertation, and I have made several conference presentations on *The Wanderer* as well as Camilla. I have taught Evelina, Cecelia, and *The Wanderer* in British literature surveys. My favorite Burney sources, other than novels and letters, are Margaret Anne Doody's *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* and Joanna Cutting-Gray's *Woman as Nobody in the Novels of Fanny Burney*. I have also used Julia Epstein's *The Iron Pen*. I realize that not everyone has read the books, and not all readers will know the plot incidents I refer to. However, I think, under the circumstances, everyone might like to examine eighteenth-century books for proof of the Armstrong/ Tennenhouse thesis!

2. My study of Indian captivity narratives has been informed by a large number of books in my twenty-year fascination with the story of Frances Slocum. Among the most important to

my understanding are June Namais' *White Captives* (1993*), Captured by the Indians* (1961)ed Frederick Drimmer, Christopher Castiglia's *Bound and Determined* (1996), and Michelle Burnham's *Captivity and Sentiment* (1997), and Ebersole's *Captured by Texts* (1995).

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Appendix: Conference Schedule

Friday, April 5

8:30-2:30 Registration

8:30-10:30 Continental Breakfast
Terrace Room: Lower Level Campus Center

All Friday Session in the Terrace Room

9:00-10:15 Session 1: *16th Century*

Welcome and Chair: Bob De Smith, Dordt College

Jason McCarty, Baylor University
"'In vaine seeks wonders out of Magick spell': Merlin as Redemptive Allegory in *The Faerie Queene"*
Mitchell Harris, Augustana College
"Spenser's Maleger and Augustinian Body Ethics"
William Hodapp, College of St. Scholastica
"Reading Pleasure and Virtue in the Sixteenth Century: Early Printing History and Reception of Stephen Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure* and *Example of Virtue*."

10:15-10:30 Morning Break

10:30-11:45 Session 2: *Mary, Milton, Marvell*

Chair: Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State University

Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State University
"'Fatal Flowers . . . Shining in Excess': The Precarious Position of Princess Mary in 1525"
Clay Daniel, University of Texas—Pan American
"Sight, Spite, and Milton"
Michael Kensak, Northwestern College
"What Transpires in Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress': A Pattern of Subversive Allusions"

12:00-12:45 Lunch: Dordt College Commons

1:00-2:15 Session 3: *Shakespeare*

Chair: Mary Dengler, Dordt College

Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State University
“Remaking *King Lear*”
Rachel De Smith, Baylor University
“’Age is unnecessary’: Stages of Life in *King Lear”*
Gary Scott Groce, Black Hills State University
“A Reconsideration of the Potential Sources for Falstaff’s Rhetoric”

2:30-3:15, Session 4: *Middle Ages*

Chair: William Hodapp, College of St. Scholastica

Nicholas Wallerstein, Black Hills State University
“The Scheming Pardoner: Style in Chaucer’s *Pardoner’s Tale”*
Michelle M. Sauer and Audrey D. Johnson, University of North Dakota
“After the Flood: The Noah Plays, Archontics, Authority, and Contemporary Fan Fiction”
Sean Gordon Lewis, Wyoming Catholic College
“English Comedy at the Close of the Middle Ages: Jan Van Doesborch's Contribution”

3:15-3:45 Afternoon Break

3:45-5:00 *Keynote Address*

John N. King
"The Reformation and the Book: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning"

5:30-6:00, Cash Bar: The Fruited Plain [171 N. Main Ave, Sioux Center]

6:00-7:30 Banquet: The Fruited Plain

Saturday, April 6

All Sessions on 3rd Level Campus Center

8:30-10:30 Continental Breakfast
Predsident's Lounge, Upper Level Campus Center

9:00-10:15, Session 5a CA318 *Tolkien and Medievalism*

Chair: Michael Nagy, South Dakota State University

David Herbener, South Dakota State University
"Hidden Myths and Half Truths in Middle Earth"
Jacob Herrmann, South Dakota State University
"Tolkien's 'Evil' Races: A Cross-Cultural Study of Orcs and Trolls"
Matthew Pullen, South Dakota State University
"Crossing Borders: Reassigning the Other in the *Lord of the Rings* and the *Vinland Sagas*"

9:00-10:15, Session 5b Board Room *Sources*

Chair: Stephen Hamrick, Minnesota State University

John Kerr, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
"'Nor Shall Death Brag': Life Beyond the Zombies in Carrie Ryan's ***The Forest of Hands and Teeth."***
Gayle Gaskill, St. Catherine University
"Young Stephen Sondheim's Classic Spin-Offs: *West Side Story* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*"
Art Marmorstein, Northern State University
"The Tragedy of the Common Cuckold: Richards' *Messalina* and its Sources"

10:15-10:30 Morning Break

10:30-11:45, Session 6a CA318 *Middle Ages*

Chair: Nicholas Wallerstein, Black Hills State University

Rachel Piwarski, University of North Dakota
"Structures of Power: Androgyny, Patriarchy, and Christ's Love in Julian of Norwich's A *Revelation of Divine Love"*
Jason Miller, University of North Dakota:
"Hybrid Monstrosity in *Sir Gowther*"
Kirby Lund, University of North Dakota
*"*Dreaming the Divine: Dream as Confession in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary"*

10:30-11:45, Session 6b Board Room *18th Century and Beyond*

Chair: Joshua Matthews, Dordt College

Douglas Northrop, Ripon College
"Castiglione in the Cloister"
Tim Decker, Minnesota State University
"Thomas Shadwell, Ben Jonson, and the Restoration Trope of Humility"
Susan Wood, Midland University
"Burney and the Anti-Captivity Narrative: A Reflection on Genre"
Jodi Napiorkowski, St. Cloud State University
"Elizabeth, Catherine, Fanny, and Emma: The Significance of Dance in the Novels of Jane Austen"

12:00-1:15 Business Lunch