The Year's Work in Medievalism

Edited by Gwendolyn Morgan

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Introduction

Gwendolyn Morgan

The present volume of *The Year's Work in Medievalism*[1] devotes over half its pages to topics in nineteenth-century art and literature. On the one hand, this is not surprising, for the era saw an immense revival of interest in things medieval, notably among the Pre-Raphaelite painters and prominent Victorian poets, and a re-working of them to elevate and validate high Victorian ideals. In light of such, Graham Johnson's re-evaluation of "Pelleas and Ettarre," from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, as the "pivotal idyll" in linking female sexuality and ensuing adultery to the downfall of Camelot (not something Malory holds to be a major cause), adds a new dimension to scholarship in this area and pinpoints the cause of that common misreading of Malory by modern and contemporary authors reworking the myth. Tennyson's mainstream distrust, even horror, of female sexuality and promiscuity can only be so effectively expressed by radical reworking of Malory's material to express received Victorian views.

On the other hand, high Victorians also appropriated medieval Arthurian and other motifs and imagery to do something very different and not so frequently recognized. Erika Bein, for example, contrasts Tennyson's *Idylls* to William Morris's "Defense of Guenevere," a far less popularly well received text then — and today — because of Morris' use and glorification of Guenevere's sexuality, strength of character, and independence to justify her and Lancelot's adultery as an ideal of courtly love in his own reinvention of the Middle Ages and of the chivalric ideal. Moreover, Bein notes, Morris's version more closely recreates Malory's vision. It also happens to dovetail neatly with the nascent feminist movement Marilynn Board sees imbuing George Frederic Watts's paintings of "Madonnas, Magdelenes, and Eves." Board demonstrates how, within the context of what she terms "Post-Darwinian Theology" but with radical departures from received Victorian views on women, Woman's natural physical and psychological fitness for influence and power in the public (male) spheres of employment and politics is advocated by Watt's work. Medievalism, indeed, of a nature not much explored to date.

Jen Gonyer-Donohue's study of Carlyle's *Past and Present* also begins with the body — male, this time — but moves into Carlyle's attempt to revitalize religion in that Post-Darwinian world. While returning to

Carlyle's (again) mainstream Victorian views, Gonyer discovers a new application for nineteenth-century medievalism in the *re-imagining* of a golden past of monolithic Christian faith as the basis for *re-creating* that mythic past to replace contemporary spiritual sterility.

Richard Utz's study of medieval cathedrals and their continued cycle of use — rejection — re-adaptation as medieval precedents of power and regionalism / nationalism (as much as religious practice) from late medieval times to early modern provides the present collection with its own "pivotal idyll." As Utz points out, smaller abbeys, parish churches, and the like tended to receive aristocratic/royal attentions in medieval times, for a variety of purposes ranging from the spiritual to the propagandistic, while cathedrals tended to be civic endeavors. However, from late medieval times to the late nineteenth century, the cathedral again and again receives the attention of kings and emperors, even revolutionary "citizen" leaders, to legitimize various claims and political programs by recalling an imagined medieval past. Looking both backward and forward from the (again) pivotal nineteenth century, Utz's essay allows the reader of this volume to do the same.

Karl Fugelso and Jesse Swan return us to the Renaissance in painting and in literature, with re-examinations of appropriations of the medieval for the purposes of legitimizing religious (Fugelso) and rejecting early modern (Swan) views of the period. Swan's essay on Elizabeth Cary's "closet drama" is particularly incisive, at once asserting a radically new reading of what has previously been accepted as Cary's support of white supremacy, based on the parallels in the play with medieval anti-semiticism, as classical-humanist ridicule of racism on all levels, and also asserting the heavy influence of a woman entrusted with a prince's rearing on the future king's views. Fugelso, on the other hand, traces an evolution of socio-religious perspective through visualizations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* rather than revolutionary departure.

Which brings us to the modern period. Jane Toswell returns to an apparently familiar subject — Auden's use of the Anglo-Saxon poetic (primarily, but not exclusively, concentrating on alliteration and stress) in his poetic endeavors — but again offers a very different slant on the results: Auden's verse is at once retrospective and revolutionary for its adaptation of early medieval technique to modern subject and sensibility. Her proofs — previously unpublished letters by Auden about his poetics — may themselves be as important to Auden scholars as her analysis.

Finally, Martin Walsh moves from the early twentieth century to the present, from the Old World to the New, with a fascinating exploration of the only truly American mystery play — *The Hill Cumorah Pageant* presented by the Mormon Church each summer as an outdoor theater celebration of Mormon theology. Addressing everything from production

details, to structure and setting, to Mormon beliefs, Walsh's first venture into indigenous American cycle drama, based on indigenous American theology and myth, presents an astonishing, if unconscious, example of contemporary medievalism in practice. His brief account of the 75-year evolution of the Hill Cumorah phenomenon opens the door to serious examination of/comparison with medieval predecessors.

The 2000 *Year's Work in Medievalism*, then, continues the explorative ventures of last year's volume into living medievalism, as well as more established venues of scholarship and the, by now, established challenge of that scholarship. This demonstrates the continued growth of medievalism as an approach within and subject for critical and scholarly interests across genres and periods. We hope that the spirit of Leslie J. Workman, which slipped quietly away on April 1, 2001, is gratified and proud at where his pioneering work in the field of medievalism has led and to which it continues to aspire. His intellectual innovation and perseverance led to the establishment not only of the *Year's Work in Medievalism* series, but of the journal *Studies in Medievalism*, the International Conference on Medievalism, and established sessions at the International Conference on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo and the International Medieval Congress in Leeds. From these endeavors, the fruits are many and sundry, as books, journals, conference sessions, and university courses on medievalism, or using it as a tool of study have burgeoned in recent decades. To Leslie J. Workman, then, we dedicate this volume of *The Year's Work in Medievalism*.

In Memoriam

NOTE

[1] The volume is based primarily on final versions of papers presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Medievalism, hosted by Hope College in Holland, Michigan, during September 2000.

Tennyson's Pivotal Idyll: "Pelleas and Ettarre"

Graham Peter Johnson

Tennyson's "Pelleas and Ettarre" has only one known source, that by Sir Thomas Malory. But in the Malory version, the tale of Pelleas and Ettard[1] is only a passing incident, taking up a mere nine pages (pp.163-172) of the one thousand twenty-six pages that make up *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*.[2] Furthermore, these nine Pelleas and Ettard pages are by no means prominent, and in fact are not even given their own title, but instead are buried in the "Gawain, Yvain and Marhalt" subsection[3] of the book "The Tale of King Arthur," which itself is only one of eight books making up Malory's *Works*. Moreover, "The Tale of King Arthur" is only the first of the eight books of the Arthurian material.[4] So, in Malory's *Works,* the story of Pelleas and Ettard takes place early on in the Arthur story, five books before even the Grail material, and almost as far removed from the Death of Arthur material, the last book, as it could possibly be.

By contrast, in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, "Pelleas and Ettare" is placed after the Grail Quest, as the ninth of twelve idylls, and the nine pages of Malory are expanded to seventeen pages, five hundred ninety-seven lines of poetry out of a total of nine thousand, nine hundred and eighty-nine lines. Thus, Tennyson develops the source material, which is less than 1% of the total material of Malory's *Works,* and makes it approximately 6% of the *Idylls*.[5] Even more significantly, he places "Pelleas and Ettarre" at a pivotal place in the *Idylls* — immediately after "The Holy Grail" and before the flight of Guinevere and revolt of Mordred. Perhaps most significantly of all, "Pelleas and Ettarre" ends with the line: "And Mordred thought, 'The time is hard at hand.'"[6] Something happens in the idyll that leads Mordred to consider the time to be ripe for revolt. One cannot help wondering what is was in the Malorian material which caught Tennyson's eye and induced him to give it this unexpected prominence.

Examining the dates that the various idylls were published also suggests the importance of "Pelleas and Ettarre" in the overall scheme of the *Idylls*. The first set of idylls was published in 1859, and there were four of them: "Enid," "Vivian," "Elaine," and "Guinevere."[7] In December of 1869; Tennyson published *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, which was made up of "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," and "The Passing of Arthur."   It is important to note that Tennyson included "Pelleas and Ettarre" amongst the idylls of central importance — between "The Coming of Arthur" and "The Passing of Arthur," which provide the beginning and end of the *Idylls* — and immediately after "The Holy Grail," the end of which has Arthur summing up the failure of the Grail Quest:

And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmires? -- lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order -- scarce return'd to a tithe.[8]

In 1871, Tennyson published "The Last Tournament," which is placed between "Pelleas and Ettarre" and "Guinevere." So, by 1871, the order and content of the last half of the *Idylls* is set, with "Pelleas and Ettarre" and "The Last Tournament" bridging the gap between "The Holy Grail" and "Guinevere," forming the hinge between the failed Grail Quest and the ultimate downfall of Camelot.

But in spite of this, "Pelleas and Ettarre" has received little critical attention in relation to the fall of Camelot -- in fact, little attention at all. Of the small number of articles and pages in books dedicated to "Pelleas and Ettarre," most of the studies focus on comparing the characters and themes in "Pelleas and Ettarre" to those in other, especially earlier, idylls.[9] Kerry McSweeney — who places "Pelleas and Ettarre" along with "Balin and Balan" and "The Last Tournament" in a grouping she calls the "Tristam group," and whose article is an examination of these three idylls "without reference to the other groups of idylls"[10] — notes that idylls of the Tristam group "are usually viewed by commentators from the philosophical and moral perspectives provided by the Holy Grail group ["The Holy Grail," "The Coming of Arthur," "The Passing of Arthur"] and the Guinevere group ["Gareth and Lynette," the two Geraint and Enid poems, "Merlin and Lancelot," "Lancelot and Elaine," "Guinevere"]." [11]

A second study using "philosophical and moral perspectives" is by Lawrence Poston III,[12] in which he concludes: "If 'The Holy Grail' explores the worthiness of men to perceive what is ideal, 'Pelleas and Ettarre' excoriates those who idealize what is all too transitory and human."[13] The problem with his article is that it, like the majority, looks back to earlier idylls, contrasting them with "Pelleas and Ettarre," not explaining its significance to what happens in the last third of the *Idylls*. However, I would argue that the moral perspective in examining the idyll is an important element of our understanding of "Pelleas and Ettarre."

Certainly, the moral perspective was one that Tennyson himself at least somewhat endorsed; criticism of the *Idylls* by Conde Benoist Pallen — begun as an 1885 article, more fully developed into a series of short studies published in 1895, and finally published altogether in a slim volume in 1904, humbly titled *The Meaning of the Idylls of the King*[14] — is based on the moral (and some would say heavy-handedly moral)

perspective. The book's flyleaf has a reproduction of a letter Tennyson wrote to Pallen that reads: "Sir, I thank you for your critique on the Idylls of the King. You see further into their meaning than most of my commentators have done. Yours faithfully, Tennyson." And, although the letter is dated April 4, 1885, and thus in it Tennyson could only be referring to Pallen's article written in 1885, one can assume that Pallen's method of interpreting from a moral perspective was consistent throughout his studies.

But most importantly, Pallen provides some insight centered around the last line of "Pelleas and Ettarre" — "And Mordred thought: 'The time is hard at hand.'" He writes:

> Until now the sin of Lancelot and the Queen had been working in the veins, subtly and silently poisoning and sowing the seed of the wrath to come. In the idyll "Pelleas and Ettarre," it at last bursts forth in fury . . . Mordred, the traitor, has been waiting the fatal hour when he might strike, in the assurance that the sin of the flesh has undermined the fair structure of the Round Table. In "Geraint and Enid," the shadow of the great sin had fallen ominously but not fatally; in "Balin and Balan" it leads to violence and disaster in the slaughter of two brothers; [but] in "Pelleas and Ettarre," it blasts the great ideal of the Round Table and rolls its black wave to the foot of the throne itself.[15]

Pallen points to the clearest indication that something monumental occurs in "Pelleas and Ettarre" — the last line of the idyll. An idyll that had begun with Pelleas, a promising young knight, coming to and being knighted by Arthur, ends with Mordred's thought of revolt foretelling doom. What began with youth, idealism, and hope ends with despair, anger, and a sense of impending destruction.

The way that Tennyson fashioned "Pelleas and Ettarre" to be the hinge of the *Idylls* can be seen through a detailed analysis of the internal structure as well as the idyll's place in the overall structure of the *Idylls*. Most important for this analysis are the symmetries, repetitions, and above all, redundant passages in the idyll. By "redundant passages," I mean those which do not move the plot along and which could be cut from the narrative without disrupting its logical sequence. This does not mean, of course, that they are "redundant" in the sense of being pointless. Rather, they have been included deliberately by Tennyson to make some non-narrative, and presumably thematic, point and are accordingly the clearest indicators of Tennyson's intentions, or it may be, inner anxieties.

If Tennyson's overall theme is the decline of Arthur and his idealistic vision of the Round Table, the hinge is the destruction of Pelleas, who represents the potential future of the Round Table — a young knight who is needed to fill one of the holes left from the Grail Quest. Instead,

by the end of the idyll, Pelleas sees Camelot and the ideals it embodies as a sham, filled with deceit and hypocrisy. Moreover, as the Pellan quote above indicates, the idyll is a hinge because it is the first concrete example of how the coming doom results from Guinevere and Lancelot's adulterous relationship.

A breakdown of "Pelleas and Ettarre" is required to aid in viewing its structure. The first thing to note about the structure is the beginning of the idyll, where there is a reversing of the chronological order. Chronologically, first Pelleas sets out for the tournament, then meets Ettarre, then arrives at court and is knighted by Arthur. But Tennyson reorders the events so that first the reader encounters Pelleas being knighted by Arthur, then Pelleas setting out, and lastly Pelleas meeting Ettarre. Tennyson does the reordering for a practical reason, but a striking effect.

Practically, putting Arthur at the very beginning provides a smooth transition between "The Holy Grail" and "Pelleas and Ettarre," because "The Holy Grail" ended with Arthur speaking — summarizing the failure of the quest and lamenting the loss of so many of his knights. The first lines of "Pelleas and Ettarre" have Arthur making "new knights to fill the gap/Left by the Holy Quest."[16] Pelleas then arrives and is knighted as one of these "new knights."

What is striking is that this reordering ultimately emphasizes the contrast between the beginning and end of the idyll, a contrast between Arthur's hope of rebuilding along with a young man's hope of becoming a knight of the Round Table, and the destruction of Pelleas' idealism and a sense that the Round Table is doomed. Moreover, the decline is presented as an uninterrupted slope; as the idyll progresses, the fortunes of Pelleas become increasingly worse. If the idyll had begun with Pelleas meeting Ettarre — who in the first one hundred lines is only rude and proud, not yet bent on disgracing Pelleas — and if Pelleas had then progressed to his meeting with Arthur, then the steady decline of Pelleas' fortunes would not be as pronounced.

In addition, if Ettarre were the first person in the idyll Pelleas met, then the contrast between Arthur and Guinevere would not be symmetrically established. But as the idyll stands, it begins with Pelleas meeting Arthur — feelings of renewal abound — and ends with Pelleas meeting Guinevere, and, in a mad rage, fleeing the court. The contrast is between Pelleas' feelings when he arrives and when he ultimately leaves. And the contrast pits Arthur the rebuilder against Guinevere the destroyer of knights, a charge leveled at Guinevere in Malory's "The Poisoned Apple" by many knights of the Round Table.[17] This symmetry is integral to Tennyson's blaming infidelity, particularly Guinevere's, for the destruction of the Round Table.

The importance of infidelity for Tennyson can be seen in arguably the most redundant scene in the whole idyll, where Guinevere rebukes Ettarre, and Ettarre then insults Guinevere. The context is that Pelleas has won the tournament, has given the golden circlet to Ettarre, but Ettarre has not given Pelleas a smile or kind words in return,

> and seeing Pelleas droop,
> Said Guinevere. "We marvel at thee much,
> O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
> To him who won thee glory!" And she said,
> "Had you not held your Lancelot in your bower,
> My Queen, he had not won." Wherat the Queen,
> As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
> Glanced down upon her, turn'd, and went her way.[18]

It is an unusual exchange; Guinevere stands up for her belief in the courteous convention that a lady should be kind towards her champion. Ettarre responds by both belittling Pelleas' victory, saying that he only won because Lancelot was not there, and bringing up Guinevere and Lancelot's relationship, saying that Guinevere keeps Lancelot in her bower. This passage is redundant for the narrative but, by adding it, Tennyson is able to bring up Guinevere's adultery as well as the facts that knowledge of the adultery is becoming wide spread and that disrespect for the Queen is occurring as a result. Tennyson adds the passage to emphasize the theme of infidelity and hint at the damage this is causing.

Even more interesting in relation to the internal structure of the idyll is the parallel involving the simile "As one whose foot is bitten by an ant" and a later passage where Lancelot puts his heel on the fallen Pelleas and threatens to kill him. Both scenes have a member of the adulterous relationship having their foot or heel somehow in contact with their accusor: first, Ettare is the ant biting Guinevere's foot, second, Pelleas is the man under Lancelot's heel who has said he will "blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen."[19] The first scene has two women; the second two men. It places Pelleas at the same level as Ettarre. And indeed this is the case by the end of the idyll; Pelleas has undergone a change, losing his idealism and hating Arthur and all that court for their hypocrisy; like Ettarre, he is bitter and rude.

The reason for the change in Pelleas is additionally emphasized by his two dreams, one early in the idyll and the other after he is betrayed by Gawain. The first dream indicates Pelleas' idealism and love for everything he believes Camelot stands for. He lies down in a grove, closes his eyes, and:

> Since he loved all maidens, but no maid
> In special, half -awake he whisper'd, "Where?
> O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee not.

For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and Sword
As famous -- O my Queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we meet.[20]

Pelleas' second dream and -- just as important -- first words upon waking up are:

And gulfed his griefs in inmost sleep, so lay,
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.
He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,
Set hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,
"False! And I held thee pure as Guinevere."[21]

The parallels are striking. In the first dream, Pelleas places himself as a type, as an Arthur, and sees his as yet unknown love as his Guinevere. He calls his love fair and pure as she is. Of course, his love turns out to be Ettarre, who is false to Pelleas (although she thinks him dead) as Guinevere is false to Arthur. Tennyson is inviting us to see a parallel between the Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot triangle and the Pelleas-Ettarre-Gawain triangle.[22] And through this, when Pelleas dreams that Gawain sets fire to the hall of Merlin, we can also view this as Lancelot destroying the hall, and symbolically in a larger sense, the adultery of the court as causing the destruction of the Round Table and all it is ideally is meant to stand for. The morning star that reels from the smoke and falls from the sky burned up is the planet Venus, symbolic of love, and this is symbolic of love in Camelot dying. And in the second dream, Pelleas still thinks that Guinevere is "pure;" it is finding out from Percivale after waking up that she is not that causes Pelleas to go mad and rush off to Camelot. For Pelleas, and for Tennyson, Arthur's court has to be pure and true in order to succeed; once there is infidelity and betrayal, the ideal is ruined and Camelot is doomed to fall.

Two strange and redundant passages involving Pelleas which are not particularly useful for the internal structure of the idyll turn out to be structurally significant in relation to the idyll which follows after, "The Last Tournament," because they are strong suggestions that Pelleas is the Red Knight. And this is important because the Red Knight is a clear forerunner of future disaster. In both passages, parallels can be made between what Pelleas says and does in "Pelleas and Ettarre" and what the Red Knight says and does in "The Last Tournament." The first passage is when Pelleas, having found Gawain sleeping with Ettarre, rails against Ettarre's towers, harlots, Arthur, and knightly vows.[23] The Red Knight's message uses similar language and deals with similar themes, attacking Arthur's court, saying that his [the Red Knight's] towers are full of harlots,

his knights are liars and adulterers, but that his subjects are better than Arthur's because at least they are not hypocrites and do not "profess to be none other than themselves."[24] The parallels between the two speeches are too similar not to be intended.

The other redundant passage has Pelleas running over a beggar begging for alms. The only reason for having this is to demonstrate that Pelleas is a raging lunatic at this point in the idyll, self-destructive and destructive with no concern for anyone. And in "The Last Tournament," the churl who comes to Arthur with the Red Knight's message is "Maim'd" and "maul'd."[25] This cruelty to the lower classes and less fortunate by Pelleas and the Red Knight is a parallel intended to suggest again that they are the same person.

The impetus behind all the redundant passages, parallels, and symmetries seems to point in the same direction. Tennyson wanted to emphasize the idea that infidelity, betrayal, and lies caused the destruction of Arthur's court. But why did Tennyson go to such lengths to emphasize the infidelity as the cause of the fall of the Round Table? He took an insignificant episode from Malory's *Works* and made it the hinge of the *Idylls*. He added Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere into the story when the Malory version takes place near or in the Forest of Adventures, nowhere near Camelot, and no one connected to Camelot is anywhere to be seen with the exception of Gawain. Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere are not in the source.

The reasons Tennyson makes so many key changes can be traced to his anxiety over or aversion to male/female sexuality and his apparent distress over sexual sin, especially sexual betrayals. Simply put, Tennyson has a problem with sexual themes. In Malory, Arthur has questionable origins: Uther, Arthur's father, kills the duke of Tintagel and, having disguised himself as the duke (with help from Merlin), has sex with the duke's wife Igraine. In fact, it is a rape. Also in Malory, Mordred is the result of Arthur's incest with his own sister, and Galahad is the illegitimate son of Lancelot and Elaine. But in the *Idylls*, Tennyson throws doubt upon or rejects all three sexual sins: first, "The Coming of Arthur" is an attempt to refute any stains upon Arthur's origins (Arthur appears in a dragon-winged boat that ascended from the depths/descended from the heavens only to land at Merlin's feet[26]); second, Arthur specifically says that Mordred is "no kin of mine;"[27] third, Percivale says that Lancelot has no children.[28]

Tennyson may well have chosen to use the Pelleas and Ettard material because Malory's story disturbed him so much — in Malory, Gawain is a sexual predator who betrays Pelleas, seduces Ettard, and completely gets away with it. Once Gawain has been found out, once he and Ettard have woken up with Pelleas' sword lying across their throats, Gawain simply

leaves -- "sir Gawayne made hym redy and wente into the forest"[29] -- and drops out of the story. Malory does not condemn Gawain at all, nor does anything that happens in the story even hint at any potential damage to Camelot being brought about by Gawain's actions. There certainly is no mention of Pelleas having a dream of Gawain firing the hall of Camelot, as is in Tennyson.

In fact, Malory's story contains little tragedy and no feelings of impending doom; it can be viewed in terms of a simple male revenge fantasy or a even a *fabliau.* As the simple male revenge fantasy, we have the eventual triumph of a jilted lover. Male X [Pelleas] loves Female X [Ettard], but Female X does not love him back, instead having sex with Male Y [Gawain]. Male X then gets a different female, Female Y [Nineve -- the Lady of the Lake], who will love him, and Male X goes off with Female Y. Meanwhile, Female X now loves Male X but cannot have him and thus dies pining for him. The extra is the fact that Nineve puts a spell on Ettard so that she loves and pines away for Pelleas. In effect, the story has a happy ending for Pelleas; he ends up with Nineve who loves him, and Ettard dies when she cannot have the man who she had earlier spurned so earnestly.

Viewed in terms of a *fabliau*, Malory seems to indicate that Gawain's seduction of Ettard is a source of amusement or at least bemusement along the lines of: "are not women strange? When given the choice between the good man or the bad, they inevitably pick the bad." This theme runs through Malory's story; Ettard does not want the chivalrous, valiant Pelleas but sleeps with lying, deceitful Gawain. And at the beginning of the Pelleas and Ettard story, a damsel has the choice between a valiant knight and a dwarf — in Malory and the French Romances, dwarves are always scoundrels and usually surly as well -- and the damsel goes off with the dwarf. This certainly is one of Malory's central messages in the story because Malory does not blame Ettard for being tricked by Gawain; Malory only blames her for not loving Pelleas.

But Tennyson seems to find this idea of women picking the "bad" men over the "good" threatening, especially in conjunction with the idea that the immoral men get away with seducing women. One gets the sense that for Tennyson, if immoral behavior succeeds, then anyone can get away with it and the very fabric of society tears. So, for Tennyson, sin must be punished, otherwise there could be complete social breakdown, or, more particularly for Tennyson, the fall of an empire due to moral corruption that he alludes to in his "To the Queen" that appears at the end of the *Idylls*.

In the section "To the Queen," we have the clearest indication of Tennyson's feelings about the sexual morality in Malory's *Works* as a whole, where he attacks Malory as "one/ Touched by the adulterous finger

of a time/That hover'd between war and wantonness."[30] So it seems that Tennyson does not like the morality expressed in Malory's *Works*; he viewed it as being touched, read "tainted," by adultery and wantonness, and, because these sexual indiscretions are not necessarily condemned by Malory, Tennyson has a problem with the material. So he reworks it to show how terrible such sexual betrayals are and what horrific damage they cause.

Tennyson puts this in direct fashion in "Guinevere," when he has Arthur blame Guinevere for the demise of the Round Table:

> Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
> Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
> Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
> And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
> Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
> Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
> And all thro' thee![31]

This is not to say that Arthur fails to blame Mordred and the traitors who are in open revolt against Arthur elsewhere for the demise of the Round Table, but the passage illustrates that Tennyson, first and foremost, blames Guinevere and the adultery. In fact, in Tennyson's presentation, there would have been no revolt without the adultery and the lax sexual attitudes accompanying it. Vital incidents in Malory, such as the incestuous birth of Mordred, and the unprovoked killing of Gawain's brothers by Lancelot, have simply been deleted as causes, and in effect replaced by the disillusionment of Pelleas.

In this way, an insignificant episode in Malory, occurring near the beginning of Malory's Arthurian story, and containing no hint of the Lancelot - Guinevere affair, is turned into "Pelleas and Ettarre," the pivotal idyll, where the affair comes to light and a young, idealistic knight turns into a raging lunatic, altogether signifying that the end is coming, the fall of the Round Table. Just as what I have called the "redundant" passages in the idyll of "Pelleas and Ettare" give the strongest clue as to its thematic center, so the equally narratively redundant idyll of "Pelleas and Ettare" itself (together with its associated echoes and codas in "The Last Tournament") give the strongest clue as to the thematic structure of the *Idylls of the King* as a whole.

St. Louis University

NOTES
1. In Malory, their names are Pelleas and Ettard.
2. Malory, Sir Thomas. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. 3rd edition. Ed. by Eugene Vinaver. Revised by P. J. C. Field. 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990).
3. Chapter VI of "The Tale of Arthur."

4. The eight books in order are: "The Tale of King Arthur," "The Tale of the Noble King Arthur that Was Emperor Himself through Dignity of his hands," "The Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot du Lac," "The Tale of Sir Gareth," "The Book of Sir Tristam de Lyones," "The Tale of the Sangreal," "The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere," and "The Most Piteous Tale of the Mort Arthur Saunz Guerdon."

5. In P. J. C. Field's edition, the total number of pages of *The Works*, minus the title pages, rubrics, and commentary, is 1026. Pelleas and Ettard is 9 pages. This works out to the Pelleas and Ettard episode taking up 0.877% of the total. In J. M. Gray's edition, the *Idylls of the King*, minus the "Dedication" and "To the Queen," total 9,870 lines of poetry. "Pelleas and Ettarre" is 597 lines long, working out to 6.05% of the *Idylls*.

6. See ll. 597, Alfred Lord Tennyson. "Pelleas and Ettarre," *Idylls of the King*. Ed. J. M. Gray, (London: Penguin, 1996).

7. In 1870, "Enid" was expanded and divided into "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid;" "Vivian" was changed to "Merlin and Vivian;" "Elaine" was changed to "Lancelot and Elaine."

8. See ll. 884-890. "The Holy Grail."

9. John Reed, in his *Perception and Design in Tennyson's Idylls of the King* (Ohio: Ohio UP, 1969) comes the closest to explicating the significance of "Pelleas and Ettarre" to the fall of Camelot: "The Order is certainly seriously challenged now from within by the defection of such a promising young man as Pelleas, but the combat remains at a superficial level" (p. 109). But he does not put as much emphasis upon the idyll as I feel it warrants.

10. "Tennyson's Quarrel with Himself," *Victorian Poetry* 15 (1977); 49-59.

11. Ibid. p. 50.

12. "'Pelleas and Ettare:' Tennyson's 'Troilus'." *Victorian Poetry* 4 (1966): 199-204.

13. Ibid. p. 204. .

14. The full bibliographic reference is *The Meaning of the Idylls of the King: an Essay in Interpretation*, (New York: American Book Company, 1904).

15. Ibid. p. 93.

16. See ll. 1-2, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

17. See p. 1054, vol. II, *Works of Sir Thomas Malory*.

18. See ll, 171-178, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

19. See l. 558, "Pelleas and Ettare."

20. See ll. 39-45, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

21. See ll. 506-512, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

22. John Reed also points this out in *Perception and Design*, p. 102.

23. See ll. 452-476, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

24. See ll. 77-86, "The Last Tournament."

25. See l. 75, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

26. See ll. 370-385, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

27. See l. 570, "Guinevere."

28. See ll. 143-148, "The Holy Grail."

29. See p. 171, vol. I, *Works of Sir Thomas Malory.*

30. See ll. 42-44, "Pelleas and Ettarre."

31. See ll. 484-490, "Guinevere."

The Influence of Malory and the Manipulation of Guenevere in the Poetry of Morris and Tennyson

Erika Bein

Completing his *Morte Darthur* in 1470, Sir Thomas Malory succeeded in compiling perhaps the most famous and influential account of the life and death of King Arthur from previous English and French Arthurian material. However, if it weren't for the renewed interest in Medievalism during the nineteenth-century, Malory's importance would surely have been lost, for, after his first publishing by Caxton in 1485, he:

> . . . passed into some obscurity. . .but since the revival of interest in the *Morte* that started in the nineteenth century, he has served as the direct or indirect basis for almost every Arthurian work in any medium: poems, novels, children's books, science fiction. Films, advertisements, cartoons, modern heritage paraphernalia -- everything from epics to t-shirts (Cooper ix) .

The significance of Malory's contribution to Arthurian understanding cannot be overemphasized, but then neither can the Malorian revival of the Victorian Age: like Arthur and his Round Table Knights, the two traditions are forever enjoined. Both William Morris and Alfred Tennyson published poems in the nineteenth century that are directly influenced by Malory's work and reveal much about the Victorian reverence for both Malory and the chivalry and mystery of Camelot -- however, Morris and Tennyson manipulate Malory's text in conflicting ways, and this is revealed in their respective representations of the figure of Guenevere, who is strikingly *strong* in Malory's *Morte*. In her essay "Newly Ancient: Reinventing Guenevere in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," Carol Hart observes, "If we compare Malory's Guenevere with her earlier representations, it is obvious that the English author reconstructed her character to create an unconventionally heroic and influential version of the queen" (3). Thus, in taking liberties with his portrayal of Guenevere, Malory paved the way for the Victorian Medievalists, but not without a Victorian response: for Morris and Tennyson, respectively, the doomed queen represents a contrasting ideal, and their own poetic manipulations of Guenevere demonstrate these distinct views.

For the purposes of this argument, I will focus upon Morris's "The Defence of Guenevere" (1858), and the "Guinevere" Idyll from Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" (1859), and compare them with Books VII and VIII of Malory's *Morte*. These final two books — *The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* and *The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur Saunz Guerdon* — are perhaps the most familiar and are argued to be "the finest of Malory's tales" (McCarthy 46), not only because a sense of finality is

inherent within them, the anticipation of the downfall of Arthur and his Round Table (McCarthy 46, Benson 229), but also because it is within these two books that Guenevere's presence is most prominent.

In Malory, Guenevere is not only an emotional force, but also a powerful and influential one as well: "Ryght so the quene toke sir Launcelot by the bare honde, for he had put of hys gauntelot, and so she wente wyth hym tyll her chambir, and than she commaunded hym to be unarmed" (Malory, Book XIX, 656). In this episode with her lover, as with many others, Guenevere has complete control over Lancelot, and he gladly relinquishes this control, giving the queen full command of him. He reveals to Arthur that, early in his knighthood, the queen had returned his lost sword, thereby shielding him from shame, and "therefore, my lorde Arthure, I promysed her at that day ever to be her knyght in ryght othir in wronge (Book VXIII 620). Thus, Lancelot has pledged himself to her, and Arthur is keenly aware of the situation. But Guenevere is not wholly satisfied with a knightly pledge — she wants a pledge of love as well, and she finds the perfect love in the form of the perfect knight, Lancelot. Malory spends much time exploring the complexity of their relationship, something that has not occurred in previous Arthurian accounts. In fact, Guenevere's presence in the final two books of the *Morte* is a force to be reckoned with, not only for her lover, but also for the rest of the court:

> Guinevere is imperious, impulsive, and sometimes witty. She exercises her power by exiling Lancelot on several occasions, usually when she is in a jealous rage. Her power is that absolute power of the beloved in the courtly love tradition, which is revealed as merely the power to reject; the exercise of that power labels her capricious, cruel and arbitrary in the view of her husband and other knights (Archibald & Edwards 50).

And therefore the relationship between Guenevere and Lancelot affects not only their own passions, but also the dynamic of the entire Round Table: knights are constantly caught up in disguising the affair from the king by updating and warning the lovers, and Guenevere is often blamed and rebuked for the absence of Lancelot when he is in need for battle -- for in her jealous rages, she drives him away from the court and his duties as a Round Table knight. But is their adultery wholly to blame for the downfall of the Round Table? Interestingly, Malory doesn't depict it as such. He even goes so far as to blame Agravain, the adamant knight who "discovers" the lovers in bed, as the ultimate cause: "And bycause I have lost the very mater of Shevalere de Charyot I depart frome the tale of sir Launcelot; and here I go unto the morte Arthur, and that caused sir Aggravayne" (Book XIX 669).

Unlike many of his sources, such as the Vulgate Cycle *Mort Artu*, Malory himself does not place the blame of the fall of the Round Table on Guenevere, but he allows Guenevere to place blame upon herself after the death of Arthur, and she admits to Lancelot while in her nunnery: "... for as well as I have loved the heretofore, myne [har]te woll nat serve now to se the; for thorow the and me ys the f[lou]r of kyngis and [knyghtes] destroyed" {XXI, 720). How are we then supposed to regard her? After the strength she has displayed throughout the text, she finally weakens as the Round Table is destroyed and goes to a silent death as a guilty nun. One possibility, perhaps, is that Guenevere is eternally tied to the Round Table -- for it came to Arthur with his marriage to Guenevere — and when it is finally gone, she too must go: the courtly romance that she shared with Lancelot can no longer thrive without the support of a court. But the romance is not forgotten.

Malory's emphasis on the love between Guenevere and Lancelot is striking, for not only is it given prominence in the final books, especially "The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere," but it is also deemed by Malory to be "vertuouse." Malory praises this chivalric love of the days of old, which was one of "trouthe and faythefulnes," and he goes as far as inciting his readers to love as virtuously as Guenevere:

> And therefore all ye that be lovers, calle unto youre remembraunce the monethe of May, lyke as ded quene Gwenyver, for whom I make a lytyll mencion, that whyle she lyved she was a trew lover, and therefor she had a good ende (XIX 649).

Therefore, Malory is careful to depict Guenevere according to his own idealistic perceptions throughout his text, and even when she acknowledges her guilt at the end, she does so with a martyr-like casualness about her -- an almost heroic resolve. As readers, we are allowed to sympathize with both her and Lancelot, and are finally compelled *not* to judge their love too harshly:

> However reprehensible the behavior of the lovers may be, Malory lays the emphasis clearly on the far more destructive guilt of the others, and, in the face of such villainy, on the great virtue of Lancelot and the queen. Their love, admittedly, caused trouble, but Malory takes time to describe and justify it; it is, he says, virtuous love (McCarthy 46).

Although Malory's representation of Guenevere and her affair with Lancelot is unique, his desire to "take up the position of a latter-day historian to Arthur's court" (Cooper xvii) prevents his readers from truly understanding the motivations behind Guenevere's actions. As Dobyns explains, Malory's characters are "never given the opportunity to express

their private thoughts; indeed, as Mark Lambert has observed, Le Morte Darthur is 'strikingly apsychological' " (31). It is not until the nineteenth-century Arthurian revival that psychology is introduced to character representations, and feminine representations such as Guenevere are prominent in the Victorian corpus. Both William Morris and Alfred Tennyson, influenced primarily by Malory, employ the figure of Guenevere in their poetry, but do so with different purposes in mind. For Morris, who published his collection of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere* in 1858, a year before the publication of Tennyson's *Idylls*, did so at his own expense and to an unresponsive audience — unresponsive "...because the texts in the volume were seen as "ideologically estranged" and it was thus "largely ignored by Victorian reviewers and readers alike" (Harrison 23).

Victorians were not accustomed to such passionate portrayals of women as the portrayal of Guenevere in Morris's title poem. Taking Malory one step further, Morris "investigates the effects of love on character" and "examines the motivations of Malory's figures, analyzing emotions at which Malory only hints" (Silver, "In Defense of Guenevere" 230). In examining the context of Pre-Raphaelite interpretations of Guenevere — which characteristically employ a sympathetic view of her and other ambiguous Arthurian women — Carole Silver claims that Morris and his counterparts considered these women uniquely, therefore withholding any personal and/or cultural judgments. The Pre-Raphaelites' "glorification" and "defenses" of these "medieval fallen women ... stemmed from their study of Malory, their views on chivalric love, and their perceptions of Arthurian women as being from another time and order who therefore functioned under different moral laws" ("Victorian Spellbinders" 249-50). This view of Guenevere allowed Morris the freedom to depict her closer to Malory's more liberal portrayal than as a typical Victorian heroine. And, because Guenevere is such a malleable and poetic figure, Morris does not hesitate to maximize the creative possibilities of her character.

In his poem, Guenevere is sexual and intellectual and threatening to the patriarchy of both her own audience as well as Morris's: "She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,/Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,/With passionate twisting of her body there..." In her dramatic monologue, Guenevere invades us, her viewers and her readers, with her seductive defense, in which she professes her own innocence and her lover's while she anticipates what is to come, for neither she nor her audience know if she will be burned for treason or rescued by Lancelot. History tells us that Lancelot will come for her, but Morris delays our expectations until the very end: this poem is not about lovers' guilt and remorse, but about an accused woman who confronts her accusers and

"delivers a monologue that sanctions sexual passion rather than chastity" (Harrison 24). In fact, Guenevere celebrates herself, reveling in her own spring-like beauty and in the joys of mad love:

> — In that garden fair
> Came Lancelot walking; this is true, the kiss
> Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
> I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,
> When both our mouths went wandering in one way.
> And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
> Our hands being left behind strained far away.

Their verdant love in the garden is similar to Malory's depiction of the influence of the "lusty month of May" upon young lovers, that month "whan every lusty harte begynnyth to blossom and to burgyne. For, lyke as trees and erbys burgenyth and florysshyth in May, in lyke wyse every lusty harte that ys ony maner of lover spryngith, burgenyth, buddyth, and florysshth in lusty dedis" (XVIII 648). This "virtuous love" that Malory describes as existing between Lancelot and Guenevere is a love that cannot be stifled — young lust is too powerful, and so is a beautiful queen's persuasive abilities.

In Morris's "Defence," Guenevere asks the accusing knights if they would not have done as Lancelot had done — could they have resisted her entreaties? She challenges them: "Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,/When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:/'O true as steel, come now and talk with me,/I love to see your step upon the ground/ . . . come here to-night,/Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear..." Even while she stands in accusation, for adultery, Guenevere acts as seducer -- with her body and with her words. But Morris is careful not to depict her as the stereotypical temptress Eve; she is instead a strong and intelligent woman, who sees herself an intellectual equivalent to her masculine audience, at one point even crying out: "So, ever must I dress me to the fight...." Having lived her adult life with the Round Table knights, she knows best how to appeal to them and, according to Bullen, "[w]ithin the chivalric code, as employed by Malory, she is an honorable woman" (80).

One aspect of Guenevere that is revealing of her honor is the nature of her relationship with both of the men in her life, Arthur and Lancelot. As is seen in both Malory and Morris, the love that she shares with Lancelot is a true, passionate, and loyal love that remains steadfast until the fall of the Round Table. However adulterous it may be, there is evidence that, although she and Arthur love one another, their marriage is one of political necessity and not of sexual love. In Malory, it is hinted that Arthur is perhaps aware of the affair but is accepting of it as long as it remains private:

> For, as the Freynshe booke seyth, the kynge was full lothe that
> such a noyse shuld be uppon sir Launcelot and his quene; for
> the kynge had a demynge of hit, but he wold nat here thereoff,
> for sir Launcelot had done so much for hym and the quene so
> many tymes that wyte you well the kynge love him passyngly
> well (XX 764).

This concern for Lancelot is consistent throughout the text, and it
can be concluded that Arthur has little true concern for his wife, for after
war breaks out against Lancelot, Arthur laments: "And much more I am
soryar for my good knyghtes losse than for the losse of my fayre quene;
for quenys I myght have inow, but such a felyship of good knyghtes shall
never be togydirs in no company" (XX 685). Should we as an audience
feel sympathy for Arthur, then? Should we place blame upon Guenevere
for experiencing the lust of youth? Apparently, Morris followed Malory
closely, agreeing that the lovers should not be blamed for Arthur's
downfall. In fact, in her poetic "Defence," Guenevere emphasizes that
time of her youth "ere I was bought/By Arthur's great name and his little
love..." She asks her audience if she should have wasted her youth, and,
upon her marriage should she have remained "stone-cold for ever?" It is
a compelling argument for one in her position, but is her audience willing
to listen? The knights to whom she speaks do not reply within the context
of the poem, but there is evidence that they are in her presence; we only
get hints that Gauwaine, who has provided the most condemning
accusations, is not interested in her defense — but then again, he does
not turn away until she declares that her spirit will haunt him for the rest
of his life: "Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!" It is Morris's
own Victorian audience who was unwilling to listen, and Morris's
collection "failed as a cultural intervention at the time of its publication"
because it was radical and because it was "morally impure" (Harrison 23,
26).

Only the other members of Morris's Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
were interested in Guenevere as a heroic figure, glorifying and praising
her with words and in images. Perhaps this connection to an ideal
brotherhood, much like the Round Table knights, is a feature that further
connects Morris with Malory. For, like the nineteenth-century Medieval
revival, Malory's own fifteenth century "witnessed a cult of chivalry," in
which Malory partook, where "orders of knighthood flourished" and
"Malory himself apparently modelled the oath Sworn by the fellows of
the Round Table on the charge laid on the neophyte knights in the
ceremony for creating Knights of the Bath" (Cooper xi). And, at the end
of each book of the *Morte*, Malory signs "Sir Thomas Malleorre, Knyght."
Morris also fancied himself similar to a modern day knight, not only
belonging to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who "painted and wrote of

[Arthurian] sullied females with such respect and understanding" (Silver, "Victorian Spellbinders" 249), but also founded with Burne-Jones a separate brotherhood "with Sir Galahad as their patron" (Harris 8). Thus, both Malory and Morris present challenging discourses to their respective audiences: they are more inclined to empower women like Guenevere because, in regard to their own chivalric ideal, these women *are* ideal. Guenevere is beautiful and, according to the conventions of courtly love, virtuous, and because Malory and Morris are men who existed outside of their own time, glorifying the medieval past, Guenevere becomes a means by which the myth of Camelot can be upheld and possibly imitated. In fact, Morris's wife, Jane, was not only the model for Morris's only completed oil painting — of Guenevere, ironically — but also for Rossetti's depictions of Arthurian women. For the Pre-Raphaelites, she was the realized medieval ideal. Tennyson, on the other hand, is truly a man of his Victorian Age, and this is perhaps why his representation of Guenevere contrasts so starkly with those of Malory and Morris.

Tennyson's *Idylls* were an instant success. In fact, after the first edition was sold, "a second edition was needed in six months" (Harrison 19). The popularity of the poems reveals much about Victorian expectations and ideologies regarding the role of women — the same expectations and ideologies that Morris attempted to thwart in his own collection. Harrison claims "Tennyson's work best illustrates what might be described as a traditionalist and conservative engagement with medievalist discourse in mid-Victorian England" (19). Unlike Morris, who views Guenevere within her own time as an archetypal female figure, Tennyson brings her directly into his contemporary world, essentially utilizing Malory "in the service of Tory social, political, and religious values" (ibid). Through this lens, Guenevere has little to revel about. In the "Guinevere" Idyll, Tennyson presents to his audience an idealized Arthur, who sweeps into his wife's chambers at the nunnery and "allows" himself to forgive her as she grovels at his feet. But not before he makes sure to put her in her place:

> For think not, tho thou wouldst not love thy lord,
> Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
> I am not made of so slight elements.
> Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame (505-508).

Tennyson's "Guinevere" is 692 lines and, although inspired by Malory's work, only works from a single passage from Malory, which depicts Guenevere's retreat to the nunnery at Almesbury (Malory, XXI 717). Though both Morris and Tennyson take liberties with Malory's texts by creating scenes from their own imaginations in their poetry, Tennyson's "Guinevere" tends to deviate, not only from Malory's narrative structure, but also his character depictions in order to create a virtuous

and heroic Arthur and a pathetic, guilt-stricken Guenevere. Throughout the course of the poem, she is constantly weeping and lamenting her sins for dooming Lancelot, betraying the King, and causing the downfall of the Round Table. According to Killham:

> The love of Lancelot and Guinevere which led to the downfall of the Round Table, and which Malory could yet not feel it in him to condemn, is made by Tennyson the rift within the lute which progressively destroys the harmony upon which the Round Table depends (376).

And, while Tennyson's Queen is so plagued by guilt that she conceals her sexuality in her robes, hides shamefully from the King, and contemplates suicide, asking "Shall I kill myself?" (615), Morris's Queen, who is even more headstrong than Malory's, flaunts her sexuality — using it as her own weapon against the knights who accuse her — and refuses to feel guilt for her actions. And while Morris depicts Guenevere as a woman still in love with her gallant Lancelot, " '. . . therefore one so longs/To see you, Lancelot; that we may be/Like children once again, free from all wrongs/Just for one night'" Tennyson's Queen tries to convince herself that she was wicked to lose Arthur's love:

> 'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
> The vast design and purpose of the King.
> O, shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
> Meek maidens, from the voices crying, 'Shame!'
> I must not scorn myself; he loves me still.
> Let no one dream that he loves me still (653-8).

In his study of Tennyson's *Idylls*, Rosenberg makes an interesting point, in that, "Tennyson wants us to believe that Arthur feels sexual passion for Guinevere, and hence that both his inquiry and his forgiveness are all the greater. But if we must take Arthur on these terms, then he had no business losing Guinevere in the first place" (130). In regard to this notion, I am inclined to recall both Malory and Morris, who depict the marriage as passionless, and Arthur as having more concern for his knights than for his wife. As readers, we tend to *like* the relationship between the Queen and her knight, because, as Malory claims, it is true and virtuous — we believe it and want to idealize it. Like all passionate loves, this one is also tragic. But we don't feel sorry for Guenevere in the end, we want to glorify her, which is what Morris successfully does. As she revels in her own May-like beauty, so does her captivated audience, because she dares them to look upon her and still uphold their accusations:

> '... see my breast rise,
> Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
> And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,
> Yea also at my full heart's strong command,

> See through my long throat how the words go up
> In ripples to my mouth...
>   ...yea now
> This little wind is rising, look you up,
> And wonder how the light is falling so
> Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
> When you have looked upon my little brow,
> To say the thing is vile?'

Tennyson's Guenevere is a pathetic figure in comparison to Morris's, who is without fear or guilt. How we as audiences are to respond to these two equally provoking but equally distinct representations can perhaps be determined by the final moments of the respective poems. Morris's "Defence," which begins in *medias res* with Guenevere's speech and ends with her "joyful" rescue by her lover, is a depiction of a dynamic event, much like the dynamism of Guenevere herself, which we admire. Tennyson paints quite a different portrait, though, because all that is left for the guilty groveling Queen is repentance and an early death in the nunnery. Tennyson's moral Victorian audience would have appreciated this Guenevere, who admits her sins, but turns to a pious life and for that "Was chosen abbess, there, and abbess, lived/For three brief years, and there, an abbess, past/To where beyond these voices there is peace" (690-2).

Although both poems drew on Malory as a primary reference, Morris and Tennyson, publishing only a year apart, manipulated Guenevere in the manner that best suited them for their respective purposes -- Morris to glorify time past and aesthetically influence time present, Tennyson to use time past to morally comment upon time present. Chapman writes of Tennyson in the writing of his *Idylls*:

> One of his great gifts was to make poetry from the weaknesses
> of the human race, and the tragic flaws in the main Arthurian
> characters gave him what he needed. The *Idylls of the King*
> present an image of Victorian England, with a hope that
> goodness may yet emerge from an unpromising people and
> unpropitious conditions (49).

Tennyson appealed to the ideology of Victorian morality by presenting Guenevere as a redeemed woman, while Morris challenged it with his portrait of a heroic and sexual Guenevere — a portrait that is consistent with Malory, who understood his Queen to be essential to the depiction of the chivalrous court:

His concept of her character acquired definition and vitality as his mastery of his material grew, and in the culmination of his great work he created both a cultural icon and an individual whom George Saintsbury has called 'the first perfectly human woman in English literature' (Hart 18).

Guenevere's humanity is what endears her to us, in Malory, and then again in Morris. Tennyson leaves us disappointed. Although Maccullum claims that Tennyson's "Idylls are a great deal more read than Malory's Romance" (290), it is Malory's tradition that we most remember; and through the poetry and images of the nineteenth-century Medieval revival of Morris and his Pre-Raphaelites, the "virtuous" love of Lancelot and Guenevere is forever idealized.

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Modernizing Medieval Tropes of Femininity: Post-Darwinian Theology, Victorian Feminism and George Frederic Watts' Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves

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Despite a recent revival of interest in Victorian art, particularly in the Pre- Raphaelites and Frederick Leighton, scholarship on the painter and sculptor George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) has been limited largely to biographies or catalog entries, and analysis of the ideological implications of his art remains sparse.[1] This essay addresses his efforts to modernize medieval representations of "femininity" within a post-Darwinian framework, focusing on his reconceptualizations of three standard medieval tropes: the Madonna (mother), the Magdalene (prostitute), and Eve (who is both the mother of humanity *and* a *femme fatale*). Following Terry Eagleton, who identifies literary texts as ideological sites of cultural construction where fragmented or conflicting economic or social experiences are integrated into an ordered, consistent whole, and Louis Althusser, who defines ideology as the "imaginary relationship of an individual to their (sic) real conditions of existence" (162), I treat Watts' modernized representations of Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves as *visual* texts that use a traditional medieval mythic theological language to embody an ideological vision of a natural and inviolable order. I argue that, while their use of traditional medieval allegorical language attempts to conceal an ideological gap between an ideal division of class and gender roles and the realities of the modern capitalist market place, their conservative demeanor has deflected critical attention from more complex and radical readings that emerge when these images are repositioned within the frameworks of his post-Darwinian theology and feminist sympathies.

Like many intellectuals in his era, Watts broke with the religion of his childhood. Although he was raised as an evangelical, in response to influences such as Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) and Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* (1859), he embarked upon a lifelong quest to create an art that could reconcile his unabated spiritual longings with the tenets of modern science. Although he was convinced that traditional theology was outmoded, he mourned the loss of religious moral sanction that had provided an ethical basis for social interaction and cultural expression.[2] For nearly forty years, from the late sixties until his death in 1904, he worked on a series of paintings called "The House of Life," which sought to recast Michelangelo's Catholic view of the moral history of humanity on the Sistine Ceiling in scientifically-compatible, post-Darwinian terms. The series, which presented human history as a divinely-ordained progression leading toward spiritual perfection through the evolutionary development of

conscience,[3] was intended to provide the masses with images of positive moral ideals that would encourage social cohesion and elevate the nation. Watts' representations of the Madonna, the Magdalene, and Eve must be understood as part of this broader program of theological and cultural renegotiation.

Interpreters of Watts' art, who have not taken his theological agenda into account, have interpreted the iconography of his modernized Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves through the lens of binary stereotypes of gender roles that define femininity in terms of rigid opposition to masculinity, thus misunderstanding them. In this familiar binary scheme, the public realm of government, culture, and commerce is identified as a masculine space, thereby naturalizing male control over political and economic activities, while the private realm of the family is linked to femininity. Woman is invested with the primary responsibility for upholding morality through her domestic role as wife and mother (the ideal of the "angel in the house"), and her elevation and purity renders her unsuited for participation in a public sphere dominated by capitalist, self-oriented aggression (see Cominos and Barker-Benfield). Wilfred Blunt, Bram Dijiskstra, and Joseph Kestner read Watts' images of women as reflections of this restrictive stereotype of femininity, describing them as static and passive images that confirm conventional patriarchal presumptions about the essentialist, unchanging nature of woman. Moreover, they contend that they were motivated primarily by his personal fear of female power (Blunt 57, 154; Dijikstra 17-18; Kestner 13).[4] However, as Jeffrey Weeks and Mary Poovey have demonstrated, Victorian gender ideology was neither as monolithic nor as absolute as it has sometimes been portrayed. Rather, it was a specifically middle-class fabrication that was always contested and continuously under construction (Weeks 23 and Poovey 3). This Foucauldian critical model, which looks at texts (visual and otherwise) as arguments within a discourse about cultural renegotiation, permits acknowledgment of the complexities and contradictions of Watts' modernized Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves, and encourages ideological (as opposed to merely biographical) analysis of their iconography.

The assertion that Watts' Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves were motivated primarily by his personal fear of female power is a misleading (and largely undocumented) speculative description of his psychological relationships to the women in his life that ignores the fact that, unlike most Victorian patriarchs, Watts was a feminist. His closest friendships were with powerfully intellectual women who challenged the conventional stereotypes of passive, domesticated femininity,[5] and he openly supported the feminist causes of his era: equal education for women, the anti-corset movement, women's participation in sports and other physical activities,

the revival of home embroidery as a source of income for lower-class women, and the integration of women into the "masculine" realm of the public arena.[6] These sympathies are vividly conveyed in his portrait of John Stuart Mill (1873), which portrays the Liberal feminist author of *The Subjection of Women* (1869) as a visionary Victorian sage. Indeed, Watts' sympathies for feminist causes sometimes strained his otherwise close relationships with more conservative fellow artists, such as Frederick Leighton, his long-time friend, neighbor, and the President of the Royal Academy, or the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones. Tensions between Watts and these two colleagues came to a head over this issue in 1889, when Leighton asked him to sign an artists' petition against the extension of suffrage to women, which was published in *The Nineteenth Century* magazine, and he refused (Watts II 145-146). The iconography of Watts' Madonnas, Magdalenes, and Eves reveals unanticipated ideological links between his post-Darwinian theology and his unorthodox feminism. It is time to examine it more closely.

Modernizing the Madonna:
Envisioning a Post-Darwinian Altruistic Mother

Throughout his career, Watts painted multiple variations on the theme of a modernized, post-Darwinian Madonna. These images, a sampling of which will be considered here, have generally been interpreted as simplistic reflections of traditional Victorian stereotypes of femininity. *Charity*, a painting that Watts reworked continuously over several decades from 1865-1895, depicts a powerful, full-bodied maternal figure in a dark mantle and flowing robes who embraces her children with gentle strength before a backdrop of spiraling floral forms. The motif of the maternal figure who embraces her children protectively appears again in a later painting called *The Spirit of Christianity*, (1872-79), which differs from *Charity* primarily in that the more disembodied figure of Christianity floats abstractly in an ethereal realm, while the corporeal figure of Charity is grounded firmly on the earth. Dijikstra describes them as representations of "the married woman's role in life, which was deemed especially appropriate because women and children formed, as it were, an inevitable continuity." Positioning them in the ideological context of Michelet's assertions that "the truly virtuous wife was, after all, as innocent as a child," and that "from the cradle, woman is mother, and longs for maternity" (Michelet 82), he reads them as confirmations of the notion that woman's fondest desire was to be surrounded by children, and achieving this desire was "a single indication of her Madonna-like purity and docility," concluding that they encouraged women to be gentle and patient and functioned to keep them "in line at a time when the excesses

of the earlier generation of isolators had already driven many women to organize in opposition to the joys of glorious subordination" (18). However, when they are repositioned within the framework of his scientific theology, their signification is dramatically altered.

Watts' favorite Biblical scripture was Corinthians 1:13, Saint Paul's proclamation that the essence of Christianity lay in faith, hope, and especially love (or charity) rather than in ritual, doctrine, or dogma (Barrington 153). The passage provided the foundation for a Victorian religion of altruistic love that was a pervasive force in Victorian literature. Auguste Comte's *System of Positive Polity* (1851-54, trans. 1875-77) was a pivotal text in this genre. Comte established a Religion of Humanity in which women were urged to renunciate wealth and exempted from work away from home, making them "Priestesses of Humanity in the family circle..." (60-61). He created rituals for a new rational religion in which the major cult object was a personification of Humanity as a Great Goddess with a child on her lap, an image of maternal affection that symbolized the idea that the system of human relationships should be held together by Love and inspire "common social affections" and "aspirations toward willing cooperation" (IV 30).[7] Altruistic love was also celebrated in popular treatises like John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) and Henry Drummond's *The Greatest Thing in the World* (1890). Ruskin declared that charity (selfless work for the common good) was the greatest of virtues, and Drummond identified conscience as the inward aid of God and described morality as the end point of a natural progression that would ultimately carry humanity toward a divine state of perfection. When Watts' modernized Madonnas are reinserted within this discourse on natural theology, their function as emblems for a post-Darwinian vision of woman as the dynamic agent of Humanity's evolutionary spiritual transformation is recovered.

The maternal protagonist in Watts' *Charity* is shown as a nurturing maternal mountain of tenderness who protects her children unselfishly, without distinction according to their faith or creed, guiding them gently toward maturity, and awaking them to their spiritual destinies. Indeed, Hugh Macmillan, a contemporary critic who was familiar with Watts' evolutionary theology, described the painting as a proclamation that "the law of Christ is not the natural selection of the strong to extinguish the weak but the supernatural selection of the weak that they may strengthen and save the strong," asserting that "this is the higher law of love which knows no distinction of creed or race, sex or circumstances; according to which the best endowed stoop to help the least favored of fortune" (209-210). Watts' figure of Christianity in *The Spirit of Christianity* is represented as a non-dogmatic, altruistic religion of charitable, motherly sympathy. Along with Charity, she is the model for the figure of Evolution

in a painting called *Evolution* (1902-04), which Watts was working on at the time of his death. The iconography of this image provides additional clarification about Watts' thinking with regard to the meaning of his modernized Madonnas. As with Charity and Christianity, he represents Evolution as a maternal figure embracing her children. Seated before a landscape of sea, mountains, and clouds, she fixes her gaze on a distant goal that lies beyond the perimeters of human vision. The painting is a post-Darwinian reinterpretation of medieval Last Judgment scenes: the children on Evolution's left (the goats) struggle and battle one another, while those on the right (the sheep) aid each other and look toward their mother for direction. They are poised on the threshold of cosmic transformation through the power of altruistic love. The figure of Evolution is preparing to rise and move toward the horizon. When she does, the ignorant children on her left will be condemned to the limitations of their materialistic hell, while the enlightened children on the right will be carried along. Although, like all of Watts' modernized Madonnas, the painting evokes an aura of occult mystery that is distinctly alien to Comte's analytical positivism, and it was clearly not intended to function as a literal Comtean altar piece, it is nevertheless a distant echo of the French philosopher's vision of Humanity as a Great Goddess with a child on her lap.

Unconditional maternal love not only provided the Victorian model for envisioning common social affections and cooperation, it was also the paradigm for feminist social action within the public arena, and Watt's modernized Madonnas are also inflected with this feminist signification. The allegory of Charity was frequently used as a metaphor for the altruism of early social workers, who, as part of a nascent profession, were often female volunteers from the leisured classes, motivated by religious models of selfless sacrifice. They worked for organizations like the Female Mission to the Fallen, which was established in 1858 to combat the "Great Social Evil" of prostitution. As critics like Alison Smith have noted, "two diametrically opposed images: the Madonna and the Magdalene..." constructed the parameters of Victorian womanhood (7). This symbiotic relationship between interdependent, yet oppositional feminine roles is implicit in Watts' portrait of Mrs. Cavendish-Bendinck and her children (1859), a commissioned representation of maternal virtue that predates his more generalized *Charity*. Mrs. Cavendish-Bendinck's aristocratic husband, who was the parliamentary spokesperson for the brothel lobby, was well-known in London for his liberal patronage of fallen women. Thus, Watts' portrait of his wife was an especially apt embodiment of the ideal upper-class mother whose purity was established by her difference from, yet interdependence upon, the sullied prostitute. The maternal affection and selfless nurturing qualities of the upper-class mother are

the antithesis of the (presumedly) unsentimental, self-oriented mercenary values of the masculine marketplace associated with the prostitute. Even more than property or lineage, the cloistered purity of aristocratic women like Mrs. Cavendish-Bendinck separated them from the pollution of lower-class status. Victorians believed that these upper class women were better suited to social work than their male counterparts because they introduced a more caring and sensitive approach that incorporated the law of love into the ruthlessly competitive public sphere. The grace that upper-class Victorian female social workers acquired as the result of their social station, which elevated them above the defiling demands of marketplace, coupled with their familial connections to male power, enabled them to function as Madonna-like intercessors between their fallen parishoners and the omnipotent patriarchal Fathers.

Like *Mrs. Cavendish-Bendinck*, Watts' portrait of Jeanne Nassau-Senior (1855-56) can also be read as a commentary on the theme of upper-class maternal Charity. Nassau-Senior, one of Watts' most intimate friends, was the daughter-in-law of the prominent conservative economist. As the founder of the "Association for Befriending Young Servants," a home for unwed pregnant women from the lower classes, she became one of the earliest Victorian women to work as a professional social worker when she was appointed inspector of workhouses by the government in 1874. However, because she worked in the public sphere with disreputable women from the under- classes, her peers considered her scandalous and she was ostracized by "proper" society (Chapman 61). In his portrait, Watts mitigated the controversy surrounding his friend by situating her within a domestic setting rather than in the public domain, and by placing flowers and a clear vessel, traditional symbols for the Madonna's purity, in the foreground of the painting. Nevertheless, the painting pays homage to Nassau-Senior's work; she is shown providing the water of life to a thriving potted plant, an allusion to her nurturing role as the caretaker of pregnant young women. While this conflation of feminine nurturing with natural law remains essentialist (as well as classist in its suggestion of an upper-class desire to tame the perceived innate sexual vigor of the poor), Victorian feminists like George Eliot and Florence Nightingale were using similar rationales to argue for the naturalness of extending the nurturing, maternal qualities linked to essentialist notions of femininity beyond the threshold of the home and into the male-dominated public domain as a check on perceived (masculine) amorality (see Jenkins). In *Adam Bede*, for example, Eliot, a much admired acquaintance of Watts (Chapman 76), maintained that "...the mother's yearning, that completest type of the life in another life, which is the essence of real human love," is the true "language of nature" (477). In her treatise *Suggestions for Thought to Searchers After Religious Truth* (1860), Nightingale predicted

that because of her innate capacity for compassion, "woman will be the saviour of her race" (Jenkins 30). When Watts' modernized Madonnas are recontextualized within the framework of this contemporary feminist discourse, they can be read as feminist arguments for the expansion of women's roles into the public arena.

Modernizing the Magdalene: Purifying the Fallen Woman

Like Watts' portrait of Nassau-Senior, his representations of prostitutes also meld binary categories of purity and pollution to resacralize images of women contaminated by their presence in the public sphere. His study for *The Magdalene* was painted in the early sixties at a time when he was in close contact with the Pre-Raphaelites, who, like many artists and writers of the era, were obsessed with fallen women. After 1840, when William Tain, an evangelical physician from Edinburgh, published *Magdalenism: An Inquiry in the Extent, Causes, and Consequences of Prostitution*, it became popular to refer to prostitutes as Magdalenes. Anglican sisterhoods coalesced around the mission of caring for and reforming prostitutes during the fifties, establishing Magdalene homes staffed by philanthropically-minded female volunteers from the leisured classes. Apocryphal Biblical texts describe Mary Magdalene as a former prostitute who became Christ's leading female disciple. As a symbol of the repentant sinner, she was a potent reminder that Christ himself had forgiven this sin. Watts' Magdalene lifts her head toward the heavens with a gesture that suggests her aspiration toward purity. Her eyes are closed in prayer-like contemplation and self-examination, and her face is illuminated by a supernatural light that signifies her divine redemption.

Prostitution was epidemic in the Victorian era, in part because women, who were systematically excluded from most well-paying jobs, were often destitute and, thus, vulnerable to exploitation. The movement of large segments of the population from villages to cities frequently resulted in the breakdown of the family, orphanhood, abandonment, widowhood, or other unfortunate circumstances that left women with few options for earning independent livelihoods. Better educated women could become governesses and live in modest comfort, but lower class women, if they could find work at all, were relegated to low-paying positions with exhausting hours, as miners, unskilled factory workers, domestics, clerks, or seamstresses (Tait 26). Many unemployed or underemployed women in exploitative jobs moved to urban centers to find work and were uprooted from the communal security and emotional bonds of their traditional support networks. These women often felt alienated from middle-and upper-class definitions of femininity in terms of domestic purity that were not applicable to the actualities of their

economic or social situations. As E. M. Sigsworth and T. J. Wye note, Victorian opinion on the innate sexuality of women as a contributing factor in prostitution was divided, and surely this factor was variable, but, regardless of individual motivations, the institutionalization of prostitution served an important social function by preserving the virginity of women from the wealthier classes and assuring the paternity of male heirs, while still satisfying the sexual appetites of men. This commodification of female sexuality resulted not only in epidemic prostitution, but also in a high rate of illegitimacy and rampant venereal disease. While the actual numbers are elusive, William Acton estimated that one-twelfth of the unmarried women in England and Wales must have "strayed from the paths of virtue," and the census figures in 1851 record 42,000 illegitimate children. According to Walter Houghton, police files in 1850 listed 8,000 known prostitutes in London and 50,000 in England and Wales. An equally staggering statistic, published in an 1857 issue the medical journal *The Lancet*, estimated that one in every sixteen women in London was a whore, and that one in sixty houses was a brothel. Thus calculated, there were approximately 80,000 prostitutes and 6,000 brothels.

During the mid-sixties, the Victorian discourse on prostitution intensified, galvanizing around the controversy over the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1865-69. These new laws required the forced examination of suspected prostitutes in an effort to arrest the alarming spread of venereal disease in the armed forces, thereby essentially institutionalizing the practice. In 1886, after several decades of heated debate, the Acts were finally repealed, largely due to the efforts of the Ladies National Association led by Josephine Butler. Butler argued that the Acts not only condoned vice, but that they interfered with the civil liberties of women and violated the feelings of those whose sense of shame is not wholly lost, further "brutalizing even the most abandoned," while leaving male patrons, the main cause, both of the vice and its dreaded consequences, unpunished (Sigworth and Wyke 96). Butler's visible feminist activism on this touchy issue was controversial. She not only audaciously addressed public gatherings of men, she spoke about indelicate topics that were usually forbidden to women from the leisured classes. Watts supported Butler's cause and in 1894 included her portrait in his Hall of Fame. She subsequently recalled the experience of sitting for Watts in a letter to her son, stating that "he wanted to make me looking into Eternity, looking at something no one else sees, because — he says —1 look like that; and he has certainly given that idea. It is not at all pretty, and the jaw and head are strong and gaunt. I don't think my friends will like it. But then he is not doing it for us, but for posterity; and no doubt it will convey an idea of my hard life work" (*G. F. Watts:*

The Hall of Fame 17). Watts' forceful representation of Butler's determined demeanor presented a new type of assertive female beauty that unsettled Victorian assumptions about the passivity of femininity.[8]

Because prostitutes worked in the masculine public sphere and often crossed class boundaries through associations with their clients, like feminist activists and female social workers, they constituted categorical anomalies that could not be classified in the normal binary scheme of oppositions. Their condition of liminarity endangered traditional Victorian ideology by calling the boundaries of gender and class categories into question, acknowledging their violability, and, thus, revealing their historical construction. In *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas famously observed that in primal cultures the boundaries of the body are used symbolically to express danger to community boundaries. Undefinable, imperfect members of a class who do not fit into clear categories function as "polluting" forces that pose destabilizing threats to the social order and must be reincorporated into the system through rituals that redirect asocial irregularities into recognized social categories (124). Like the ritual purifications that Douglas describes, Watts' paintings of Magdalenes also endeavor to sanctify potentially polluting women who have entered the public sphere by repositioning them within a culturally constructed category of femininity. As his secularized Madonnas purify upper-class social workers who transgress the boundary between private and public charity by entering the workplace, his representations of Magdalenes redeem polluted fallen women by representing them as martyrs. Yet, at the same time, by rendering the distinction between categories of purity and pollution ambiguous, these images expose a gap between ideal bourgeois models of femininity and the actual demands of modern capitalism, thus revealing a crisis in the construction of Victorian gender ideology .

Modernizing Eve: Resacralizing the Female Body

Watts' *She Shall Be Called Woman* (1888-1892, with later reworking) is the first part of a trilogy of large pictures that show the single figure of Eve. Like Watts' modernized Madonnas and Magdalenes, his modernized Eves also blur binary distinctions between purity and pollution and unsettle the essentialist category of femininity; Eve is, after all, simultaneously the mother of humanity, a fallen woman, and a *femme fatale*. In a letter written in 1873, Watts stated his intention that *She Shall Be Called Woman* should represent Eve "in the glory of her innocence," rising upward in an explosion of light and color. He described the second picture in his trilogy as a depiction of her yielding to temptation, and the third as showing her restored to beauty and nobility by remorse

(conscience). Watts, who believed that nudity was "more fit for a gallery than a dwelling house," planned to donate the series to the nation for public display as part of his larger project on the modernized moral history of humanity, the "House of Life" (Watts I 262). He intended that all three canvases should be seen together, like "parts of an epic poem," along with three other multi-figured scenes from Genesis: *The Creation of Eve, After the Transgression,* and *The Denunciation of Cain*. However, at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1892, where space was limited, he allowed *She Shall Be Called Woman* to stand for the entire series, and, for similar reasons, it shall do so here as well.

The figure of Eve in *She Shall Be Called Woman* is the embodiment of Mother Nature; she is the Tree of Life, an *axis mundi*. Her feet are grounded in matter at the base of the canvas and her erect body stretches toward the radiant sunlight that falls into the space of the picture from above and illuminates her torso. Watts' second wife and biographer, Mary, compared Eve's axial centrality within the painting to a passage in Plato's *Republic*, which describes "a line of light, straight, as a column extending through the whole heaven through the earth in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer" (Jowett translation). She recalls that Watts told her he wanted the figure not so much to stand in light as to emit light, and that the upturned face was dark in the midst of light because human intuitions may take the human mind into a region where reason stops, "a dark with excessive light (Milton)" (Watts II 140). According to Mary, Watts did not envision her as the apotheosis of womanhood but rather an embodiment of the eternal feminine (II 138-139). Indeed, he declared that she is "not so much, or rather not all, the Eve of Genesis, nor Milton either," but "an incarnation of the spirit of our time, and a hope for the future. It (sic) is intended to suggest the very essence of life—of the spiritual..." (Watts II 140). Eve's face tilts longingly upward toward the sunlight, a recurring motif in Watts' art that symbolizes humanity's desire for reunion with the "divine intelligence" that dwells within nature and brings order to the cosmos (Watts 1:317).[9] Modern commentators on the painting have also stressed its spiritual aspirations. Barbara Bryant observes that Watts left the Biblical origins of the Eve subjects "far behind" as he "developed the idea of a life force, igniting a new set of meanings for the 1890s" (267), and David Stewart notes that Eve is not simply Adam's helper, the newly created Biblical Eve, but a powerful modern spiritual Eve who is both the material world and its spiritual emanation (302).

A close reading of *She Shall be Called Woman* suggests that Watts has represented Eve, the symbol of Humanity's embodiment in the finite world of time and space, in the process of evolving from her corporeal state to an immaterial condition of transcendent luminosity. A small

white butterfly, symbolic of humanity's transformation from material embeddedness into celestial spiritual energy, floats emblematically in the golden radiance of the upper-left corner of the composition. Clouds, flowers, and birds swirl around Eve's axial figure in a serpentine circular spiral that seems to emanate from within her. Her flowing hair streams outward, merging with an enveloping cloud that bears her upward in defiance of gravity. At points within the composition, the edges of her body dissolve into pure, disembodied light and color. The glowing, luminescent tone of the painting conveys the sacred origin of Eve's life-giving spirit. Her purity and redemption signify the purity and redemption of (feminine) matter.

Watts' Eves, like his Madonnas and Magdalenes, resacralize the polluted (and potentially polluting) female body. Although his modernized allegorical tropes of femininity remain conservative in their essentialist conflation of women with nature and maternity, when they are repositioned within the contemporary debates surrounding post-Darwinian evolutionary theology and Victorian feminism, which link women's maternal roles to an evolutionary progression toward moral knowledge and spiritual transcendence, it is clear that they undermine rather than confirm traditional assumptions about the static essentialism of gender roles. Moreover, they augur unexpected possibilities for female empowerment within the public sphere.

SUNY - Geneseo

NOTES

1. Watts' posthumous reputation has undergone unusually dramatic shifts. At the time of his death, he was one of the most respected artists in Europe, but a few years later, with the advent of Modernism in conjunction with Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist show in 1910, his reputation plummeted and has only somewhat recovered. His art has received extensive treatment in two catalogs: *The Victorian High Renaissance* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1979) and *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (Tate Gallery, 1997). There are two biographies: Ronald Chapman's *The Laurel and the Thorn* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949) and Blunt, cited above; but a modern book that addresses Watts' work in a cultural context does not yet exist. Suggestions by various scholars that Watts lacked virility, the quality of masculine dominance that became the hallmark of the modernist artist, may account, at least in part, for his relatively low status in the art historical canon.

2. Mary Watts reports her husband's recollection of his childhood revulsion at the insincere wrath of a preacher in black. In his late years, Watts became a rather vocal critic of doctrinal sectarianism. Mary, who disagreed with his negative views on institutionalized Christianity, describes his position rather tactfully, observing that, although he felt "such great reverence for religion that it was difficult for him to speak about it," he "rebelled against the unreality of ordinary religious teaching" (15-16).

3. While the dimensions and dates of these paintings vary widely, Watts often hung works of varying sizes together, stipulating that they should be seen in relationship to each other, like "parts of an epic poem," and he clearly conceived of them as fragments of a

larger, coherent vision. Reading them as a thematic unit within the Victorian "crisis of faith" debates not only provides insight into their implications for contemporary viewers, it also demonstrates their pivotal significance for the subsequent discourse of Victorian studies. For further discussion of Watts' theological orientation and its relationships to postmodern concerns, see Board, "Arts Moral Mission" and "Modernizing the Grail Quest."

4. There is not much solid evidence to work with regarding Watts' fear of women or lack thereof. Watts' critics frequently cast aspersions on his virility (Blunt and Kestner), and Kestner states that "Watts' intellectual abstraction represents an avoidance of human passion: severe sexual repression characterized him throughout his life" (73). However, as even Blunt must acknowledge, so little is known about his sexual life that it "must always remain a mystery" (25).

5. Throughout his life, Watts' closest friends were women. In his youth in Italy, while living with Lord and Lady Holland at the Villa Medici in Careggi outside of Florence, he was close to his patron Lady Holland, as well as to Georgiana Duff Gordon. After his return to England in 1847, when he became a permanent guest at Little Holland House in Kensington, his most intimate friendships were with his hostess, Sarah Prinsep, and her four sisters, especially Virginia Pattle (Lady Somers) and Julia Margaret Cameron. Later in life, he was close to a variety of women, including Jeannie Nassau-Senior, Mrs. Russell Barrington, and, of course, his second wife, Mary Tyler, among others. He also had a large following of female pupils who adored him. This pattern of inter-gender friendship was unusual for Victorian patriarchs and can, perhaps, be explained, at least in part, by the early death of his mother, his unhappy childhood, and his unfulfilled adolescent longing for female sympathy.

6. For example, Watts' adopted daughter, Lilian Macintosh, was allowed to run, uncorseted and unrestrained, just as boys did. He believed that girls should be educated with the same care as male children (Blunt 107 and 210). He wrote an introduction for a pamphlet supporting Lady Marion Alford's efforts to make needlework fashionable and provide employment for women in a productive and artistic home industry (Watts II 191-202).

7. Identifying Woman as the affective sex, Comte confined her to the home, where, in recognition of the altruism of her maternal love for her children and her self-sacrificial support for her husband, she would be worshipped as the most perfect representatives of Humanity (Comte, *Catechisme positiviste* (Paris, 1891, 104-108, cited in McGee 13). By contrast, Mill, who is other respects admired Comte, was, of course, an advocate for women's equality in the public sphere, as was Watts.

8. The continued potency of the debate surrounding the question of prostitution is demonstrated by Watts' reluctance to publicly exhibit another of his images of prostitution, *Found Drowned* (1848-1850). In this painting, he depicted the unregarded body of a prostitute who has thrown herself off a bridge as it is washed up along the banks of the Thames. She is represented as the destitute victim of ruthless social indifference, whose tranquil face and cruciform pose, illuminated by a halo of light, imply that her spiritual purity remains intact. Watts not only refrained from exhibiting the painting at mid-century when he conceived it, as late as 1881-82, he still considered it too controversial for inclusion in his retrospective exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery (Casteras 22).

9. Watts' marble bust of *Clytie* (1867-1878) is a probably the best known example of this motif in his work. Clytie was a nymph who loved the sun god Apollo. When he deserted her, she was turned into a sunflower whose head constantly turns to follow the sun. Watts' portrait of Ellen Terry (1864) also shows his young wife craning her neck longingly in order to glimpse a revelation that lies beyond the picture frame, and numerous allegorical paintings of Dawn, as well as some of his seated maternal figures with children on their laps, like *Peace and Goodwill* (1888-1900), show women turning their heads yearningly toward the sun.

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Of Sanctified Bodies and Stuffed Rumps: Reading the Medieval Narrative of Carlyle's *Past and Present*

Jen Gonyer-Donohue

In his 1843 polemic *Past and Present*, Thomas Carlyle thrusts a menagerie of economically and spiritually devastated characters at us to illustrate his view of the social deprivation of nineteenth-century England. One such image is a recent papal procession in Rome. He writes:

> The old Pope of Rome, finding it laborious to kneel so long while they cart him through the streets to bless the people on *Corpus Christi Day*, complains of rheumatism; whereupon his Cardinals consult; ~ construct him, after some study, a stuffed cloaked figure, of iron and wood, with wool or baked hair; and place it in a kneeling posture. Stuffed figure, or rump of a figure; to this stuffed rump he, sitting at his ease on a lower level, joins, by the aid of cloaks and drapery, his living head and outspread hands: the rump with its cloaks kneels, the Pope looks, and holds his hands spread; and so the two in concert bless the Roman population on *Corpus Christi Day*, as well as they can.[1]

Carlyle laments that this rolling phantasm must be the most remarkable Pontiff "that has darkened God's daylight" — the representative of Christ on Earth constructed through artifice rather than Nature and literally full of empty gestures. He sees this same hollowness of gesture in the English leadership, only he sees it in the secular Aristocracy that is "no longer able to do its work" and incapable of serving the needs of those whom it leads. The English Aristocracy, Carlyle complains, does not even make an effort at staging a "show" of leadership for the people, unlike the Papal effigy. "Is our poor English Existence wholly becoming a Nightmare; full of mere Phantasms?"[2]

As a remedy for Phantasm-leadership and its attendant Corn Laws and workhouses, Carlyle advocates not necessarily a return to the distant past but rather a return to the heroic qualities he admires in past leaders. In book two of *Past and Present*, he casts a hypnotic spell on his readers with a glowing narrative of a twelfth-century abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, a figure originally found in the *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*. Carlyle's representation of the past, constructed through his textual "hero-worship" of Abbot Samson, is juxtaposed with the morally bankrupt world of Victorian England so that Samson emerges as a great heroic leader who possesses qualities Carlyle's contemporaries should strive to emulate. By revisiting the original chronicle, along with the second book of *Past and Present*, this paper will argue that Carlyle himself constructs stuffed effigies for the sake of hero-worship. The point of this essay is not to

condemn Carlyle for hypocrisy, however, but rather to discover a fresh metaphoric model through which to reread the textual body of his medieval narration.

Carlyle claims that he was first inspired to write of the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds during a trip to Suffolk in search of materials for his historical work on Cromwell. It is on this trip that he toured the ruins of the abbey (admission costing one shilling, or 10% of the average laborer's weekly pay) and witnessed the dismal and hopeless despair of the St. Ives workhouse. His visit to the town "thus fixed for good in his mind the stark antithesis of the beautiful and spacious past and the harsh and grinding present, ... juxtaposition of medieval abbey and modern workhouse."[3] Touring the ruins of the abbey may not have been the sole source of inspiration for Carlyle, however, for the *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond* was not an obscure manuscript but rather one of the Camden Society's most successful medieval-document publications in this time of renewed interest in historical sources[4], and was readily accessible to anyone who possessed the basic Latin skills for reading this ancient "Monk or Dog Latin" (as Carlyle describes it).[5]

One of the more influential studies of "'The Ancient Monk" is Grace Calder's analysis of the known pre-publication manuscript fragments. After comparing Carlyle's translation of the chronicle passages in the manuscripts with the published edition of *Past and Present*, Calder concludes that Carlyle is true to his historical source, and although he adds "moral warnings" to the chronicle narrative, he does not alter Jocelin's historical text. She describes Carlyle as framing the chronicle, "fashioning around Book II a gesso border of his own composition," and asserts that Carlyle does not "distort the picture he impanels for his modern spectators; the panel is Jocelin's own document."[6] According to Calder, Carlyle remains faithful to the medieval chronicle, animating Jocelin's ancient Latin in order for his Victorian readers to lose themselves in their twelfth-century hero-ancestry and recognize the moral bankruptcy of their own contemporary culture. Unfortunately, Calder does not transcribe all of the chapters found in the manuscript fragments, nor does she identify the chapters in the manuscripts that she has chosen not to transcribe. Her omission makes it difficult to evaluate thoroughly her laudatory conclusions on Carlyle's faithfulness to Jocelin without turning to the original chronicle itself. Subsequent criticism of book two seems to accept Calder's conclusions at face value, even as newer critical and theoretical positions are established.[7]

It is difficult to concur with Calder that book two is "an unsurpassed record of the Middle Ages" or even the "most representative of Carlyle's histories,"[8] for Carlyle seems to be more interested in discerning overall patterns of greater human truths in his source materials than in

transcribing them verbatim. Carlyle shows great disdain for the Dryasdust-type historian because the strictly factual, document-derived analysis "could not discern the larger patterns of truth."[9] By examining other "historical" works by Carlyle, Beverly Taylor identifies his historical method to be a process of first reading the Dryasdust documents for which he shows such disdain, establishing a pattern of "human truth" in the documents, stripping away any materials that do not fit into this pattern of experience, and then supplying new details to "embody" the established human truth.[10] Using this model, Carlyle could have chosen to use the passages in Jocelin's chronicle that support his assessment of Samson as a hero-leader while omitting any passages that do not fit the pattern of "truth," opening up a number of theoretical possibilities when critically reading his narrative of Abbot Samson.

An excellent example of Carlyle's "patterning" of human truths through a conscious use of historical details is found in Alice Chandler's recent essay, "Carlyle and the Medievalism of the North."[11] Although Carlyle is usually considered a "neo-feudalist who looked to the paternalistic and hierarchical structures of the high Middle Ages for solutions to the 'Condition of England' problem," he is very much aware of the traditional reform ethos of freedom and independence associated with Anglo-Saxon medievalism,[12] especially considering his interests in German philosophers and literature. Even though these medieval traditions of nineteenth-century reform — the fierce and independent Teutonic Liberals, and the chivalrous and hierarchical Norman Tories — were seen as polar opposites,[13] Chandler argues that Carlyle is utilizing elements from both traditions in his depiction of Abbot Samson and his patron saint, Edmund.

While the setting for *Past and Present* may be the feudal Bury St. Edmunds — within the jurisdiction of the monarchy and papacy but clearly under the thumb of the abbot — the two key figures in the narrative have been crafted as heroes who are a part of both models of medievalism. Carlyle "borrow[s] from the iconography of the Saxonists" in his depiction of Edmund, emphasizing the king's role as a social leader, while his role as a fierce warrior is suppressed. For Carlyle, Edmund is a farmer and a landlord. "A faithful Christian and a figure of self-sacrifice, he dies under torture by the Danes fighting to protect his people," but Edmund's participation in battle is a reaction to violence originating outside of him.[14] By carefully editing "the facts of his life to emphasize his benevolence and his martyrdom, Carlyle avoids having to cope with the dilemma of reconciling violence with righteousness" that arises when advocating a return to the ethos of a pre-Conquest society.

On the other hand, Abbot Samson is said to be a rough and roguish man who can easily pass himself off as a brutish Northern Scotsman.

This is unusual considering his position and power as a figure who historically would be entrenched in the trappings of a traditional feudal society. Although he is a fiercely strong leader, Carlyle tempers the abbot's "terrible anger" by emphasizing his benevolent leadership and concern for the common good of his followers. "Like the traditional figures of chivalric medievalism, Samson is a figure of self-sacrifice; but he is also the violent 'hard primitive' of Carlyle's Norse vision."[15] In the end, Chandler discerns two different political ideals that Carlyle is advocating in his Samson narrative -- the neo-feudal idea that "security in an ordered society" is more important than political freedom for the poor, and the Liberal-Saxon idea that freely choosing one's leaders is ideal. According to Chandler,

> Abbot Samson's confreres knew how to elect a leader because they lived in an organic society that acknowledged the spiritual dimension. In an age of unbelief, Victorian society cannot select a leader. Democracy is the failed substitute for heroism — a destructive philosophy, Carlyle believes, that will itself have to be destroyed.[16]

Natural leaders will rise to the top and be elected by the members of a spiritually-centered community through a common trust in the "integrity and authenticity" of that leader's character truths. At the risk of offending Carlyle's critical sensibilities by engaging in Dryasdust practices of criticism, it will prove valuable to examine the authenticity of Abbot Samson himself and what other, larger character "truths" Carlyle may be suppressing in his translation of the chronicle.

Linda Georgianna is the only recent scholar who has thoroughly examined both *Past and Present* and the original chronicle together in an effort to verify the "truth" of Carlyle's Samson since Calder's 1949 study, and no one has followed Georgianna's lead since her 1980 essay.[17] According to Georgianna, a "medievalist's view of Carlyle's use and misuse of a monastic chronicle should help pave the way for a reconsideration by twentieth-century scholars of Carlyle's historical sense,"[18] but unfortunately only one critic has cited her work.[19] Unlike critics who take Calder's analysis at face value, Georgianna's essay challenges Calder's positive assessment of Carlyle's historical veracity.

Carlyle's representation of Abbot Samson differs greatly from Jocelin's chronicle, which records the political rise and *fall* of a new abbot, elected to restore his convent after the last abbot decimated its finances. Although Carlyle asserts that the chronicle is in "confused Paper-Masses," which he is magnanimously willing to sift through as our editor,[20] Jocelin's narrative structure is well organized with a clear "thread of a story concerning his innocent and high expectations of Samson, and the disillusionment which time and experience bring."[21] Upon Samson's

election, Jocelin records the hopes of the monastery that the abbot will lift the convent out of debt and restore its privileges and reputation. About halfway through the chronicle, though, he loses faith in Abbot Samson and we encounter scene after scene demonstrating the abbot's lust for power and political control. Samson would rage in anger, stage false emotions, and, oftentimes, excommunicate those who displeased or challenged him. By the end of Jocelin's chronicle, Samson is as humanly flawed and corrupted by power and money as his predecessor was. Jocelin leaves us with a picture of Samson as an ineffective and ill abbot who has further demoralized the monks and plunged the abbey deeper into debt. The original chronicle hardly supplies us with a picture of a great leader deserving of hero-worship.

Through misquotations, omissions, and re-arrangements, Carlyle successfully appropriates Jocelin's figure of Abbot Samson and translates him into the hero-leader the project of *Past and Present* requires. Georgianna points out that Carlyle must have been consciously revising the narrative of his source, for Calder's examination of the *Past and Present* manuscript "demonstrates that Carlyle kept his copy of the chronicle close at hand, returning to it frequently in order to check and improve his accuracy."[22] Carlyle has made seemingly minor but highly effective changes to the original chronicle materials, such as suppressing passages describing Samson rigging elections, selling off convent liberties; and taking as praise King Henry's criticism of the new abbot upon his election. Carlyle writes that once he is chosen by the king, Samson genuflects, turns to face the alter, and

in a clear tenor-tone, the Fifty-first Psalm, *Miserere mei Deus*, . . . with firm voice, firm step and head, no change in his countenance whatever. "By God's eyes," said the king, "that one, I think, will govern the abbey well." By the same oath,, . . . I too am precisely of that opinion! It is some while since I fell in with a likelier man anywhere than his new Abbot Samson.[23]

Even though he follows the details of the chronicle very closely, in the original text, the king actually says, "this elect thinks himself worthy to be the guardian of his Abbey."[24] In addition, Carlyle downplays the true reasons Samson's monks revolted against him, an episode that first marks a descent of Samson's character in Jocelin's chronicle. Carlyle buries this mutiny in the middle of his narration well before Samson's dramatic inspection of the body of St. Edmund. In contrast, the original rebellion occurs immediately after the transference of the saint and tempers the glory of its miraculous incorruption.[25]

Carlyle has created a legend of the eternal Samson by dropping his "time-curtains" onto the chronicle immediately following St. Edmund's

transference, freezing our impression of Samson as forever standing at Edmund's side, Georgianna suggests. Carlyle implies that the chronicle is cut off and lacks a sufficient conclusion, for he writes that Samson "makes for departure, departs, and — And Jocelin's Boswellean narrative, suddenly shorn through by the scissors of Destiny, ends. There are no words more; but a black line, and leaves of blank paper."[26] Looking at the original text, however, we can see that it is not Destiny who cuts short the chronicle but Carlyle himself. The original chronicle ends on a rather low note, the last line being a quote from Ovid expressing Jocelin's doubt in Samson's last promise to help the monastery: "in promises there's none but may be rich."[27] Carlyle ignores this bitter reference to the abbot's reputation for making empty promises. By cutting short the narrative and discarding the remaining four years of history with which Jocelin concludes, Carlyle suspends Samson in history following his triumphant examination and verification of the sanctity and incorruptness of the abbey's patron saint and resident relic, St. Edmund.

Establishing the sanctity of St. Edmund's body was of great importance to Samson, for the financial health of the convent depended upon the incorruptible reputation of the saint. Jocelin describes in great detail, which Carlyle translates almost word for word, Samson opening the saint's tomb and displaying the incorrupt body of Edmund in an attempt to quell rumors that the supposed 300-year-old relic had been singed in a sanctuary fire.[28] The body was viewed in a secret nocturnal ceremony with only Samson, the physician, the sacrist, and a few others in attendance. Jocelin describes the body as being so large that "a needle could scarce be placed between the saint's head or feet and the wood" of the coffin. Samson removed the layers of linen and silk that shrouded the body until he reached the final layer of linen, stating that he "not dare go further to see the sacred flesh unclothed."[29] Jocelin describes the saint's nose as extremely large and his feet turned "stiffly upwards as of a man dead that self-same day." Once Samson himself touched all of the parts of the body through the linen covering, including putting his fingers between the holy digits and checking to make sure the head was securely attached, he allowed the other monks to come closer to view the body,[30] therefore successfully demonstrating to his followers that the body was in fact still whole. But was it the holy body?

According to Antonia Gransden, the details of this 1198 viewing suggest that the body in the coffin was not 300 years old because it appears to have been embalmed. Embalming practices were not perfected until the mid-seventeenth century, and the technique used in the Middle Ages had only temporary results. Gransden asserts that this embalmed body could not have been 300 years old, not even 100 years old (the previous viewing had been in 1098), since the process used could preserve

a body for a week at most.[31]   In addition, a very large nose and stiff upwards-pointed feet are typical of bodies that have been embalmed since dehydration is a part of the process.[32] It is also very likely that this was a different body than what the coffin was originally sized for considering how tightly it fit. The fact that Samson did not remove the final layer of linen to expose the "holy flesh," that he was the only one who touched the body, and that the viewing took place at night by candlelight further suggest that this was not the body of Edmund but perhaps of a recently deceased villager.[33]   Jocelin does not mention any smells of aromatics when the coffin was opened, which is another clue that this is a new body since the accounts of the previous viewings of the body in 967 and 1098 record a very powerful odor of aromatics filling the church.[34] Finally, the account of Samson lifting the hands and putting his fingers in between the dead ones is unlikely to have occurred since the body would have been too stiff, especially considering the description of the stiff feet. Gransden suggests that "Samson may have conveyed to the monks an idealized image of the body, one reflecting his own perception of a perfect, incorrupt body," for chances are none of the other monks would have been able to see clearly Samson manipulating the body considering their distance from the coffin and the low level of light.[35] This viewing very well could have been a well-orchestrated staging and performance on Samson's part to strengthen the faith in Edmund's incorruptible holy body, just as the body itself may have been constructed and sanctified by Samson.[36]

Again, the purpose of this essay is not to debunk the legend that St. Edmund's body was uncorrupted, nor is it to "prove" that Carlyle was deceptive or unfaithful to his sources; neither of these conclusions is productive in examining the relationship between Carlyle and his medieval source. However, the possibility that Samson may have staged the viewing of St. Edmund's body does give us an interesting metaphoric model of Carlyle's literary technique. Just as Samson has staged an unveiling of the saint's body for his monks, Carlyle too has staged an unveiling of Samson to his readers. Carlyle has taken the figure of Samson as he was in the beginning of Jocelin's chronicle, emptied the body cavity to prevent change and decay, and embalmed the body — essentially constructing a "sanctified" body for reverence when the body was originally a corruptible human with flaws. Although the figurative body is too big for the textual coffin, Carlyle can still make his new holy Samson fit in the space originally intended for the flawed Samson (the context of Jocelin's chronicle being this coffin). Carlyle can still get the book lid closed — and his Victorian audience is never the wiser. Carlyle also leaves the last layer of linen on the body so that we too must accept his word that this is truly Samson. Although the original Samson is fallen and decayed, Carlyle has

successfully reconstructed an ideal and incorruptible Samson for his theatrical presentation of the medieval hero-leader. Similarly, just as the sanctity of Edmund's body may have been constructed by Abbot Samson, and the sanctity of Abbot Samson's body was constructed by Carlyle, the sanctity of book two of *Past and Present* has been constructed, preserved, and is continuously reasserted by the literary critics who base their discussions on the veracity and fidelity of Carlyle's transcription/translation of the *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*.

It is perhaps ironic that Carlyle criticizes the parade of the stuffed pope — and the Catholics in the Roman streets venerating this constructed effigy of leadership — and yet he parades around his own Phantasm demanding veneration from his readers. In turn, we the readers and critics readily comply, continuing the long tradition of hero-worship of Abbot Samson (and of Carlyle himself) without investigating the substance of the figure wrapped in cere-cloth. On the other hand, even though he ridicules the artifice of the dummy parade, Carlyle still sees positive aspects of the papacy: the pope is still a representative of charity and "gives loaves to the poor," and his Jesuits were essentially the only attendants to those dying of cholera in Italy.[37] In addition, the theatricality of the Mass and processions provides a spiritual focal point in this God-less society. The stage-mechanisms of the Church, which Carlyle refers to as a "scenic phantasmagory of wax-candles, organ-blasts, Gregorian Chants, mass-brayings, wool-and-iron rumps, artistically spread out"[38] — help maintain the faith and hope of the people. This is better than the alternative hollowness of skepticism, atheism, doubt -- in other words, the self-awareness of being soul-less. While this stuffed pope may not be quite the Saxon leader spiritually elected,[39] the effigy is certainly a more promising figurehead than England's seven foot high roaming hat. Carlyle writes:

> There is in this Pope, and his practice of the Scenic Theory of Worship, a frankness which I rather honour. Not half and half, but with undivided heart does he set about worshipping by stage-machinery; as if there were now, and could again be, in Nature no other.[40]

Could not this be said for Carlyle's effigy of an abbot as well? Almost as if taking his cue from this disparaged yet respected Pope, using his own Scenic Theory of Worship, Carlyle has both constructed and sanctified an ecclesiastic figure to save his nineteenth-century audience from emptiness and despair — planting a seed of hope in them that the soul of society can be recuperated without antiseptic salt. It is only fitting that he chose Abbot Samson who had himself mastered the Scenic Theory of Worship and stagecraft to maintain the faith of his own medieval

community — to be the sanctified representation of the long-lost golden era of the Middle Ages as Carlyle has constructed it.

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NOTES:

1. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ed. Richard D. Altick, (New York: New York UP, 1965), pp. 140-1.
2. *Ibid*., p. 143.
3. J. A. W. Bennett, "Carlyle and the Medieval Past," *Reading Medieval Studies* 4 (1978): 3-18. p. 4.
4. Grace J. Calder. *The Writing of Past and Present: A Study of Carlyle's Manuscripts*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1949), p. 25-7. See also Rosemary Jann's discussion of the nineteenth century's fascination with the Middle Ages as indicative of a negative reaction to industrialism and the Enlightenment in "The Condition of England Past and Present: Thomas Carlyle and the Middle Ages," *Studies in Medievalism* 1.1 (1979): 15-31.
5. Carlyle, p. 47. It should be noted that Carlyle may have first recognized the possibility of culling a hero-narrative from the Camden Society publication after reading a review of the chronicle in the January 29, 1841 edition of the *Athenæum*. Bennett draws attention to the review when he asserts that Carlyle must have been familiar with it since it includes "literal renderings of almost all the passages he was to translate." See Bennett, p. 6.
6. Calder, pp. 31-2.
7. Cf. Gordon Hirsch, "History Writing in Carlyle's *Past and Present*," *Prose Studies* 7.3 (1984): 225-31; G. Robert Stange, "Refractions of *Past and Present*," *Carlyle Past and Present: A Collection of New Essays*, eds. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), 96-111; John D. Rosenberg, *Carlyle and the Burden of History*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), pp. 118-36; and Joseph W. Childers, "Carlyle's *Past and Present*, History, and a Question of Hermeneutics," *Clio* 13.3 (1984): 247-58.
8. Calder, p. 21.
9. Beverly Taylor, "Carlyle's Historical Imagination: Untrue Facts and Unfactual Truth," *The Victorian Newsletter* 61 (1982): 29-31, p. 30.
10. *Ibid*., p. 30.
11. In *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman*, eds. Richard Utz and Tom Shippey. (Tumhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998): 173-91.
12. *Ibid.,* pp. 176-7. Chandler further summarizes Carlyle's growing interest in the Northern Saxon tradition of medievalism as evidenced in the *Nibelungen Lied*, the Odin Chapter of *Heroes and Hero Worship*, and *The Early Kings of Norway*. See pp. 178-85.
13. *Ibid*., p. 175.
14. *Ibid*., p. 187.
15. *Ibid*., p. 189.
16. *Ibid*., p. 190.
17. Linda Georgianna, "Carlyle and Jocelin of Brakelond: A Chronicle Rechronicled," *The Browning Institute Studies* 8 (1980): 103-37.
18. *Ibid*., p. 104.
19. See Richard W. Schoch, "'We Do Nothing but Enact History': Thomas Carlyle Stages the Past," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 54 (1999): 27-53.
20. Carlyle, p. 42.
21. Georgianna, p. 111.
22. *Ibid*., p. 107.
23. Carlyle, p. 86.
24. Jocelin de Brakelond, *Cronica Jocelini de Brakelonda de rebus gestis Samsonis abbatis monasterii sancti Edmundi*, Trans. and ed. H. E. Butler. (New York: Oxford UP, 1949), p. 23: *"Iste*

electus videtur sibi dignus abbatie custodiende." Georgianna first brought this change to my attention, p. 108.
25. Jocelin, p. 117.
26. Carlyle, p. 127.
27. Jocelin, p. 137: *"Pollicitis dives quilibet esse potest."* Ironically, this phrase is from *Ars amatoria* (1.444), as Ovid instructs his "pupils" in the art of manipulating maidens for personal gain.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-1.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Antonia Gransden, "The Alleged Incorruption of the Body of St. Edmund, King and Martyr." *The Antiquaries Journal* 74 (1994): 135-68, p. 136. See also Norman Scarfe, "The Body of St. Edmund: An Essay in Necrobiology," *Suffolk Institute of Archæology* 31 (1970): 303-17.
32. Gransden, p. 154.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 142.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
36. See Schoch, pp. 46-7, for a discussion of Samson's staging and sense of performance.
37. Carlyle, p. 141.
38. *Ibid.*
39. cf. Chandler, p. 190.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

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Two New Letters by Auden on Anglo-Saxon Metre and *The Age of Anxiety*

Jane Toswell
Alan Ward

In 1952, Alan Ward, then a young lecturer at Wadham College, Oxford, was preparing a series of lectures on the history of alliterative verse in English and thought of concluding with a lecture on Auden, with specific reference to *The Age of Anxiety*. He wrote to Auden about his use of Anglo-Saxon metres, asking about the extent to which that use was deliberate.[1] Auden replied generously, as the following letters show. The lecture was never completed and these letters have remained in Ward's Auden file since then, and almost overlooked. A chance conversation with Jane Toswell reminded him of their existence. Toswell had been studying Auden's own training in Anglo-Saxon as a student at Oxford, and was wondering whether Auden's Anglo-Saxonism incorporated not only sources and themes but also metre and prosody.[2] This paper, which begins with the exchange of letters between Ward and Auden, and some commentary on them, moves in that direction. The original letter from Ward to Auden has not survived, but a longhand draft of the follow-up letter does and is reproduced here. The content of the original letter can be inferred from Auden's reply.

The page numbers given in Auden's letters are to the first edition of *The Age of Anxiety* as published in London in 1948 and New York in 1947.[3] References to the *Collected Poems* of 1991 and edited by Edward Mendelson[4] are given in square brackets. Typographical errors (including spacing) have been corrected, though Auden's idiosyncratic usage is retained where it has been recognized.

Aug 30
Via Santa Lucia 14
Forio d'Ischia
Prov. di Napoli

Dear Mr. Ward,
    Thank you for your letter of Aug 25 inquiring about the metre of *The Age of Anxiety*.
    1) I made some attempts to obey the quantity rules of O.E. but abandoned them; as in all quantitative experiments in modern English so many vowels become long by position that, without an obviously artifi[ci]al diction, you cannot get enough Lifts of the Accented-Short-unaccented-short type.
    2) To compensate for this relaxation, I took from the romance tradition syllabic counting. In the first two parts of the poem, for instance, the number of syllables in the whole line is 9, so that the caesura always

divides asymmetrically. There is one 2:7 line, I believe, but most are 5:4, 4:5, 3:6, 6:3 etc. Contiguous vowels and vowels through *h* elide. In the more lyrical sections, I have allowed myself more freedom, and, as I expect you will have seen, in many places I have imitated or modified Icelandic meters. I have tried also to follow O.E. practice in avoiding a dactylic rhythm and in ending sentences in the mid-line.

3) The alliteration conforms, I hope, to O.E. rules.

I hope this answers your questions. If you want to know anything more, my address after Sept 14 is 235 Seventh Avenue, New York City II.

<div style="text-align:center">

yours sincerely
W. H. Auden

</div>

22 December 1952 (from handwritten transcript)

. . . I'm particularly interested to know how much you followed OE metrical rules' simply because they offered a discipline, and how much you followed them because they seemed relevant in ModE and suited what you wished to say: with particular reference to:

a) your attempt to avoid an iambic rhythm.

b) your tendency to end sentences in mid-line.

c) alliteration. For instance, with regard to the normal OE practice (which you follow) of allowing ST-, SP- to alliterate only with themselves and not (e.g.) SK-, or S-, do you feel this justified by anything in the sound of the language now? Similarly, when alliterating H- with a vowel, is this expediency or obedience to the ear? Sometimes you alliterate on other consonant-groups beside ST, SP (rather like the ME [Middle English] poets) : are there any groups which you feel (ought) to be the same category as ST and SP (i.e. 'might' to alliterate regularly as a group?)

It has struck me that there is something that may be called 'half-alliteration'; e.g. STONE and TANNED sound to me as if they alliterate almost as much as, say, STONE and SAND. I'd very much like to know whether you feel the same. STONE and STAND certainly seem to alliterate more notably still.

d) the position of the alliteration falling regularly on the first stress of the second half-line, and not double there. I should very much like to know also if you ever consciously used (or avoided), 'crossed alliteration,' (ab/ab) or 'linking alliteration' (ax/ab bx/etc where the alliteration sound(s) of one line are as it were anticipated by the initial sound(s) of the last main stress in the previous line.)

My lectures are not yet complete by any means, but I hope you will not mind my talking about *The Age of Anxiety* to make a comparison with OE verse and show the potentialities that 'rum ram ruf' still hold.

Dec 28

<div align="right">

235 Seventh Avenue
New York City II
New York
U.S.A.

</div>

Dear Mr Ward,

Thank you for your letter of Dec 22. In answer to your first question, I originally started out with the intention of writing a poem of forty or fifty lines, but, once I began, the metre seemed to offer so many possibilities that I changed my mind and wrote a long poem.

There are lines in which the second alliteration is not exact, but I believe or hope that the first and third are always correct, eg

st. s. st. x

Occasionally the same alliteration is used in consecutive lines, but I don't think there is a case of linked alliteration. Cross alliteration is only used in some of the lyrical bits, eg p 61 (Lights are moving) [p. 487] and p 68 (These ancient harbors) [p. 493].

Quite a lot of The Seven Stages is written in Ljóðuháttr, and the lyric on p 39 (Deep in my dark the dream shines) [p. 470] is in Kviðuháttr. P 104 (Hushed is the lake of hawks) [p. 519] is an attempt at a Drápa.

As C. S. Lewis has pointed out, one of the values of the O.E. metre is that it naturally accepts the spondee in a way that our normal 'french' metric does not. On the whole, I suspect that it is a metre which is only suitable to rather sombre subjects, but I may be wrong.

with best wishes for the success of your lectures
yours sincerely,
W. H. Auden

The exchange of letters is interesting on several levels. First, Auden's kindness in responding to very technical questions is well worth noting. Although he was a prolific commentator on the ideas and inspirations for his poetry, Auden rarely spoke — publicly or privately — about the more technical aspects of his art, though it is clear from his lifelong habit of revision and critical response to his own works that prosodic and stylistic issues were of striking importance to the poet. These letters in the first place provide a rare sidelight on the artist's technical mastery and his concern for the details of his metrical procedure. Second, they are very much the commentary on his art of a working poet, a craftsman. They

suggest a fairly sophisticated understanding of Old English and other medieval metres and point to the willingness of the professional to discuss with an intelligent interlocutor the details of his method of approaching his subject.[5] Third, Auden replied to Ward's first letter within four days of receipt, and did the same a few months later when a follow-up letter asked for clarification on some details. Fourth, although the follow-up reply does not address most of the extremely technical questions that Ward raises in his second letter, which may suggest that Auden's knowledge of the very fine details of Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre was scanty, Auden does provide detailed extra information on crossed alliteration and on his use of Icelandic metres. The poet's own account of his metrical usage suggests that his adaptation of medieval structures was both more complex and less "instinctive" or "imitative" than has previously been acknowledged. The second letter points out that, although Auden had intended to write a poem of some forty or fifty lines "the metre seemed to offer so many possibilities that I changed my mind and wrote a long poem." Finally, the poet very usefully concludes with the observation that the Old English metre—despite the technical advantage of accepting the spondee more naturally than the "normal French' metric" used in twentieth-century English— seems to him "only suitable to rather sombre subjects." One might almost conclude that the choice of metre, and the possibilities that resulted from the development of that metre, drove the choice of subject and the development of the material. Given that this was Auden's last long poem conceived as a whole piece, it seems appropriate that for it he returned to, and greatly elaborated, ideas and metrical usages which had intrigued him at the beginning of his career.

Metrical analysts have long since concluded that Auden wrote syllabic metre of high quality, but the way in which he combined Anglo-Saxon alliterative practice with syllabic metre in this poem has hitherto gone unrecognized. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that Christine Brooke-Rose, in her article on Auden's metre in this text, criticized Auden for his inadequate use of the Old English metrical types.[6] Like many others, she mistakenly concluded that he was following Anglo-Saxon practice closely and attempting to replicate the alliterative pure stress metre of a millennium earlier. However, she does suggest, at the end of her paper, that Auden's practice was influenced by syllabic verse. These letters confirm those suspicions. They also give credence both to John Fuller's identifications[7] of some Old Norse metres in the poem (though he finds "Hushed is the lake of hawks" to be *dróttkvaet* when Auden was attempting a *drápa*), and to Paul Szarmach's argument that "Anthem" was a preliminary draft for *The Age of Anxiety*.[8]

Our concern here is twofold: briefly to consider Auden's own background and interest in matters medieval (and particularly medieval and metrical), first as a student of English and the ways in which that did or did not provide him with metrical models and second as a practicing poet; and to examine his specific practice in *The Age of Anxiety* in light of his own account, in these letters, of its creation.

A. Auden's Medievalism

The details of Auden's undergraduate career are relatively well known.[9] He arrived at Christ Church, Oxford in the fall of 1925 to read science, but during the summer of 1926 obtained permission to switch to the School of English Language and Literature and sat his Finals in 1928. Nevill Coghill, newly-appointed at Exeter College, became his principal tutor; according to Coghill's own account, Auden was a brilliant but erratic student, filled with insight when his attention was caught but entirely unprepared to slog through what he considered the less interesting items in the curriculum. He did develop something of an interest in medieval studies, as he has so famously been quoted as stating, partly inspired by the lectures of J.R.R. Tolkien and partly intrigued by the difficulty and strangeness of this material — especially since it was material he saw as his own heritage. His first name, Wystan, derived from the Anglo-Saxon martyr, the royal child-saint murdered in the seventh century. His surname he described as Anglo-Icelandic, and he perceived himself as profoundly Scandinavian in origin, believing that "Auden" was synonymous with "Odin" — a point which has interesting implications for Auden's sense of himself as a poet. From childhood stories, he already knew the Icelandic sagas and other medieval tales.[10] Old and Middle English texts he was obliged to learn for his Finals, taken as a group at the end of his second year in the English School, in 1928.

His biographers and friends find Auden's Oxford result, a Third Class degree, somewhat difficult to explain. During his time at the university, he focused less on his studies than on meeting friends, writing poetry, founding and co-editing a literary magazine, playing the piano, and arguing about intellectual matters. It is possible that there was little time for careful preparation of examination material. Other reasons that have been proposed include incompatible examiners, a crisis of confidence, the over-exhaustion resulting from stressful late preparation, enthusiastic but unfocused tutoring from Nevill Coghill, and the different sensibility an artist (in this case a poet) brings to bear on the study of English than does a scholar or critic. No doubt some combination of these reasons provides a partial explanation. In addition, the last point moves in a direction that may serve us here, since Auden's own version of the

explanation in later years was an apparently careless combination of laziness with the poetic sensibility. Whether the laziness was truth or a polite fiction may remain in doubt, but there is substantial evidence from unimpeachable sources — Auden's own poems and criticism — for the argument of poetic sensibility. Incidentally, no one has yet noted that, since he changed courses of study after his first year but nonetheless completed his Finals after three years at Oxford, Auden may well have suffered from not having written the first-year Honour Moderations exams and from not having enough time to learn the curriculum for the Finals, given that its base was, and is, the preliminary materials taken in first year.

Auden's understanding of Old and Middle English was imperfect, though wholly adequate for his own purposes as a poet. It perhaps parallels his understanding of German, of Swedish, of Russian, of Old Norse, and of Icelandic, from all of which languages he prepared or co-prepared translations, but none of which he understood well.[11] In fact, Auden seems to have considered translation from an imperfectly-understood language to have provided a new kind of poetic exercise, even a poetic creation. While teaching at Ann Arbor, Michigan, for example, he assigned students the translation of poems in German, French, and Latin, advising them to work word-for-word with a bilingual dictionary in order to grasp the sense, and then to develop their poetic translations.[12] With his deep interest in etymology as a study in itself he allied a belief that detailed study of the unfamiliar, word for word, could inspire a poetic recreation or translation. The sheer "foreign-ness" of the material provided an edge, perhaps, or gave the poet the exhilarating sense of being on the verge of losing control of the text. Auden clearly enjoyed such exercises, since he set himself stringent criteria for the structure of his poems and insisted on honesty and austerity in the text. He also told the students that to do these exercises well, they would have to depend on their wits; he clearly trusted his own wits implicitly when engaged in this kind of poetic recreation. From this point of view, *The Age of Anxiety* was for Auden a fascinating exploration of the metrical possibilities of mixing Anglo-Saxon alliterative techniques with romance syllabic metre, intermingling occasional Icelandic metres for particular lyrical effects.

There is no question that Auden was himself profoundly interested in the technical aspects of poetry. In North America, he is on record as having attended graduate seminars in Old English on several occasions, and his principal interest appears to have been metrical. Thus, for example, Larry McKill (now at the University of Alberta) reports that in

a graduate seminar at SUNY (Stony Brook) in 1969, Auden attended one class, during which Robert Creed expounded a complex theory of Old English metrics. Auden, not intimidated by the subject matter, was, in McKill's words, "extremely skeptical of a system so elaborate that a working poet couldn't possibly have all those forms in his head."[13] Creed carried on and published his theory, and it must be said that metrists tend to agree with Auden's assessment of its utility in practice, though Auden was more succinct.

B. Auden's Metrical Practice and the Metre of *The Age of Anxiety*

One of the poet's more difficult texts, from a number of points of view, is *The Age of Anxiety*. Published in 1947, the poem, subtitled "A Baroque Eclogue," was carefully presented with a faux-Baroque typeface and layout; it was a poetic bestseller, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948, and inspired a Leonard Bernstein symphony, which in turn inspired a Jerome Robbins ballet. It has not been as popular with literary critics. Those discussing this poem have reached detailed conclusions about the meaning of the poem but have tended to shy away from the form by describing it as a "development of Auden's four-stress alliterative verse associated with the Old and Middle English line."[14] George Wright goes farther in the direction of not reaching conclusions by suggesting that, in addition to the four-stress alliterative line which was one of his favourite verse forms, Auden varied it "with a wealth of other often remarkable forms" (132).[15] The lack of specificity in this statement leaves much scope for further investigation. John Blair suggests that, although Auden's early imitations of Old and Middle English verse forms, and especially of Langland, seemed to be strained mannerisms, when reused in *The Age of Anxiety*, they "have a startling poetic evocativeness" (17).[16] The poem's metrical indebtedness to Anglo-Saxon techniques has clearly been recognized, though details are imperfectly understood, but the Icelandic metres which appear throughout the poem for lyrical effect and the use throughout of syllabic metre has not been observed.

Paul Szarmach has considered "Anthem," a preliminary piece for "The Age of Anxiety," first published by Edward Mendelson in the *Collected Poems* in 1976 but clearly written when Auden was working out the ideas and presentation of the longer poem. Szarmach notes in his careful analysis of the poem as an "imitation" of "Caedmon's Hymn" that, in several lines, Auden appears to be producing a modern recreation of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line. Szarmach proposes that

> Auden is a similar alliterative poet in his insistence on an
> alliteration that defines a line and otherwise makes demands
> on standard syntax and sense, but he is not Cædmonian — or

Anglo-Saxon for that matter — in the looseness of his lines (335).

Thus, for Szarmach, Auden's indebtedness to Anglo-Saxon metre in this poem is limited to the alliteration and its linkage to syntax, rather than involving the patterns of stress that would indicate a metrical, rather than purely alliterative, imitation. Auden uses Anglo-Saxon alliteration, then, but otherwise writes modern verse. Nicholas Howe goes a little further in his assessment, proposing that Auden's "importance to the afterlife of Old English poetry was to use it as a model of technique rather than as subject or, more accurately, merely as subject."[17] In general, commentators on Auden's poetry have focused on his extensive use of alliteration, and perhaps on the slightly shorter and heavier line, the four-stress alliterative line, which he often used.

However, Auden's use of medieval metres appears to have been more complex than generally acknowledged. Auden's own account of his procedure in these letters suggests that he took from Old English, Old Icelandic, and medieval romance metres for his practice in this poem — and his account of his practice is certainly that of a craftsman elucidating the technical aspects of his work, even to establishing exactly where the nine-syllable lines of the first two sections of the poem broke at the caesura. More evidence than that provided in these letters is also available, in that Carpenter records that Auden's secretary, Alan Ansen, "read through the draft and pointed out errors in the syllabification of the verse."[18] *The Age of Anxiety* was clearly a poem in which syllabification mattered. Davenport-Hines' account is less explicit, in that he states: "One of Ansen's tasks was to check the metrical stresses in 'The Age of Anxiety.'"[19] Christine Brooke-Rose, in her analysis of the metre of the text, takes a playful approach, pretending that the poem is an example of Old British alliterative metre representing a continuous tradition begun ten centuries earlier and just rediscovered in the year 2185. The serious purpose of the paper is to investigate the many features of Old English verse technique found in *The Age of Anxiety*. It is a tribute to Brooke-Rose's acuity as a critic that she identifies the use of single and double alliteration, the almost total lack of alliteration on the fourth stress in the verse, and the observation of the rules of grammatical precedence in that alliteration principally marks nouns and adjectives, then participles and adverbs with meaning. However, she does assume that Auden is attempting to replicate Old English verse forms, and she carefully demonstrates the ways in which his verse does not succeed in that apparent attempt. She points out his failures with the complex Old English types in some detail and notes that the greatest problem is "the license taken . . . with unaccented syllables."[20] In conclusion, she suggests that the Anglo-Saxon metres had died out, and Auden's poem must be a "brave attempt at rebellion

against such new-fangled devices" as syllabic and end-rhymed metre.[21] The analysis is detailed and fascinating, but based on the false premise that Auden was trying to reproduce fully and in every respect the complex metre of Anglo-Saxon verse, with its five types of verse, specific rules for alliteration based on which type is in use, and specific rules for unstressed syllables in each type. He was not, but on the other hand Brooke-Rose, lacking the evidence of the short initial version of the poem "Anthem" and Auden's own comments, makes an extremely reasonable assumption based on Auden's clear debt to Anglo-Saxon metre.

That Auden occasionally used syllabic metre has indeed been mentioned by various metrists. Shapiro and Beum list Auden as one of several twentieth-century poets who "have written syllabic verse of high quality," but go on to suggest that good syllabic verse in English is stanzaic, with the pattern of syllables in each line of each stanza corresponding.[22] Paul Fussell notes that "syllabism is not a natural measuring system in a language so Germanic and thus so accentual as English," despite occasional successes. Nonetheless, Fussell points out in the next paragraph, "when syllabic meter does produce engaging effects, they will often be found the result of a lurking system of stresses which the poet has not been able to wish away."[23] In the case of *The Age of Anxiety*, Auden takes advantage of the lurking system of stresses to combine alliterative effects with a syllabic metre. In fact, Auden finds an innovative way to combine syllabic verse, depending simply on counting the number of syllables in the line, with an accentual element. Stephen Adams points out that "syllabic verse of this sort calls on many of the same formal perceptions as well-wrought free verse."[24] The metre of *The Age of Anxiety*, then, involves what Adams calls 'prose rhythms' which break against traditional English two-syllable patterns, but also involves the traditional alliterating head-stave of Anglo-Saxon metrics along with one or two alliterating words in the first half of the line.

Here, then, is Auden's poetic sensibility creating a text imitative of medieval metres but not readily identifiable for these features to the eye and ear of the critic.[25] Auden points out, for example, that the syllabic count in the first two sections of the poems is nine, which is certainly the case. The nine-syllable line remains the central metrical structure of the whole poem, though it appears with the greatest consistency in the first two parts of the poem.[26] The third and fourth sections of the poem are the most metrically adventurous, although after each lyric in the third part the poem returns to the nine-syllable form. Part Five has a set of other lyrical forms, but the section ends with a substantial speech in nine-syllable lines, while the Epilogue makes only passing references to this form, in that it follows a similar structure to the preceding part. The

poem ends, however, with a longer line of eleven syllables for the final soliloquy of Malin.

In some ways, Auden's response to Ward is too modest. Linked alliteration, which involves either direct repetition of the alliteration or the carrying through from a non-alliterating stressed word in one line to the alliteration of the next line, occurs with some consistency throughout the poem (e.g., on *s* in Emble's speech on p. 459). Auden also states that there is only one line in which the first half contains only two syllables (the proportion Auden labels 2:7 in his letter). In fact, there are two such lines in Part One, and two more in Part Two. In every case, to mark the unusual structure, double alliteration occurs: "Quick, quiet, unquestionable as death" (458), "Knees numb; the enormous disappointment" (461); and in Part Two, "Just judge, the Generalized Other" (474), and the rather obvious "No. No. I shall not apologize" (475). Auden also does not mention in his letter that, when the radio or juke box play, the metre changes to reflect the jingly, short syntactic structures. The alliteration continues, but the line length shifts to fit the sing-song world of both the radio and the juke box. Incidentally, only the radio interrupts in Part One (four times, of which the last one is incorporated into the discussion and subsumed by the debate), and only the juke box interrupts in Part Two (three times, the second of which conforms to the nine-syllable line).

Auden notes in his letter that the count of nine syllables in fairly standard. In fact, there are remarkably few exceptions to the nine-syllable rule in the first two-thirds of the poem, and Auden demonstrates an extraordinary technical ability to play within a nine-syllable line with at least single alliteration — often double[27] — and a mid-line caesura moving about for variety and emphasis. He notes that vowels and vowels through *h* elide, but the first twelve lines of the poem have no elision at all, which establishes very firmly the metrical structure. Lines split between two speakers still count up to nine syllables, and at the end of Part One, when Malin asks a question, the six syllables before the answers are completed when he resumes — after a single nine-syllable line from each of his interlocutors — with three syllables after the responses (463). Auden played with elision through *h* in such lines as: "Prayed for the plants. They have perished now; their" (482) or "These hills may be hollow; I've a horror of dwarfs" (488), both, incidentally, by Rosetta. Her usage might even suggest that her elision of *h* reflects a lower-class background.

Auden makes it clear in his letters that he also used Icelandic metres in the poem, particularly in Part Three: The Seven Stages. John Fuller points out two instances of skaldic metre in the poem, and Auden points to three, disagreeing unknowingly with Fuller on which Scandinavian verse-form is in use. However, Auden here radically understates the case

for Icelandic verse-forms in the poem and does not even specify just how many Icelandic forms he used. For example, he describes as "an attempt at a drápa" the eight-line poem "Hushed is the lake of hawks" (519), the love duet near the beginning of Part Five: The Masque which — despite its self-deprecatory introduction — was Auden's emotional high point in the poem. Fuller describes the same poem as dróttkvaett.[28] During the T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, Auden cites this poem in its entirety as an example of dróttkvaett and explains the formal rules for this skaldic poem in some detail:

It is a stanza of four couplets; each line has three stresses and ends on an unaccented syllable. The first line of each couplet has two alliterations, and an assonance; the second is related to the first by alliteration and also contains an internal rhyme. Lastly, the ordinary names for things should be replaced by kennings.[29]

Auden's knowledge is detailed and accurate; it is hardly surprising that near the end of his life he collaborated on a translation of Old Norse poetic texts.[30] However, since not every line of the poem ends with an unaccented syllable, nor does the poem have a refrain, probably Auden might have best described it as a variation of the dróttkvaett.[31]

Skaldic verse, with its extremely precise rules and restrictions for both metre and diction, is probably also the inspiration for the very focused and intense lyrics found at intervals through Parts Three, Five, and Six in the poem, and once near the beginning of Part Two. Auden describes Rosetta's song "Deep in my dark the dream shines" (470) as kviðuhattr, a point with which Fuller concurs.[32] It might better be described as an adaptation of that Norse form, since it consists of 4 four-line stanzas with seven-syllable lines, each with caesura and double alliteration. The two-stress alliterated lines of "Lights are moving" (487), "Stranger, this still" (501), "Plumed and potent" (522) are clearly skaldic in inspiration, and they follow the density of Old Norse verse in omitting articles and auxiliaries, in wrenching syntax, and especially in utilizing elliptical and ambiguous language in which word-play is critical. Word-play is also central to the complex stanza form Auden seems to have developed for Part Four: The Dirge. This section consists of four stanzas of seventeen lines, the central sections of which are in nine-syllable lines, but the opening two lines and the bob of two lines as the end of each stanza are much shorter. The stanzas also tend to begin with repetition ("sob" in the first stanza) and end with synonymy ("dad" and "father" in the first stanza). The lines seem to be a yet more complex form of the ljoðuháttr stanza which Auden describes as central to Part Three: The Seven Stages. Most of that section of the poem is written in alliterative long lines alternating with shorter lines of a tighter alliterative structure, Auden's version of the ljoðuháttr; the form in Old Norse tended to be

used for magical purposes, and the quest in this part of the poem is the search for understanding.

In short, the metrical structure of *The Age of Anxiety* is extremely complex, though its ground base is the nine-syllable line taken from medieval romance forms. Rising about the ground base is a pattern of alliteration derived explicitly from Anglo-Saxon verse, though a constantly-varying rhythm surges with the shifting of the caesura from occurrence after the third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth syllable in the line (and very occasionally, after the second). Each line generally has at least three stresses, four being the norm, but the pattern of stresses is far removed from the normal prose rhythms of free verse, which explains why critics have mistakenly perceived the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon or Middle English metrics in the text. The pattern holds with only brief interludes in the prologue, one formal departure in Part Two, a long section in other metres in Part Three, and sporadic reappearances through the rest of the poem. However, exceptions to the pattern at first glance appear to be the whole of Part Four, large sections of Part Five, and all of Part Six except the ending, which reverts to the syllabic metre but with the added weight of two extra syllables in the line so that poem closes with a meditative long-line soliloquy. The details of the different metres used through the central and critical sections of the poem have escaped serious study since they too are based on an alliterative Germanic metre, and those who noticed the alliteration may have failed to notice that the rest of the metrical structure had also changed. However, it is clear that, for the important emotional and philosophical moments of this poem, Auden used Icelandic metres, very carefully and accurately replicating them in modern English — in fact, so accurately that they looked Anglo-Saxon in origin. Technically, at least in the metrical sense, the poem is a *tour de force*.

Critical reaction to *The Age of Anxiety* has been very mixed. When the poem was first published, John Bayley described it as Auden's "greatest achievement to date." Later on, Bayley quoted a passage of description from *The Age of Anxiety* and then said: "It does not lead anywhere — (indeed it is difficult to see where anything in *The Age of Anxiety* can be said to lead) — but it conveys a sense of the occasion at once and with vivid accuracy."[33] Bayley's second assessment seems mild beside the attacks of Randall Jarrell. Anthony Hecht, in his extensive and reasoned assessment of Auden's *oeuvre*, starts with a careful analysis of Jarrell's change of heart about Auden, describes the poem as "one of the large major works," and concludes with the judicious, though parenthetical, statement that "*The Age of Anxiety* does not fit easily into what preceded or what followed it, with which it seems stylistically at odds — a kind of daring, and not wholly successful, experiment."[34] This was the last of

Auden's long poems; critics addressing the complexity of its structure and ideas may perhaps be able to draw less uncertain conclusions if they understand more clearly the hidden delights of the verse form. Similarly, G. S. Fraser comments, with respect principally to "The Sea and the Mirror,"

> On the other hand, Auden is steadily increasing his mastery over the actual craft of verse. There is almost no form, no metre at which he is not capable of having a pretty competent try. His most interesting metrical innovation in "The Sea and the Mirror" is the borrowing of syllabic metre from Miss Marianne Moore.[35]

The innovation of "The Sea and the Mirror" carried on into *The Age of Anxiety* such that, in Auden's next major poem, it became the central metrical structure. This fact was obscured by the Anglo-Saxon alliterative structure and the frequent use of Icelandic metres, but it remains central to analysis of the text.

Critics who specialize in post-medieval areas often do not recognize the ways in which individual authors can be profoundly influenced by medieval texts, because that shaping influence cannot be readily charted or easily defined.[36] They can recognize the outlines, but not the details, and perhaps they cannot recognize the depths.[37] Sometimes they can make generalizations or draw conclusions that might be correct with respect to the modern poet but do not correspond well with the medieval texts. For example, Monroe K. Spears, in an otherwise fine analysis of Auden's interpretation of the Old English poem "The Wanderer," a poem that has been variously titled "The Wanderer," or "Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle" (from the first line), suggests that "[t]here is also in Auden's poetry a kind of ambiguity that is wholly foreign to Old English poetry."[38] Ambiguity is central to Old English poetry, and interpretation of the early medieval poem founders on such questions as whether it is a profoundly Christian interpretation of a pilgrimage motif using imagery of the sea as a metaphor for life, or whether it is a thoroughly pessimistic and even realistic representation of the difficulties of life and the ways in which the early medieval individual had to turn to gnomic statements and stoic doctrines in order to arrive at any hint of hope for the future. While Auden's poem is certainly ambiguous, that ambiguity reflects Old English poetic themes rather than being a departure from them. In fact, matters medieval can influence writers in extremely complex ways that have to be teased out and examined in different ways for different authors. Auden's indebtedness for themes and ideas, and his word choice and alliterative usages, have now at least had their preliminary explorations. Perhaps more careful nuances to his use of this material can now be established.

    T. A. Shippey has recently pointed out the many ways in which Anglo-Saxon materials have not entered into the popular consciousness. [39] Though Auden would never wish to claim the kind of vulgar popularity now available, in Shippey's argument, to the Vikings, to King Arthur, and even to Lady Godiva, he certainly used Anglo-Saxon poetic techniques and images. [40] Study of the ways in which he was indebted to his own interest in early medieval studies may perhaps allow knowledge not only of Auden but also of Anglo-Saxon matters to become more widespread. Of that, Auden would certainly approve.

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NOTES

1. The letters are copyright of the Estate of W. H. Auden. We are very grateful to Edward Mendelson, Auden's literary executor, for his advice and in particular for his generous permission to publish these letters.
2. See M. J. Toswell, "Auden and Anglo-Saxon," *Medieval English Studies Newsletter* (The Centre for Medieval English Studies, Tokyo) 37 (December 1997): pp. 21-28.
3. W. H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue* (New York: Random House, 1947). Auden's own page references differ slightly from this edition and probably are to the London Faber edition of 1948.
4. Edward Mendelson, ed. *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems* (New York: Random House, 1991).
5. An earlier version of this paper was delivered by Toswell at the Fifteenth International Conference on Medievalism sponsored by *Studies in Medievalism*, held at Hope College, 29-30 September 2000. Afterwards, William Calin suggested that Auden's understanding of metre might well derive from the lectures (and perhaps tutorials} of C. S. Lewis, a point well worth pursuing -- especially given Auden's own quotation from Lewis in these letters.
6. "Notes on the Metre of Auden's 'The Age of Anxiety,'" *Essays in Criticism* 13 (1963) : 253-64.
7. See his revised *W. H. Auden: A Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998) pp. 369-387, at pp. 376 and 384.
8. See Paul Szarmach, "*Anthem*: Auden's 'Caedmon's Hymn'" in *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman* eds Richard Utz and Tom Shippey (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998): 329-340.
9. See Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981), chapter 4 "Oxford," pp. 42-84.   Richard Davenport-Hines' more recent biography, *Auden* (London: Heinemann, 1995), describes the Oxford years pp. 51-86, noting on p. 58 that Auden preferred not to care about the class-mark of his degree.
10. See, for the most accepting view, Charles Osborne, *W. H. Auden: The Life of a Poet* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), pp. 9-10.
11. See Toswell (1997) for detailed references, and also Lincoln Kirstein, "Auden: Glossographer, Ortheopist, Verbrarian" *W. H. Auden Society Newsletter* 9 (August 1992), published at http://www.audensociety.org. Kirstein describes Auden's interest in language, giving detailed examples of his "idiosyncratic harvesting." Auden did speak German, though not, perhaps, fluently.
12. For the details of this procedure see, among other accounts, Robert L. Chapman, "Auden in Ann Arbor," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 17.4 (Fall 1978): 507-20.
13. Larry McKill, email to Toswell, 22 August 2000.
14. Szarmach, "*Anthem*: Auden's 'Caedmon's Hymn,'" p. 330.
15. George T. Wright, *W. H. Auden* rev. ed. (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 132. Wright is on the right track, though nebulously.

16. John G. Blair, *The Poetic Art of W. H. Auden* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1965), p. 17.

17. Nicholas Howe, "Praise and Lament: The Afterlife of Old English Poetry in Auden, Hill, and Gunn," in *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998) , pp. 293-310, at p. 296.

18. Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 347.

19. Davenport-Hines, *Auden*, p. 238.

20. Brooke-Rose, "Notes," p. 258.

21. Brooke-Rose, "Notes," p. 264.

22. Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum, *A Prosody Handbook* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 56-9 at p. 56.

23. Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* rev. ed. (New York: Random House, 1979) , p. 7.

24. Stephen Adams, *Poetic Designs: An Introduction to Meters, Verse Forms, and Figures of Speech* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1997), p. 65. Adams also notes here that syllabic metre is more effective when the lines have an odd number of syllables, since this prevents them from falling into standard accentual patterns.

25. A useful parallel is the work of Molly Peacock, a practicing poet of great talent whose recent book on how to read poetry starts with the argument that the line is the music of the poem and that a poem which works is one in which "two arts, the art of storytelling with its own music and the art of music itself, are working on your ear as the sentence *wraps around* the line," resulting in a "mysterious, elastic wholeness." See her *How to Read a Poem. . .and Start a Poetry Circle* (Penguin: Riverhead Books, 1999), p. 22.

26. Auden's thinking about English metres was very much influenced by George Saintsbury, according to Carpenter. On p. 55 of his biography, Carpenter notes that Auden already knew Saintsbury before coming up to Oxford, and on p. 419 he suggests that "[i]f the *O.E.D.* was now the Bible to his poetry, his prayer-book was George Saintsbury's study of English prosody." Auden was apparently boasting that he had now written a poem in every known metre and was searching farther afield (in the early 1960s). Saintsbury, although he provides only a very brief paragraph on Icelandic metres (under the rubric of Scandinavian metres), does carefully elucidate the syllabic structures used in English medieval romance: see George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody* 3 vols. 2nd ed. (London, 1923), vol. 1, "The Metrical Romances," pp. 89-99.

27. Anglo-Saxon metrists define single alliteration as that agreement of initial consonants (including a distinction between s and st and sp) or vowels which occurs when one stressed word before the caesura alliterates with the stressed word occurring first after the caesura. In Anglo-Saxon metre, either the first or the second stress in the first half-line may be involved in the alliteration. If both stresses in the first half-line alliterate with the first stressed word after the caesura, this is double alliteration.

28. Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 384.

29. W. H. Auden, "The World of the Sagas," in *Secondary Worlds*. *The T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), pp. 67-68.

30. See W. H. Auden, Paul Beekman Taylor, trans. *The Elder Edda* (1969), now rev. ed. as *Norse Poems* (London: Athlone Press, 1981). Auden's interest in Iceland is also reflected by the trip he took there not long after leaving Oxford, which resulted in W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

31. Good explanations of the verse forms of Norse poetry are difficult to come by in English; the standard text is Winfred Philipp Lehmann, *The Development of Germanic Verse Form* (Austin, Texas: U of Texas P, 1956); for these metres see especially pp. 125 and 193. A recent summary can be found in Orrin W. Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 125-131. Part of the difficulty is that different scholars use different terms for the same stanza forms.

32. Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 376.

33. John Bayley, "W. H. Auden," an excerpt from his *The Romantic Image* (1957), but interestingly the one made readily available to Auden scholars in *Auden: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. Monroe K. Spears (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 60-80, at p. 76.

34. Anthony Hecht, *The Hidden Law: The Poetry of W. H. Auden* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993). The first quotation is p. 40, the detailed assessment and final — though parenthetical — conclusion is p. 294.

35. G. S. Fraser, "The Career of W. H. Auden," in *Auden: A Collection*, ed. Spears, pp. 81-104 at p. 92. See also his *Metre, Rhyme and Free Verse* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 54-5, which makes the same point.

36. Patrick Deane, personal communication, 1997.

37. For example, an enduring misapprehension about the metre of *The Age of Anxiety* connects it with Langland's *Piers Plowman,* a Middle English alliterative poem, perhaps because the lines can be longer than Anglo-Saxon lines generally are. The origin of the association with Langland is difficult to determine, though such different figures as A. L. Rowse and Barbara Everett espoused it, and it has been repeated by most modern critics, even including Szarmach in the article cited here. See A. L. Rowse, *The Poet Auden: A Personal Memoir* (London: Methuen, 1987) , p. 87, and Barbara Everett, *Auden* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), pp. 90-91. More recently, Alan Jacobs has rightly pointed out the awkwardness of pursuing Auden's claim to Langland with his statement: "But pity the critic who would try to establish a meaningful connection between Auden's work and *Piers Plowman*," *What Became of Wystan: Change and Continuity in Auden's Poetry*. (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1998), p. 35. Having made this good point, and commented in the endnote that Auden's self-identification with Langland may have been purely a desire to be a populist poet, Jacobs loses the ground he has claimed by noting that "Auden uses a similar form [to Langland] in *The Age of Anxiety*, his most allegorical work," p. 139.

38. Monroe K. Spears, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden: The Disenchanted Island* (New York: Oxford UP, 1963; new preface, 1968) , p. 14.

39. T. A. Shippey, "The undeveloped image: Anglo-Saxon in popular consciousness from Turner to Tolkien," in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* eds. Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) , pp. 215-236.

40. The reference to Lady Godiva derives not from Shippey's article, which argues that English identity was in the nineteenth century subsumed under a more general British and imperial identity, but from Daniel Donoghue, "Lady Godiva," pp. 194-214 in the same collection.

The Medieval Cathedral:
From Spiritual Site to National Super-Signifier

Richard Utz

The Cathedral of Cologne ranks among the most magnificent churches of Christianity. As the seat of one of the most important Roman Catholic archbishops, it is the spiritual center of the religious life of German Catholics. Its enormous size and the purity of its High Gothic method of construction make it famous around the world. Thus, it is not surprising that two to three million people visit it each year. They look up in amazement at the impressive, vertical architecture without realizing that the history of this powerful cathedral can be traced to earliest Christian times. Therefore, let us begin at the beginning.[1]

This short passage ushers in Anglophone visitors to Cologne cathedral via a booklet of fifty-odd pages providing concise but fairly comprehensive information on the history, artistry, and architecture of one of Europe's best-known Gothic churches. In addition to its predictable praise of the historical and art historical attractions, the passage stresses the importance of Cologne cathedral as the see of an archbishop as well as the "center" of contemporary German Catholicism, and it sketches the apparently unbroken chain of spiritual significance of the church site since early Christian times.

While the word "German" does make a short adjectival appearance in the passage, there is no further reference to the prominence of the cathedral for the history of Germany as a nation state. Because today cathedrals in most parts of Europe are mostly serving as spiritual sites and thus, as most observers believe, serve the same function as they did in their medieval past, the complex negotiations of the cathedral's symbolism and signification between church and state authorities in former centuries are largely overlooked.

Like the author of the Cologne cathedral guide, this essay should begin at the beginning, i.e., with the origins of the cathedral in Late Antiquity. During this period, when Christianity is succeeding in converting the majority of the population in western Europe to join its cause, the formerly open Roman villages, secure because of the *Pax Romana*, surround themselves with walls to be protected against invaders. It is inside these walled *castra* that the cathedral church and its numerous adjacent administrative buildings implant themselves. Consequently, when the Germanic tribes overrun the Roman *Limes*, the Christian administrative centers are in place and functioning, and for the triumphant invaders there seemed to be an intimate connection between the urban

centers and the organized Christian faith. Bishops had made a point of imitating with their episcopal churches the civic buildings of the Roman era, particularly the basilicas. Quite often, they even installed themselves and their episcopal throne, the *cathedra*, in the former *Praetorium* of the Roman emperor's local or regional representative. Those buildings were adapted to the necessities of liturgical celebrations, but retained in their architectural design the signature of authority, a semicircular apsis in the back of which the episcopal throne replaced the chair of the governor or procurator.[2] Thus, even at the inception of the cathedral idea, the building was conceived to play, especially after the disappearance of the imperial Roman authority, a political and social role in addition to its spiritual function as the site where the Eucharist would be celebrated by the bishop and his priests. In the absence of the Roman administrators and their soldiers, the bishop even became the essential authority and protector of the often diminished, but not completely destroyed, urban centers. And early on, the cathedral was seen as a place which could provide a ceremonial setting for secular as well as religious events: on the one hand, the episcopal elections and the regional synods were held in the cathedral, and the building thus underlined its status as the mother church of all churches in the diocese; on the other hand, Hugues Capet, founder of the Capetian dynasty, was elected king in the cathedral of Senlis in 987, by his powerful nobles, both secular and ecclesiastic. Even the construction of municipal palaces and other secular administrative edifices did not necessarily bring an end to the cathedral's public functions: in the thirteenth century, for example, the Marseille city council took it for granted to hold its meetings within the cathedral. And when, in 1302, Philip the Handsome intended to rally support from all three estates of France for his confrontation against Pope Boniface VIII, he gathered their representatives in Notre-Dame de Paris, an act which is usually interpreted as the first public affirmation of the Gallican national church. The uses that the secular powers make of the cathedral demonstrate that it is the symbolic power of these diocesan churches which suggests a symbiosis between church and state.[3] However, it is as late as in the thirteenth century that this symbiosis reaches its most impressive proportions: Clovis did enter the cathedral of Reims, but it was only to receive baptism at the hands of the powerful bishop St. Remi. In 862, the Carolingian kings came to Reims to be anointed with the oil from the "holy ampoule" and to be crowned. Generally, however, the early medieval kings preferred the abbeys and monastery churches for representational purposes: it is at St. Denis that the French kings want to be buried, and the Plantagenets in England preferred first Fontevraud (Pays de la Loire) and then Westminster. Even during the high medieval period, kings contribute relatively little to the construction of cathedrals.

From the thirteenth century on, the French monarchy recognizes the symbolic and strategic value of the cathedrals and seeks to control them so as to convert them into places of what Colette Beaune, in her 1985 monograph on the birth of the French nation, has rightly termed a "royal religion."[4] The Gothic cathedrals, which used to display with their record-seeking high vaults and spires the ambitions of the urban and regional centers they represented, cease to serve as parish churches and gradually take on national importance as sites reinforcing a growing collective national memory. The royal gifts to the cathedrals increase; monarchs have themselves depicted on the walls of the buildings. Saint Louis and his wife, Marguerite de Provence, have themselves represented at the feet of the Virgin at Notre-Dame de Paris; and Charles V bequeathes his heart to the cathedral of Rouen and has his effigy sculpted on one of the supporting columns of the Northern tower at Amiens. This perfect union between the throne and the altar, one in which the rituals of liturgy exalted the sacred function of the Christian Kings of France, led to a parallel development, in which the kings take more and more responsibility over the cathedral, which used to be controlled entirely by the cathedral chapter and their bishop. From the fourteenth century on, all French cathedrals find themselves under the king's direct protection and patronage, and the king often holds spiritual power during the times when the episcopal throne happens to be vacant.

By the seventeenth century, the maintenance of the cathedrals has been taken over by the royal administration. It is, for example, out of King Louis XV's budget that the new cathedral of La Rochelle is financed. During this period, the balance of control over the cathedral tips more and more toward the state, and the state obliges the church to provide the great religious pomp and circumstance it sees fit for its self-glorification and public affirmation. Louis XIV not only fills the walls of Notre-Dame de Paris with the flags and standards taken from enemy armies, he makes use of the cathedral for numerous family celebrations, such as baptisms and weddings, and to receive foreign ambassadors. On November 16, 1663, he presides under a high dais in the center of the choir, covered by red velours adorned with the *fleur de lis*, in a ceremony during which the 15 ambassadors representing the Swiss cantons renew their oath of allegiance which had united them with France since the battle of Marignan (1515). After a "messe basse," the celebrating bishop intoned the "Te Deum" and continued with the song, "Domine, salvum fac regem." Afterwards, all participants were invited to dinner at the Archbishop's.[5]

In the eighteenth century, the state shows no qualms about breaking a larger entrance into Notre-Dame de Paris so as to facilitate the entry of the royal dais. And the process of secularization of the cathedrals reaches its zenith in Paris, when Napoleon I is crowned emperor in 1804, and in

Reims, in 1825, when Charles X is anointed, even if the latter ceremony, which was followed by the traditional act of the scrofula-healing "royal touch," seemed to revive medieval customs. In both cases, however, the cathedral was little more than a prestigious, symbolic site which served to enhance and sacralize the by now completely political design of such events.[6]

If the transformation of the cathedrals into sites in which the monarchy orchestrates large-scale celebrations of its own glory results in a loss of spiritual significance, cathedrals profit from such gradually won national symbolic power during the revolutionary periods of 1789 and 1830. The bishops and canons of the eighteenth century already had damaged the churches by covering them with a layer of plaster and powdered freestone, by replacing stained-glass windows with simple, polished white glass panels, and by suppressing gargoyles, chimeras, and pinnacles whose anarchic profusion had offended the neo-Classical tastes. The revolutionaries of 1789, however, committed actual acts of violent destruction: the sans-culottes, for example, chiseled and hacked off the statues of the kings of Judea and Israel on the façades of Amiens, Chartres, Paris, and Reims because they saw in them the predecessors of the very Capetian monarch whose latest representative the Convention had just sentenced to be decapitated. In Laon, the revolutionaries planned to undo all effigies of Christ, the Angels, and the saints and to cut off both spires because they seemed to invoke the idea of feudalism. At Chartres, the lead covering of the roof was removed and the metal used for other purposes.[7]

Although the cathedrals were often mutilated, emptied of their relics, treasures, and clergy, their close association with national glory and the sense of fascination that association had brought about kept them from being closed or destroyed entirely. Even during the Revolution, the changing leadership groups and their public acts received a certain kind of legitimacy from the cathedral. During the first phase of the revolution, a whole number of "Te Deums" celebrates the storming of the Bastille, the abolishment of feudal laws, and the various agreements between king and nation; after 1793 the abolishment of the Catholic faith and the new signification of Notre-Dame de Paris as a temple of Reason keeps the building from being closed. Cleansed of its religious implications by the removal of hundreds of statues representing monarchy and religion, the building remained a site conjuring up a common cultural memory: the declaration of human rights is publicly read in it, and the abolition of slavery is celebrated. After May, 1794, French cathedrals once again become Catholic churches.

However, the Napoleonic era clearly demonstrates that the cathedrals now have become national supersignifiers embracing the entirety of

otherwise diametrically opposed causes: in 1801, under the auspices of seeing Notre-Dame de Paris as a primary symbol of national unity, it has become possible to celebrate one and the same "Te Deum" to express gratitude for God's benevolence toward the French people during the revolution, to thank God for the continental peace, and to commemorate Bastille day. On Easter Sunday, 1802, the day of the Concordate signature, consuls, senators, judges, tribunes, and generals participate in a mass celebrating the reintroduction of the Catholic faith in Notre-Dame de Paris. Napoleon Bonaparte had himself taken pains to orchestrate the occasion so that it might closely resemble still remembered similar monarchic celebrations of the kings of France. On August 14, 1802, he had a star of nine meter's diameter put on top of one of the cathedral towers to announce his birthday. With these actions and numerous similar ones, he linked his own fate with that of his capital's most powerfully symbolic building. The cathedral reminded everyone simultaneously of the glory of the old monarchy and of the revolution, of recent and ancient traditions. In the semantics of his crowning ceremony, Notre-Dame then became the most obvious synthesis of the new ruler: as the ceremony had to pay homage to both significations, he had the anointing and crowning take place in the sanctuary, the site of the mystery of transubstantiation, while the constitutional sermon, essentially a lay procedure, was done on the other side of the separation jubé, in the Eastern part of the nave. For the first part of the ceremony, the emperor used the regalia of the French medieval kings, which he had restored for the occasion. For the second part, he was seated on top of a carpeted platform which faced the site of his crowning.

The regalia, preserved by the *Ancien Régime* among the treasures of the abbey of Saint-Denis, were not given back to it after the crowning ceremony but remained, according to Napoleon's own decision, in his cathedral, signifying a clear preference of the cathedral over the abbey church. In addition, in 1805, the relics of the "Saint Couronne," bought by Saint Louis and kept in the Sainte Chapelle (which was expressly built to house them), were also returned to the cathedral. These actions and the crowning ceremony meant that now all the functions of the former holy sites of the French medieval monarchy, Reims, St. Denis, and the Sainte Chapelle, were united in Notre-Dame de Paris.[8]

After Napoleon's defeat and the revolution of 1830, the French cathedrals were once again subject to a wave of vandalism because they remained linked to the hateful *Ancien Régime*. However, this period is of short duration, and the parallel movements of Romantic Nationalism and Restoration bring about an unexpected general change of opinion toward the cathedral from the early nineteenth century on. Thus, at the exact moment when, with few exceptions, the cathedral's very existence

is threatened by ideological animosity and almost irremediable material damage, it comes back center stage, in both France and Germany, and the tension between their destitute exteriors and the grand cultural and national aspirations of the nineteenth-century nation states will lead to a veritable Renaissance of the medieval structures.

In Germany, Cologne cathedral is advanced by Emst Moritz Arndt as early as after the battle of Leipzig as a "strong and mighty" monument that could serve to unite all Germans ("ein starkes und mächtiges Bindungsglied aller Teutschen").[9] The conservative Catholic Johann Joseph Görres immediately joins the chorus of those who see in the dilapidated and unfinished state of Cologne cathedral a symbol of the ever-unfinished German nation, an emblem of "Germany in its confusion of spirit and languages, its inner strife and disunity" ("Teutschland in seiner Sprach- und Gedankenverwirrung, seinem inneren Hader [...] und seiner Zerrissenheit").[10] He proposes to finish construction of the cathedral as a sacrifice signifying the liberation from French despotism, as the "one true national monument" ("das wahre Nationaldenkmal") powerful enough to symbolize the "new empire" ("des neuen Reiches") which he wants to come into existence. By adding an overarching national signification to the budding aesthetic-historical and preservational ideas to save the cathedral, Görres brought about enthusiastic reactions from a large number of thinkers, artists and politicians such as Stein, Arndt, Humboldt, Runge, and Goethe, and even the rulers of Bavaria, Württemberg, and Prussia. However, due to the political situation in Germany, it took more than twenty-five years until the "Cathedral Construction Festival" ("Dombaufest") of 1842 was able to unite an amazing variety of ideologies and opinions such as regional patriotism, Romanticism, Catholic religiosity, the desire for peaceful reconciliation between church and state, plans to integrate the Rhineland into Prussia, Bourgeois enthusiasm for the arts and Romantic enthusiasm for history, and the yearning for national unity. The recurring ideas of God, Culture/Art, and the Fatherland are all seen to have their most masterly exemplification in Cologne cathedral because it offered outstanding testimony of German medieval greatness and therefore of the German national character, and because the supra-regional effort to repair and finalize its construction was supposed to equal the enormous supra-regional efforts necessary to forge and bring to perfection the new German nation. Thus, the cathedral now carries the semiotics of a premier memorial site of the glorified past as well as that of a willed and deliberately signifying monument for the future. This ability, to combine and transport religious as well as national mythographies, which the German historian Thomas Nipperdey has called the cathedral's "Omnibusfunktion," is based on the nineteenth century's tendency to sacralize all matters national.[11]

Political beliefs have been transmuted into a new form of secular salvific faith in the nation which allows the old religious beliefs to coexist as long as they can be subordinated to the all-encompassing national cause.[12]

In France, despite quite different national conditions, romantic nationalism, which Leslie Workman has shown to be synonymous with modern medievalism,[13] helps establish a similarly powerful national mythography for the medieval cathedral: Chateaubriand, in his widely received *Genie du christianisme* (1802) produces a veritable defense of medieval art, especially of Gothic art which, to him, was inspired directly by the natural order. However, it is clearly Victor Hugo who managed best to captivate and redirect the profoundly felt aspirations of the *Zeitgeist* when he metamorphoses cathedrals into a genuine literary myth, a medievalist entelechy, a story in which the idea of the cathedral is brought to life as a mysterious medieval organism on its way toward fulfillment in its nineteenth-century present. While his "Odes and Ballads" had already chastised the revolution for the ignoble work of destruction it committed, it is his novel, *Notre Dame de Paris,* which imagined the Middle Ages in a mixture of historically factual intimations and invented ideas. And so immensely successful was his actualization of the cathedral's character and its role in the development of western civilization that it allowed those who were indifferent or even hostile to the Catholic church to find themselves represented by cathedrals which the French historian Michelet regarded as "houses of the people."[14] The architects Ludovic Vitet and Eugene Viollet-le-Duc added other politically acceptable readings of the cathedral. Intent on demonstrating the relevance of the cathedrals and the necessity of completion and restoration, they claimed that the cathedrals' construction had actually been an open form of protest against the medieval feudal system. Moreover, aware of the signs of the time, Viollet-le-Duc, in an influential article for the *Dictionnaire raisonnée de l'architecture française*, demonstrated the rootedness of the French cathedrals in his country's historical path:

> The monarchic and religious unity, the alliance of the two powers to constitute one nationality caused the growth of the great cathedrals in Northern France. While cathedrals certainly are also religious monuments, they are most of all national edifices of the French nationality, the first and most powerful attempt towards unity.[15]

These and similar arguments made it possible to endow the medieval cathedral with all those values, freedom of thought, secular spirit, and nationality, which the liberal bourgeoisie as well as the anti-clerical intellectuals were able to accept. Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, not only could most French cathedrals undergo restoration (as in Nantes, Limoges, Moulins), but new ones could be built as in Gap,

Digne, and Marseille, often in Neo-Gothic styles which passed as the most sublime expression of Christian faith. Dozens of artists and critics, Verlaine, Ruskin, Huysmans, Monet, Debussy, Péguy, Aubonnet, Rodin, and Claudel, to name only a few, celebrated and memorialized the cathedral. And Marcel Proust claimed that "our cathedrals are not only the most beautiful artistic expressions but they are also the only ones which have retained the connection with their original purpose."[16]

While it is true that most cathedrals in modern times serve once again as parish churches and centers of their dioceses and archdioceses, it is their function as national symbolic monuments which had become their prime signification by the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1918, the cathedrals of Metz and Strasbourg, part of the annexed territories of Alsace-Lorraine, become omnipresent symbols of the lost provinces. The entire French nation shook with anger when Wilhelm II, who had initiated important repair work for Metz cathedral, had himself represented under the facial traits of Daniel on a statue at the main entrance. As soon as the war was over, Wilhelm II was taken off again and substantial loans were voted in place for the damage done during the war to the cathedrals of Reims and Rouen. During World War II, it was once again the cathedral of Strasbourg which became one of the major references for the Free France movement. In 1941, general Leclerc and his men, in the famous oath of Koufra, swore not to lay down their weapons until the French flag would be hoisted on the Strasbourg cathedral spire. On May 21, 1944, the victory "Te Deum" is sung and cardinal Suhard, the bishop of Paris, consecrates the city to the Virgin Mary. On August 26, 1946, General DeGaulle replaced the "Te Deum" with a "Magnificat," in the absence of the bishop of Paris who was accused of collaborating with Pétain, and with this ceremony DeGaulle sacralized a power which had been preliminarily legitimized by the ovations of the Parisians on the Champs d'Elysees. Twenty-six years later, the victory "Te Deum" is sung for the funeral of DeGaulle in the presence of guests from all over the world. In 1987, the cathedral of Amiens unites the Count of Paris and President Mitterand to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Capetian Dynasty. Finally, in 1996, the French nation celebrated, with a visit of Pope John Paul II in the cathedral in Reims, an even earlier foundational moment, the conversion and baptism of the Merovingian king Clovis in the fifth century.[17]

More than any other medieval building, even more than the medieval castle, the cathedral has inscribed itself into the manifold practices through which western societies remember and reinvent the Middle Ages. Beginning with its inception as the episcopal church in Late Antiquity, it profited for its survival and glory from its existence in the borderland of symbolic functionality between spiritual and state authority. This early,

potent, and symbiotic cooperation and competition, which was clearly decided in favor of the secular side in the age of romantic nationalism, might even be powerful enough to encompass the now more closely knit Europe. And strangely enough, it might again be Strasbourg cathedral, conveniently situated on the border between the two most populous countries of the European Union, that can be seen as a perfect site to break with a highly conflictual and nationalistic past. It appears the cathedral mythography may be able to bring about what proponents of scientist medieval studies in France and Germany have striven to exclude, mostly due to their nation-driven scholarly paradigms.[18]

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NOTES

1. Arnold Wolf, *Cologne Cathedral. Its History - Its Works of Art* (Koln: Greven Verlag, 1995), p. 2. An earlier version of this essay was presented at a session on "Medieval Myths: Castles, Places, Landscapes," (organized by Werner Wunderlich [University of St. Gall, Switzerland] and Ulrich Müller [University of Salzburg, Austria]) at the 35th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, in May 1999.

2. For thorough, basic histories of the terms 'cathedra' and 'cathedral,' see the respective entries by Leslie Brubaker and Carl F. Barnes, Jr., in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Strayer (New York: Scribner's, 1938), vol. III, pp. 191-92.

3. On this symbiotic relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastic levels, see the section "Un lieu de rencontre du spirituel et du temporel" (pp. 3122-24), in André Vauchez's essay "La cathédrale," *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), vol. III, pp. 3122-24. Similarly, Christopher Brooks, "Die Kathedrale in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft," (*Die großen Kathedralen*, ed. Wm. Swaan [Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1969], p. 15), stresses the universal functionality of the cathedral as a "house with many rooms," usually dozens of smaller chapels, in which lay individuals as well as organizations (e.g., the guilds) sought to link themselves to the spiritual power and prestige of the cathedral church. In the late medieval period, for example, the cathedral of Laon had more than 50 priests whose charge it was to cater to these various groups, and St. Paul's cathedral in London boasted 74 different smaller spaces in which mass could be read.

4. See the chapter, "La France et Dieu," in Colette Beaune's excellent study, *Naissance de la nation France* (1985; Paris: Gallimard, 1993), pp.103-313.

5. See Vauchez, "La cathédrale," pp. 3125-26.

6. On this event, see René Limouzon-Lamothe, "La dévastation de Notre-Dame et de l'archevêché en février 1831," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 50 (1964), pp. 125-34.

7. Vauchez, "La cathédrale," p. 3126.

8. See the section, "Notre-Dame dans la tourmente" (pp. 4196-200), in Alain Erlande-Brandenburg's essay, "Notre Dame de Paris," *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), vol. III, pp. 4177-213.

9. Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Ein Wort über die Feier der Leipziger Schlacht* (Frankfurt a.M.: P. W. Eichenberg, 1814), pp. 20, imagines his ideal national memorial as "groß und herrlich [...] wie ein Koloß, eine Pyramide, ein Dom zu Köln."

10. Joseph Görres, *Rheinischer Merkur*, 20 November 1814, quoted in Thomas Nipperdey, "Kirchen als Nationaldenkmal. Die Pläne von 1815," *Festschrift für Otto von Simson*,

ed. Lucius Grisebach and Konrad Renger (Berlin and Wien: Propyläen, 1977), pp. 412-32, here p. 414, fn. 12 (the English translation is mine). Görres repeated this statement almost word for word in his book, *Der Dom von Köln und das Münster von Strassburg* (Regensburg: G. J. Manz, 1842), p. 3.

11. Thomas Nipperdey, "Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal," Thomas Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte*. Essays (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), pp. 189-207 (here p. 192); an earlier version of this essay was published in *Historische Zeitschrift* 206 (1968), 529-85. A wealth of information on the German interest in adapting medieval history and mythography for the construction of national monuments (Wartburg, Herrmannsdenkmal, Kyffhäuserdenkmal, Gosslarer Pfalz, Walhalla) is provided by Ludger Kerssen, *Das Interesse am Mittelalter im deutschen Nationaldenkmal* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975); pp. 16-48 of his study, "Der Kölner Dom als Zeichen der Sehnsucht nach nationaler Größe," deal specifically with Cologne cathedral. On the role of medievalism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British and North American architecture, see the essays in *Medievalism in Architecture and Design*, ed. John R. Zukowsky (=*Studies in Medievalism* III/2 [Fall 1990]).

12. On this mentality in pre- and post-1871 Germany, see Francis G. Gentry, "The Politicization of the Middle Ages: Nationalism and Festivals in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *German Medievalism*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (=*Studies in Medievalism* III/4 [Spring 1991]), 467-88.

13. Leslie J. Workman, "Medievalism and Romanticism," *Medievalism and Romanticism, 1750-1850*, ed. Leslie J. Workman, *Poetica* 39/40 (Special Issue for 1993), 1-41, and "Medievalism," *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1985), 29-33.

14. See Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 4 (in Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Paul Viallaneix, Jacques Le Goff, and Robert Casanova [Paris: Flammarion, 1974], vol. 4, pp. 600ff).

15. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, "Cathédrale," *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture, française du XIᵉ au XVIᵉ siècle* (Paris: B. Bance, 1966), vol. 4, p. 281.

16. Marcel Proust, "La mort des cathédrales," *Chroniques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 159.

17. On these historical events from World War I to the 1990s, see the section, "Une mémoire mythologique," in Vauchez, La cathédrale," pp. 3136-38; on Clovis and French national mythography, see Beaune, *Naissance*, pp. 75-100.

18. The scientistic study of the "real" Middle Ages among Merovingian specialists may serve as an example here: until the 1980s, this area has been dominated by an understanding of the period influenced by the Franco-German hostilities dating back to 1870-71, 1914-18, and 1933-45. To French historians, the period has been seen as the first time (of many) when the barbarian Germanic hordes would invade and occupy the civilized Gaul; to German historians, the Merovingian tribes represented the victory of new and vigorous peoples over the decadent successors of the Roman Empire. It took an "outsider," the American scholar Patrick J. Geary, to usher in the beginning of the end of this dated paradigm. See his study, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*:
Renaissance Responses to a "Medieval" Text[1]

Karl Fugelso

Although most major departments of Italian or comparative literature offer a course devoted solely to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, writing about that text may be a dangerous career move for a young academic. He or she may become trapped in the wrong pigeonhole, for there is rarely consensus on where to locate the *Commedia* within the antiquated taxonomy of higher education. Is it a medieval sermon that builds on Scholasticism and other early schools of thought, that derives from the styles and concerns of Guido Cavalcanti, Brunetto Latini, and other Trecento poets? Or is it a Renaissance essay that foreshadows the humanism of Petrarch, Bruni, and their successors, that marks the beginning of a new era characterized by greater intellectual self-determination? The truth, of course, lies somewhere between these poles, for, even as the *Commedia* emerged from established approaches to literature, history, theology, philosophy, and politics, it fostered new trends and beliefs in those disciplines. Indeed, as early as the fifteenth century, commentators and illuminators treated Dante's text as a threshold between their own era and that which came before it. As we shall see, they acknowledged on the one hand that the *Commedia* sprang from an earlier preoccupation with religion, from concerns that they associated with their predecessors and that have since come to characterize the Middle Ages. Yet, on the other hand, they also invoked the *Commedia* to legitimize interpretations of their own culture. They treated Dante as an erudite observer of a bygone yet influential era, as a witness to ideas, beliefs, and mores that may have taken root in an earlier, more overtly religious period but that still bore fruit in their own, ostensibly more secular age.

Those reactions are central to our understanding of not only how the *Commedia* and Middle Ages were perceived during the fifteenth century but also how early modern artists interpreted texts, for the thirty cycles of *Commedia* miniatures represent an exceptionally wide range of responses to an extraordinarily accessible and innovative work.[2] Though Dante derived some of his material from the *Aeneid* and other illustrated sources, his text demanded a great deal of creativity from its early illuminators.[3] In fact, even after early fourteenth-century artists developed a canon of subjects for the *Commedia*, circumstances particular to each commission, such as a call for an extraordinarily high number of images, often forced illuminators to look beyond pictorial models.[4] They had to turn to recommendations from scholarly advisors — suggestions that can sometimes still be seen in the margins of Budapest University MS italien 1 from circa 1345 and other unfinished manuscripts — or to their own

knowledge of the text: to having read one of the thousands of copies then in circulation, to having heard Giovanni di Ser Buccio and other orators read it publicly, to having attended Boccaccio's free lectures on it, or to having joined peasants singing it as they drove their donkeys "laden with trash."[5] Of course, given the opportunity, not all of the illuminators may have deigned to chime in with the peasants, for some of the artists seem to have been owners of the manuscripts or to have been artistically untrained friends of those who were wealthy enough to own a manuscript. The early fifteenth-century miniatures from Kongelige Bibliotek MS Thott 411.2 in Copenhagen, for example, lack the technical expertise and eloquence of those by professional illuminators, such as the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master, or by artists famed more for their work on panel and in fresco, such as Giovanni di Paolo.[6] Yet, though the amateur illustrations may be crude, they often compensate for their lack of polish by the profundity of their insight and by supplementing the evidence of professional fourteenth- and fifteenth-century responses to the *Commedia*. In both number and nature, they greatly expand our knowledge of Dante's audience between the first appearance of *Commedia* miniatures in 1324, just three years after the poet's death, and their final production in the early 1480s, when the advent of printing largely eliminated the market for them. Indeed, in tandem with the more professional *Commedia* illustrations from this period, they represent the largest early modern response to a text other than the Bible, and they help define the completeness with which many fifteenth-century readers departed from their predecessors' interpretations of Dante's text.

Although fourteenth-century commentators and illuminators increasingly assign responsibility for the *Commedia* to the mortal author and otherwise lay the groundwork for later critics, they do not deny Dante's claims to have been divinely inspired, and they accordingly assign his text great relevance to our life and afterlife. They treat the *Commedia* as a living work of the greatest significance for our conduct here on earth and for our future in the afterlife. Indeed, some of the earliest readers treat it as no less important than Scripture itself. For example, on the recto of the first folio from Musée Condé MS 597 in Chantilly — an *Inferno* and commentary illustrated by Buonamico Buffalmacco and his workshop in approximately 1328 — Dante appears in the form of an inspired Evangelist.[7] From a historiated initial inaugurating the *Inferno*, he gazes up at a figure of Virgil in the same manner that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are often seen gazing up at their muses. Like them, he seems to be receiving a message from on high, to be about to fill the empty folios in front of him with the Word made flesh in the form of text on parchment. Indeed, lest we doubt that he is receiving divine dictation, that he is a "pen of God," as Jerome described the Evangelists, he does

not look at the folios to which he applies his quill, and, though the *Commedia* itself indicates he was right-handed, he holds his pen in his left hand, in his least voluntary hand.[8] Moreover, he employs his right hand to point towards Heaven, to indicate the origin of the *Commedia*. Thus, while this image insists that the mortal Dante revealed the Word and allows that he may even have embellished a message from God, it also implies that he was no less an instrument of divine will than were the Evangelists, that, like the figure encoiled by the letter "N" of this initial, he was subject to the very text that he brought into being.

Buffalmacco and his assistants thereby assign Dante far less responsibility for the *Commedia* than do other illuminators. In many mid- to late fourteenth-century manuscripts, such as Biblioteca Comunale MS Guarneriana 200 in S. Daniele del Friuli, the poet is depicted at his desk gazing at the codex in which he is writing.[9] He may be immersed in his own imagination, as is overtly suggested by the landscape around his lectern in Vatican MS latini 4776 of circa 1390-1400, by the displacement of his studio with the dark woods in which the narrative begins.[10] Or he may be constructing the *Commedia* from other texts, as is signified in the S. Daniele manuscript by the open codex above the one in which he writes. But, regardless of whether he is fabricating the *Commedia* solely from his own powers of creativity or piecing it together from other texts, he appears to contribute far more to it than he does in the Musee Conde author-portrait.

Yet even the late fourteenth-century illuminators do not assign Dante as much responsibility for his text as do many of their fifteenth-century counterparts. Rather than insist Dante authored the *Commedia*, and thereby admit the possibility that he did not, many Quattrocento artists seem to have taken for granted that he had full agency over his text. Although author-portraits were common in the fifteenth century, these illuminators completely ignore Dante's role as writer and begin their pictorial cycles with an image of him as the protagonist. Some open with Dante so "full of sleep" (*Inf* 1.11) that he sits dozing with his head in his hands.[11] Some open with Dante setting out alone or by Virgil's side in the dark woods with which the narrative begins.[12] And some start with Dante encountering the three beasts shortly after he sets out.[13] But, regardless of precisely where they begin in the text, they all open with Dante participating in the narrative. Evidently, these illuminators did not feel a need to articulate his role in the production of the *Commedia*.

That confidence in Dante's authorship suggests that his text was no longer perceived as a spiritually authoritative work. As Jacques Derrida has noted, many pre-modern philosophers treated writing as a "radical absence."[14] According to John of Salisbury, "letters are shapes indicating voices, . . . frequently they speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent."[15]

Working backwards from the text, the audience could erect an author-idea based upon autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical revelations within the work, as well as upon preconceived models of human motivation and psychology.[16] But, for pre-modern readers, the text itself could neither make manifest the absent nor vouch for its own truthfulness and authenticity. To verify the reader's author-idea, Saint Jerome required historical evidence for it, testimony from outside the text itself as to who was responsible for it.[17] This criterion was adopted by many later scholars, including Hugh of St. Cher, whose lectures on the Bible (1230-35) perpetuate the rule even as they make an exception for some apocryphal texts: "They are called apocryphal because the author is unknown. But, because there is no doubt of their truth, they are accepted by the Church for the teaching of mores rather than for the defense of the faith. However, if neither the author nor the truth were known, they could not be accepted."[18] And we have no reason to believe that this criterion had changed by the fifteenth century. Although an author-portrait may be nothing more than an idea that the illuminator derived from the narrative or from workshop models, it would still have been perceived as one means of independently introducing the historical figure of the author, of inserting a biological referent for an otherwise distant collection of written signs. Thus, many of the fifteenth-century illuminators do not ground the text in a historical source or otherwise verify its authenticity. They do not establish the authority upon which rest earlier pictorial narratives, such as that of Musée Condé MS 597.

On the recto of folio thirty-one in the Chantilly manuscript, Buffalmacco builds on his author-portrait of Dante with a depiction of Fra Guido da Pisa.[19] In a historiated initial that follows an uninterrupted text of the *Inferno* and inaugurates Guido's commentary on that cantica, Buffalmacco portrays the Carmelite sitting at a desk with a pen in his hand. But rather than serve as an *auctor*, as a direct conduit for the word of God, Guido epitomizes a *commentator*, a scholar actively responding to a text.[20] He does not apply his pen to parchment with his more passive hand; he sharpens it with both hands. And he does not look up for inspiration; he looks down at his work. Although he merely may be gazing at his hands, his slightly open mouth suggests that he is looking past them, that he is reading the *Commedia* or articulating his own response to it, that he is shaping his commentary as he shapes his pen.

Lest we doubt Guido's agency or the divinity of his sources, we have only to look at the top margin of folio thirty-one.[21] There, just six lines above the portrait of the commentator, Daniel interprets the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's dining room. Standing to right of center, imitating the pose of the disembodied hand at right and craning his neck to look at the king on the left, the prophet pictorially embodies the transmission of

the Word and serves as an obvious analogy to Guido. Indeed, we may not even need to know the source of this image, much less have read Guido's declaration that "this (disembodied) hand is our new poet Dante," to recognize the connection.[22] The mere awareness that this image precedes a commentary encourages us to view that text as a valid interpretation of a divine message, as a legitimate response to a true and accurate record of the other world.

In accord with that premise, with the assumption that every moment of the *Commedia* is of the utmost importance to our life and afterlife, Buffalmacco manipulates the gate of hell on the recto of folio forty-eight to immerse us in the narrative.[23] Perhaps even before we have had a chance to read the end of Guido's *Deductio textus de vulgari in latinum* for canto three or the beginning of his *Expositio lictere* for that same canto, a brown line beneath them pulls our eye from the empty bas-de-page at left to a bright red tower at right. Drawing on our tendency to read images like a line of text, it propels us towards the same portal that awaits the hesitant figure of Dante. And, like him, we too may wish to pause when we see the two bats that hover in front of the tower and foreshadow the demons to come, when we see the three owls that perch on top of it and symbolize none other than the Devil himself, and when we see an inscription that is written just beneath them and boils Dante's nine vernacular lines down to one word from Guido's Latin summary of them — "IUSTITIA." But, like the pilgrim, we too cannot easily avoid the portal. Just as Dante is yanked towards the gate by a very determined Virgil — a far cry from the reassuring guide in the text who, "with a cheerful look from which (the narrator) took comfort" gently "places" his hand on that of Dante (*Inf* 1.19-20) — so we are pulled into the portal by the relentless ground line and by a subtle disjuncture in perspective. Judging from the fact that we can see the right side of the crenellations, they, and implicitly the rest of the tower, face towards our left, towards the oncoming figures of Virgil and Dante. But, judging from the fact that we can see the width of the portal only on its right side, the gateway opens towards our right, away from the figures in the scene. Indeed, it addresses us more directly than it does Virgil or Dante. Moreover, it gives us roughly the same viewpoint of itself as the pilgrim has of the crenellations. We cannot be entirely sure of the direction in which the crenellations face, for we do not know the ratio of their width to their length, nor of their width to that of the portal. And, in any case, the variation in the length and height of the other bricks in the tower demonstrates that the illuminators were not concerned with the consistency of such proportions. But within the illuminators' margin for error, it appears that the crenellations face approximately 35 or 40 degrees to our left and 50 or 55 degrees from the trajectory of the pilgrim's

approach. They therefore depart at roughly the same angle from that trajectory as the gate departs from our line of sight, for the width of the portal is exposed for more than half the length of the arch. That is to say, we have roughly the same location in relationship to the portal as the pilgrim has in relationship to the crenellations.

It is of course possible that this disjuncture in viewpoint is merely an error. Perspective was not systematically organized around a single focal point for another century.[24] But all of the components for one-point perspective existed by the 1320s, and many artists of that period could at least approximate it, particularly those as talented as Buffalmacco.[25] He repeatedly demonstrates that he was fully capable of rendering scenes from a single vantage point when he chose to do so. In his miniatures of inner hell, for example, the doors and windows of each wall open in the same direction and are generally in accord with all of the crenellations and other indications of our viewpoint.[26] Indeed, Buffalmacco sometimes includes so many superfluous signifiers of our vantage point that he could be accused of hyperbole, of reveling in his ability to render each scene consistently. If so, he would not have been alone among his contemporaries. In approximately 1338-39, Ambrogio Lorenzetti distorted dozens of buildings in *The Effects of Good Government* to privilege a figure of peace on an adjacent wall of the Sala dei Nove in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico. Only from her viewpoint in *The Allegory of Good Government*, from the eyes of the virtue that Siena expressly promoted on its coinage and to which Saint Bernard dedicated the Palazzo Pubblico, do the buildings appear illusionistically correct.[27] Thus, Buffalmacco had not only the skill to render perspective from a consistent vantage point but, if we are to judge from his contemporaries, also the ability to deliberately manipulate it.

However, if we presume that he did not make an egregious error in perspective at the gate of hell, at the visually and narratively most important orifice in the cycle, to what end did he so blatantly disrupt its perspective? Why did he depart at this particular point from the conventions of pictorial representation elsewhere in this manuscript? The answer may lie in the *Commedia* itself, for, by conflating us with the pilgrim, Buffalmacco's gate closely imitates the function of its counterpart in the text. Prior to the third canto of the *Inferno*, Dante has encouraged us to imagine that we are merely accompanying the narrator. For example, by employing the first-person plural possessive in the very first line of canto one, "midway in the journey of our life," he groups our viewpoint with his own. And, as if we were a spectator in the narrative, he commands us shortly thereafter to "behold. . . a leopard light-footed and very fleet" (*Inf* 1.31-32). He invites us to descend the steep and savage path at the

end of canto two by the pilgrim's side. But, as canto three opens, we find that rather than merely accompanying the pilgrim, we are the pilgrim. Like him, we are reading the inscription over the gate of hell:

> Through me you enter the woeful city,
> Through me you enter eternal grief,
> Through me you enter among the lost.
>
> Justice moved my high maker:
> The divine power made me,
> The supreme wisdom, and the primal love.
>
> Before me nothing was created
> If not eternal, and eternal I endure.
> Abandon every hope, you who enter. (*Inf* 3.1-9)

Moreover, we may not initially realize that we are, in fact, reading the same words as does the pilgrim. Although some of us may guess from the lines themselves that the pilgrim is their primary audience within the *Commedia*, and although the narrator definitively interrupts our identification with the pilgrim by declaring after the inscription "these words. . . I saw inscribed over a portal" (*Inf* 3.10-11), we have no warning, as we begin to read the inscription, that it is a text within the narrative. The author does not provide an introduction to the inscription, and, unlike modern publishers, the Musée Condé scribe and most of his contemporaries do not distinguish the inscription with capital letters, quotation marks, or other such signifiers. We are therefore encouraged to read the inscription as if it were addressed primarily to us, and, until we learn otherwise, we may not only read the same words that the pilgrim does but also read them as the pilgrim. We may be led to assume that we are the subject of the verb in the first three lines and that we are the ones who will have to abandon every hope upon entering hell.[28]

Not long after that juncture in the *Inferno*, Dante reverts to the first-person singular tense for his dominant voice, a tense that, like the lateral vector prevailing throughout the rest of Buffalmacco's illustration cycle, distinguishes us from the narrator. But neither the author nor the illuminator allows our empathy with the narrator to collapse completely. Just as Dante occasionally employs the first-person plural tense to renew our identification with the narrator, so Buffalmacco sometimes confirms that identification through the use of a first-person viewpoint, particularly in the first image after the illustration of the gate.[29] When the ground line on the recto of folio forty-eight catapults us through the gate of hell, we land on the recto of folio forty-nine, where we encounter the cowardly

undecided: the angels "who were neither rebellious nor faithful to God" (*Inf* 3.38-39) and the souls who "lived without infamy and without praise" (*Inf* 3.36).   Racing across the bas-de-page, eternally chasing a banner they will never catch, they fill the bottom of the folio with a frieze that perpetuates the left-to-right vector of the preceding scenes and halts our ocular penetration of pictorial space.   But rather than give us a third-person, detached point of view, as do the figures in most of the other miniatures in this manuscript, they continue our first-person perspective as the pilgrim himself, for rather than stare at an image of Dante, as do the sinners in most of the other miniatures from this manuscript, the fourth and seventh cowards from the left look towards us.   In fact, Buffalmacco has followed the text so closely that even if the cowards wished to gaze at a figure of the pilgrim they could not, for the figure is absent from the scene.   As noted in the *Commedia*, the pilgrim does not converse with the cowards as they stream by him but, instead, follows Virgil's advice just to "look and pass on" (*Inf* 3.51).   That is to say, rather than meet the front of the row of cowards and physically align himself with them, as the pilgrim does with other trains of sinners, he occupies a position roughly perpendicular to the cowards and analogous to our location in relationship to the Musée Condé image of them.   Consequently, although the fourth and seventh cowards from the left do not look at a figure of the pilgrim, they do, in looking towards us, evidently gaze at an embodiment of him.   They invite us to pass as the pilgrim himself from the bats that hover on either side of the gate to the winged beasts among the cowards, from the owls above the gate to the strigiform emblem on the banner, and from a pronouncement that divine justice awaits the damned to the execution of that justice.

Such conflations of Dante's protagonist and audience are not discussed by Guido.   Nor does he directly call for our immersion in the narrative.   But, in analyzing the inscription over the portal, he does underscore a theme of great relevance to both the protagonist and us. Just above the illustration of the gate, in the right-hand column of text, he deduces from the line "Justice moved my high maker" (*Inf* 3.4) that "the reason for which was made this infernal prison. . . is divine justice."[30] And he proceeds to identify the rest of the inscription as little more than a frame for that theme: the first line, "Through me you enter the woeful city," merely denotes the location of the gate; the fifth and sixth lines, "The divine power made me,/The supreme wisdom, and the primal love," establish that the gate was created by the Trinity; the seventh and eighth lines, "Before me nothing was created/If not eternal, and eternal I endure," denote when the gate was created; and the final line, " Abandon every hope, you who enter," confirms that there is no exit for those of us who sin, for those of us who merit punishment.[31]   Thus, Guido' s entire

interpretation of the inscription revolves around a theme, divine justice, that applies no less to us than it does to the pilgrim, that to some degree conflates us with him.

Lest we miss the universal applicability of that justice, Buffalmacco pictorially directs it at us and thereby reinforces its extranarrative relevance. Just above the illustrated doorway, in the same language and the same brown ink as the body of the commentary, he literally and figuratively foregrounds the keyword of Guido' s interpretation. Allowing the letters of "IUSTITIA" to grow neither from left to right, as the angle of the crenellations suggests they should, nor from right to left, as the portal suggests they should, the illuminator presses this boldly capitalized word to the surface of the image. Hence, even as he manipulates the portal to slip us into the pilgrim's shoes, even as he immerses us in the narrative, he reminds us that we are looking at ink on parchment. He underscores our viewership and suggests that the *Commedia* has extranarrative relevance to our life and afterlife.

In that spirit, Guido repeatedly demands a close reading of both the form and content of the *Commedia*. For example, he urges his patron to observe the poetic structures that enhance Dante's didacticism: "Note, Lucano Spinola, . . . that the rhymed verses of the first type need rhyme on only one syllable or letter, namely on the last one; the second ones, however, need to rhyme on three syllables, that is, on the next-to-the-last ones and the last one; and the third ones on two, namely on the last two, as the letters very clearly show. And thus the form of that which is treated is clear."[32] This clarity, according to Guido, can reveal a metaphorical dimension of the text, an extranarrative applicability to which he pointedly draws his reader's attention: "Note here, Lucano, that the first grace makes man abandon vices and move toward the virtues; the second makes him progress from virtue to virtue; the third makes him pass from wretchedness to glory."[33] As Guido insists elsewhere, the protagonist is a model for his patron and, implicitly, for all of Dante's other readers: "Note here, O devout Lucano, who wish to be instructed in the virtues and are anxious to be protected by heavenly grace, that Dante assumes within himself the role of a penitent man."[34] That is to say, those of us who wish to avoid eternal damnation should take the contrite pilgrim as our example and learn from his experiences, should follow in his footsteps and immerse ourselves in the narrative.

Guido can maintain that every moment of the *Commedia* is relevant to our life and afterlife, for he also holds that the protagonist is in essence the author, that Dante actually had a divine vision. The commentator claims that, while the poet was "still living in the flesh, he was allowed to see hell, purgatory, heaven, the citizens of heaven, and even the most blessed Trinity itself."[35] Perhaps to fend off charges of heresy that were

then in circulation, Guido sometimes denies that Dante physically traveled to the other world and says the poet merely "beheld in an imaginary seeing those very places where the souls go after the death of their bodies."[36] But, though the commentator may remove Dante from the ranks of Paul and other Biblical figures who corporeally visited the other world, he not only compares the *Commedia* to Ezekiel's vision, Noah's ark, and the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace but sometimes does so in the most liturgical of language.[37] For example, in claiming that *Paradiso* is analogous to one of the three words in the book seen by Ezekiel, Guido describes the subject of both the cantica and the word as "glory and jubilation" ("laus et iubilatio").[38] Moreover, it was apparently Guido who chose to have the writing on the wall pictorially epitomize the *Commedia*, for alphabetical letters next to many of the illustrations in this manuscript and pictorial allusions to minor points in Guido's Latin text suggest that the commentator gave the illuminator a list of subjects and perhaps locations for the images.[39] He had Buffalmacco carry out the implications of his author-portrait for Dante and echo the spirit of his own paraphrase of Saint Jerome, his own insistence that Dante is "the pen (with which) . . . the Holy Spirit rapidly wrote for us the penalties of the damned and the glory of the blessed."[40] Dante may not have physically traveled to the other world, but, according to Guido, he did have a true and faithful vision of the afterlife, and, as suggested by the commentator's 214-folio, line-by-line response to the *Inferno*, we must not only study Dante's themes and assimilate his general points but also share his experiences and immerse ourselves in them.

Guido's approach thus departs from that of all other fourteenth-century commentators, for they are far more likely to locate the protagonist's experiences in the poet's life. In approximately 1322, for example, Dante's son Jacopo claims that the antagonistic beasts in canto one of the *Inferno* and the encouraging ladies in the next canto "figuratively" represent how the poet "induced himself to demonstrate the virtues and vices in order to give the world correction and example."[41] Approximately twenty years later, the third redaction of Andrea di Ser Lancia's commentary goes a step further and attributes the *Commedia* largely to reflection, to the influence on Dante of night, "when a man, apart from others, focuses on the ruminations of the conscience."[42] That attribution marks a substantial shift from Andrea's first redaction and may reflect the earliest version of a commentary by another son of Dante, Pietro. The first redaction of Pietro's commentary, which dates from 1340-41, traces so many of his father's sources that it has been interpreted as an *apologia* for Dante.[43] Yet it ascribes far less agency to the poet than do Pietro's second (ca. 1355) or third (ca. 1358) redactions. The third, for example, adds a note that Dante could only have traveled to the

afterlife in "a fictitious, imaginary way" and, relative to Pietro's first redaction, locates the *Commedia* even more thoroughly in the poet's life.[44] Beatrice is enlarged from an allegorical representation of metaphysics and an anagogical representation of theology to the woman Dante loved and courted, to the historical person who was "born into the Portinari family" and was "outstanding in manners and beauty."[45] Thus, Pietro practices that which Boccaccio preaches fifteen years later in noting that "it is. . . desirable to examine men's lives and habits and fields of study so that we may recognize how much credence should be lent to their words."[46] From such an analysis, Boccaccio deduces in his *Commedia* commentary of circa 1373-75 that Dante "came to understand about the divine essence and about the separate fields of knowledge that through human ingenuity can be understood," for his habits were "serious and highly scrupulous."[47] To know the truth, Dante plunged "with keen intellect into theology" and "after considerable thought . . . began to produce what he had long premeditated, that is, how to rebuke and reward the lives of men according to their various merits."[48] Nor, as Boccaccio himself notes, was he alone in calling Dante "a theologian" and in grounding the *Commedia* in the poet's thoughts and experiences.[49] In 1375, an anonymous commentator known as "Falso Boccaccio" claims that the *Commedia* originated in the mind of its author; in the late 1370s, Benvenuto da Imola repeatedly declares that the text sprang from Dante's meditation on the afterworld; shortly thereafter, the Anonimo Fiorentino explains apparent contradictions in the *Commedia* as opinions of the author; in the late 1390s, Francesco da Buti defines portions of the text as the products of Dante's imagination and claims that Dante dreamed this "poetic fiction;" and around 1400 Filippo Villani insists that Dante "invented the *Commedia* out of his own thoughts" to lead us to righteousness.[50]

Yet, even as the fourteenth-century commentators ascribe the *Commedia* to the poet's reading and experiences, they never deny that Dante actually had a divine vision. The anonymous author of the Epistle to Cangrande, which was written prior to Dante's death in 1321 and perhaps by him, claims the protagonist's experiences were "within the realm of possibility."[51] In 1324, Graziolo Bambaglioli compares the *Commedia* with prophetic portions of the Bible, such as Ezekiel 18.3-4.[52] And sometime between 1324 and 1328, Jacopo della Lana joins both Guido and the epistler in analyzing the *Commedia* via the *accessus ad auctores*, a Scholastic formula hitherto reserved for Scriptural exegesis.[53] Andrea di Ser Lancia and Pietro Alighieri do not defend the idea that Dante was a divine agent, but, at the same time, they do not deny it, and Boccaccio downright promotes it. He revives the comparisons of Dante with Old Testament prophets, and repeatedly declares that Dante was "granted special grace by God in our times," that he was motivated by

that grace to think about his subject, and, indeed, that "without any doubt, (the *Commedia*) lends itself to the belief that (its inspiration) was the grace of God."[54] Nor is Boccaccio alone among late fourteenth-century commentators in portraying Dante as a divinely inspired theologian. Benvenuto da Imola compares Dante with Old Testament prophets and claims that the poet was called Dante because he "gave news of God and of divine things."[55] Francesco da Buti claims that Dante's name is appropriate because the author "graciously makes gifts for others from that which God has given him."[56] The Falso Boccaccio writes that "holy theology gave succor to the author, that is, divine inspiration, through the grace in the soul of the author, made him come to desire and to think of studying in this field of knowledge."[57] And Filippo Villani not only compares the *Commedia* with the writings of the Church Fathers but also declares that the poet was "touched by the divine spirit," that "no one could have written a work at once so sublime and so profound without the special aid of the Holy Spirit."[58] Thus, while never claiming Dante actually had a vision from God, Villani joins all of the other fourteenth-century commentators in at least allowing that Dante may have been divinely inspired, and, like some of his colleagues, he occasionally even insists on that motivation. While participating in a growing tendency to locate the text in Dante's personal experiences and to increasingly downplay the relevance of those experiences to us, he sustains the theological legitimacy of the *Commedia* and insists on its significance to our future in the afterlife.

Villani and the other fourteenth-century commentators therefore explicitly articulate that which is merely implied in *Commedia* illustrations of their time. Rather than attempt to conflate us with the pilgrim at the gate of hell, to immerse us in Dante's narrative, Buffalmacco's Trecento colleagues insist that the *Commedia* has relevance for us outside of our reading experience. Instead of subtly departing from one-point perspective to give us the same view that the pilgrim has of the rest of the image, they have their portals overtly depart from those conventions and remind us of them, of the fact that we are viewing an image of the gate rather than the gate itself.[59] This is not to deny that some of these fourteen gates may be the result of negligence or incompetence, for, as noted before, one-point perspective did not emerge until the 1420s. But in several instances where the artists demonstrate elsewhere in their cycle that they have the ability to render images from a consistent viewpoint, their lintels and thresholds are so perspectively inconsistent with each other and with the otherwise uniform perspective of the image that it is difficult to believe these incongruities would have passed unnoticed. That is to say, the portals depart so overtly from the conventions of representation

elsewhere in their manuscripts that they literally and figuratively foreground those conventions.

Those portals, moreover, may not be as incongruous with the conventions of their manuscripts as are other fourteenth-century images of the gate. In six cycles of the period, the thickness of the portal is revealed on all four of its sides.[60] It departs a full ninety degrees from the lateral trajectory of Dante and Virgil and often forces them to swing awkwardly around a jamb in order to enter hell. This extreme disjuncture of pictorial vectors, of a frontal address in the midst of a largely lateral narrative, discourages our identification with the pilgrim. It may not necessarily terminate our imaginary immersion in the narrative, for viewers may conflate being addressed with identifying as the pilgrim. That is to say, viewers may collapse the left-to-right trajectory of the pilgrim with the perpendicular vector welcoming them into the narrative. But, as the frontality of the portal pulls the doorway to the surface of the image, it underscores the fact that we are viewing miniatures in a manuscript and projects the implications of the *Commedia* beyond the narrative, beyond any immersion that we may be experiencing. Like all fourteenth-century commentaries, other than that by Guido da Pisa, it presents the *Commedia* not as a divine vision in which we must immerse ourselves fully but as a divine text with themes critical to our life and afterlife.

In sharp contrast, most fifteenth-century illuminators, such as those for the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* in British Museum MS Yates Thompson 36, ostensibly ignore us at the gate of hell.[61] Though these artists turn the portal far enough towards us to reveal its opening and the fact that it is a doorway, they do not have it overtly depart from the conventions of pictorial representation elsewhere in these manuscripts. In accord with the left-to-right flow of the narrative, the portal opens towards our left, towards the approaching figures of Virgil and the pilgrim. It therefore welcomes them more overtly than it does us. It postpones pictorial attempts to directly engage us until later, more political moments in the narrative. Indeed, by promoting the predominant, left-to-right vector of the narrative, it underscores the degree to which those attempts depart from the conventions of representation. For example, since we are encouraged to track Virgil and the pilgrim from left to right through the Yates Thompson portal and across most of the illustrations in this manuscript, we may be all the more likely to notice that the Sienese illuminator who worked on *Paradiso*, Giovanni di Paolo, has manipulated the walls of Florence to engage us and to foster sympathy for Dante as he is exiled from his hometown.[62] In contrast to the low, bright, welcoming walls of Dante's anonymous refuge at right, the high, dark, forbidding rampart at left bars our access to a city clearly identified by the red lily of Florence above the gate and by Brunelleschi's still-lanternless cathedral.

The wall encourages us to empathize with Dante as he is ejected from his hometown and to condemn those who, like the determined figure at left, exiled him. Indeed, it partakes in a pattern of mural exclusion that bans us from other cities defined by Dante as bad and that equates them with Renaissance Florence. For example, in contrast to medieval Florence and its humble neighbors, which share well-traveled roads and welcome us with the same bent walls as Dante's refuge, the cities "enclosing the rabble between the Adige and Tagliamento" (*Par*. 9.43-44) are isolated by dead-end paths and join Dante's ex-patria in turning high, straight walls towards us.[63] They encourage us not only to empathize but also to sympathize with Dante in his exile from Florence, and, in so doing, they playoff of the third-person, perpendicular viewpoint that we have of the rest of the narrative, including the protagonist's entrance to hell.

The implication that most of those lateral gates are ignoring us is reinforced by the few fifteenth-century exceptions to that rule. In juxtaposing a fully frontal portal with a lateral gate in Vatican MS Barberiniani latini 4112 from 1419, an anonymous Florentine illuminator clearly differentiates us from the pilgrim and directs that lateral gate at him.[64] And twenty years later, in directing the gate of hell at us, the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master appears to be obeying the dictates of an extraordinarily conservative advisor.[65] Subtle iconographic parallels between the Master's illustrations and a presentation copy of Guiniforte Barzizza's commentary in the same manuscript suggest Barzizza advised the Master, that he encouraged the illuminator to convey the spirit of his own guide, Francesco da Buti's late fourteenth-century commentary.[66] Thus, in the same vein as Barzizza's anachronistic silence on whether the *Commedia* came from God, that is, the commentator's departure from his contemporaries in not expressly denying that the poem is divine, the Master turns his portal towards us. He departs from all other illuminators of his time in suggesting that the *Commedia* may have profound moral implications for our life and afterlife.

In thus turning the gate towards us, the Master also departs from all of his colleagues in the next generation of *Commedia* artists, except Guglielmo Giraldi, the illuminator of Vatican MS Urbinati latini 365 from 1478-82. Giraldi also welcomes us with a fully frontal portal.[67] But he does so in a very different spirit from that of the Master or the Barberiniani illuminator. Whereas the latter reveals sinners being seized by rapacious demons, and the Master portrays the pilgrim quailing as he reads the fearsome inscription above the maw of hell, Giraldi depicts the elegant figures of Virgil and the pilgrim strolling arm-in-arm into a beautiful landscape. As the somewhat idealized cowards race by and as Phlegyas patiently waits in his bark, the protagonists approach a scenic moat surrounding a majestic city. Indeed, even the ornate inscription

above the portal hardly seems threatening in this image. We are invited to join Dante as casual observers of the afterlife, rather than as pilgrims subject to the sinners' discomforts.

Giraldi's illustration is thus in harmony with all of the fifteenth-century commentaries, other than that by Barzizza, for they do not treat the pilgrim's experiences as a divine vision, as faithful and true to the afterlife. Rather than approach the *Commedia* as a living document of anagogical import by an agent of God, they treat it as a compendium of immense and sometimes strange knowledge and invention, the work of a scholar who spreads out for our intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment a vast repertory of philosophical, historical, and political information. Whereas Villani had closed the fourteenth century with the declaration that Dante was "touched by the divine spirit," Lionardo Bruni' s *Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogi* of approximately 1401-4 has Niccoli claim that Dante derived his theology from monastic *quodlibeti* and other sources that Bruni's circle treated as simplistic, outdated, and misleading.[68] Indeed, after pointing out a couple of Dante's theological "errors," such as assigning virtually the same punishment to Cassius, who merely "annoyed the world," as to Judas, who "betrayed the Savior of the world," Niccoli insists he and his companions not even bother to discuss "that which deals with religion" in the *Commedia* and focus instead on perceived shortcomings in Dante's use of the vemacular.[69]

Yet Bruni himself does not entirely ignore the religious relevance of the *Commedia*, particularly with regard to Dante's sources. In a 1436 biography of the poet, he goes out of his way to assign the *Commedia* to its mortal author and to dismiss the possibility that it contained a heavenly message of Scriptural weight. He claims it is not divine and prophetic, "the highest and most perfect kind of poetry," for, unlike Saint Francis, Dante did not "apply his soul so intensely to God by possession and abstraction of mind that he became, as it were, transfigured beyond human sense."[70] He did not become a poet "through his own genius, excited and aroused by some inward and hidden force termed frenzy and possession. . . through an inner abstraction of the soul."[71] Instead, like a "theologian," he came to his understanding of God "through study and letters."[72] Indeed, Bruni claims Dante worked "incessantly" and achieved literary greatness by "staying awake and diligence in his studies."[73] Yet, rather than "renounce the world and shut himself up to a life of ease," as Bruni suggests was the case with Petrarch, Dante took a wife and "did not omit any polite and social interaction."[74] Moreover, while living "the honest, studious life of a citizen," he "was considerably employed in the republic" and had fought for the state "vigorously, mounted, and in the front rank" at the battle of Campaldino.[75] That is to say, he was not only an intellectual of the highest caliber but also a great and loyal soldier. Indeed,

from Bruni's perspective, Dante seems to have combined his martial and scholarly pursuits. The biographer suggests that, like a military campaign, the *Commedia* is a product of "discipline, art, and forethought," a highly calculated work that succeeds in "capturing the mind of every reader."[76] It is a virile poem that is "not sterile nor poor nor fantastic but fertile and enriched, established from true knowledge and much discipline," and it is a vivid poem that demonstrates "such familiarity with modern history that (Dante) seems to have been present at every event."[77] Thus, at a time when the growing commercialization of Florence demanded that Bruni and his colleagues justify their drain on communal resources, Dante is portrayed as both the most active of intellectuals and the most dedicated of public servants.[78]

Nor was Bruni the only fifteenth-century author to exploit Dante for his own political ends. In approximately 1440, Gianozzo Manetti wrote a biography of the poet that sometimes depends heavily on Bruni's account but at other times tellingly departs from it and, on occasion, even returns to earlier biographies that Bruni had dismissed.[79] For example, Manetti revives Boccaccio's claim that Dante was a direct descendant of ancient Romans, a claim that Bruni described as "most doubtful. . . and nothing other than guessing."[80] Manetti seems to have willingly exchanged his usual scrupulousness with regard to the truth and reliability of his sources for an opportunity to bolster Dante's reputation.[81] He seems to have agreed with the growing belief among his contemporaries that Florentine culture, pride, and identity depended ever less on professional soldiers and statesmen, who were costing the city territory and prestige, and ever more on the reputation of its artists and authors, particularly its "three crowns"—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.[82] He therefore sheds many qualifications of Dante's earlier biographers and does not hesitate to incorporate flattering, sometimes contradictory anecdotes and legends from those accounts. In fact, the contradictions may have been particularly welcome, for, in overtly pointing to their famous sources, especially to the biographies by Boccaccio and Bruni, the discord not only underscores the prestigious attention that Dante had received but also anchors Manetti's biography in those of his forerunners. Even as the conflicting passages reveal different perceptions of Dante's worth and achievements, they also highlight the high esteem in which he was held by many Florentine scholars.

Of course, that intellectual appreciation strongly departs from how Dante was politically treated by his former compatriots. Thus, in contrast to Bruni, who tightly ties the *Commedia* to Dante's civic involvement, Manetti attempts to divorce Dante's literary achievements from his political pursuits. Indeed, Manetti blames politics, particularly the intrigues of Henry VII, the emperor Dante strenuously promoted in public

epistles to the Florentines, for disturbing the poet. According to Manetti, Dante would have continued to study the humanities after his exile, "living most peacefully and most serenely ," if Henry's invasion of Italy had not "violently disrupted and upset even these tranquil and divine studies of his."[83] Without denying that Dante contributed militarily and politically to Florence before his exile— for Manetti was under the same pressure as Bruni to defend civic expenditures on scholarship—the biographer both highlights Dante's contributions to the literature and arts of Florence and suggests that those were areas in which the city excelled. He admits that, in accord with the concerns of Dante's contemporaries, the *Commedia* "reconciles poetry with a healthy Catholicism" and that Dante was "like the ancient poets that were inspired by the Spirit," but he also exploits the *Commedia* as an ancestor of the scholarly achievements in his own era.[84] He defends it as a paradigm of the contributions he and his contemporaries were making to the artistic and literary reputation of Florence.

Thirty years later, such defenses were hardly necessary, for Florence had long since established its prominence among the cultural leaders of Europe, and Dante was widely acknowledged to be a pillar of that reputation. Yet, in a commentary of 1474, Martino Paulo Nibia (also known as "Nidobeato") celebrates the form of the *Commedia* and, to the degree that he found Dante's subjects and insights relevant to himself and his contemporaries, its content.[85] In adopting and adapting Jacopo della Lana's early fourteenth-century commentary on the *Commedia*, Nibia often omits Jacopo's discussion of Dante's theology, updates the poet's references, expands on the style of the *Commedia*, and addresses the more secular aspects of Dante's content, such as history and genealogy.[86] He borrows Jacopo's description of Dante as "divine," but he conspicuously avoids Jacopo's repeated claim that Dante was divinely inspired, and he devotes much of his time to establishing the relevance of the *Commedia* to late fifteenth-century Italy.[87] For example, after reviewing Dante's references to several central Italian towns, Nibia notes, "Faenza found itself under the rule of the wretched Carlo di Manfredi; Imola found itself under Count Ieronimo, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV; Cesenna under the Holy Church."[88] Rather than join Manetti in defending Dante's contributions to Florentine culture, Nibia presumes them and turns to analyzing the specific merits of the *Commedia* in relationship to the culture of his own era. He treats Dante's text not so much as a divinely inspired window on the afterlife, as the reflection of an age concerned above all with the other world, but as a forerunner of his own world, as a paradigm of late fifteenth-century literature and an essay on issues that he evidently thought were more relevant than theology.

Six or seven years later, Cristoforo Landino takes a similar approach, even as he dismisses the efforts of Nibia and other predecessors.[89] Indeed, he focuses far more than does Nibia on Dante's language and style. As Landino declares to the Florentine Signori in a dedicatory epistle for his commentary: "This alone I affirm: to have liberated your citizen from the barbarity of many external idioms in which (the *Commedia*) was corrupted by commentators, and my duty in presenting it to you is to demonstrate pure and simple Florentine."[90] Here and elsewhere in his discussion of the *Commedia*, he seems above all to praise it for its form and to condemn his predecessors, the vast majority of whom worked in the fourteenth century, for their mishandling of Dante's style and language. Yet his remarks could also have overtones for Dante's content and for his predecessors' responses to it. The "idioms" in which the *Commedia* had supposedly been corrupted could refer to earlier interpretations of its subject matter, for, despite Landino's claims to the contrary , he devotes a great deal of his commentary to the history, philosophy, and allegorical implications of the *Commedia*.[91] He reviews many of his predecessors' responses to these issues, weighs the merits of their evidence, analyzes their reasoning, and either approves one of their interpretations or produces one of his own. Moreover, as he dwells on the subjects that he believes are most relevant to his readers, and as he reveals which implications of the text are most correct in his opinion, he suggests by his conspicuous refusal to address Dante's theology the reason that preceding commentators had misinterpreted the more secular aspects of the text. He implies that his forerunners, in their concern with the question of Dante's ultimate source and religious authority, allowed themselves to neglect other important facets of the text, cultural reflections of a milieu that Landino presents as the foundation of his own.

Thus, despite the fact that Landino' s fifteenth-century predecessors are among the "corrupting" commentators from whom he attempts to distance himself, he joins them in treating the *Commedia* as a threshold to his own era. He too echoes the secular emphasis of fifteenth-century illuminators on the literary, historical, philosophical, and political aspects of the work. He too stands in sharp contrast to fourteenth-century commentators and illuminators, who treat the *Commedia* as a divinely inspired guide to the afterlife, and who sometimes even suggest it is a true and faithful account of a journey to the other world. Indeed, in amending and emending Trecento responses to the *Commedia*, Landino and his contemporaries remark on those responses and, to some degree, on the previous century as a whole. By directly addressing viewers only at the most political junctures of the narrative, by seeking to avoid "that which deals with religion" in the *Commedia*, and by attempting to purge Dante's text of "corruption" from past commentaries, they characterize

their fourteenth-century predecessors as being less concerned than themselves with the more secular aspects of the text and as being overly focused on theological issues, on concerns from which they themselves were already seeking to distance themselves. Yet, even as Landino and his contemporaries underscore their differences from their forerunners, they question that very division. In employing the *Commedia* to promote their own agendas—to praise the use of the vernacular, to establish a prototype for the active scholar, or to celebrate Florentine contributions to literature and the arts—they acknowledge their own roots in Dante's text and in the culture of his time. They acknowledge the continuity of their past and undermine the very classification system that they are helping to inaugurate. They justify resistance to the taxonomy that they otherwise foster and that still oppresses academia, particularly young *dantisti.*

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NOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Medievalism, October 30, 2000. For their comments at that time, I would like to thank Gwendolyn Morgan and Mark Galik. For reading earlier versions of this paper, I would also like to thank Teodolinda Barolini, Joan Ferrante, Jackie Jung, David Rosand, Jane Rosenthal, and Christine Sciaccia. Any remaining faults are, of course, mine alone.

2. For over 1200 reproductions of *Commedia* illustrations and the most complete survey of their subjects, symbols, sources, and context, see Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles Singleton, *The Illuminated Manuscripts of the "Divine Comedy,"* 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969). For detailed descriptions of all known manuscripts of the *Commedia*, see Marcella Roddewig, *Dante Alighieri, "Die gottliche Komodie": Vergleichende Bestandsaufnahme der "Commedia"- Handschriften* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1984). For my definition of "fully illustrated," I am drawing on that of Brieger: "thirty manuscripts still in existence contain illustrations that form a pictorial cycle, canto by canto, on consecutive pages either inserted (framed or unframed) in the text or placed in the bottom margin," as described in his essay "Pictorial Commentaries to the *Commedia*," *Illuminated Manuscripts*. . . , I, 83. In addition, there are two manuscripts, Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 78 in Paris and Biblioteca Nazionale MS Banco Rari 39 in Florence, that have incomplete cycles in their historiated initials; one, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Thott 411.2 in Copenhagen, that has an incomplete cycle in the margins and historiated initials; and many that have a few historiated initials or a few marginal illustrations. Unless otherwise noted, I have dated and attributed the miniatures in accordance with the catalogue by Brieger and Meiss in *Illuminated Manuscripts*. . . , I, 209-339.

3. For the most concise yet thorough introduction to pictorial models for early illuminators of the *Commedia*, particularly to the Vergilius Vaticanus (Vat. lat. 3225), see Brieger, 86-88.

4. That canon was first noted by Brieger, 84.

5. For more on Giovanni's reading of the *Commedia*, see Deborah Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993), 173, n. 13. For the text of Boccaccio's lectures, see his *Esposizioni sopra la "Comedia,"* ed. Giorgio

Padoan (1965; repr. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1994). For a good, albeit somewhat dated, introduction to the vast literature on the *Esposizioni*, see Padoan's entry on Boccaccio in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. Umberto Bosco, 6 vols., (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970- 78), I, 645-50. Boccaccio, who was apparently the first to give public lectures on the *Commedia*, was soon followed by Benvenuto da Imola at Bologna in 1375, Scuaro de' Broaspini at Verona in 1380, Franceso da Buti at the Pisan Studio in 1385, and Nofri di Giovanni at Pistoia in 1394. For the fourteenth-century reference to peasants singing the *Commedia*, see novella CXV in *Le novelle di Francho Sacchetti*, ed. Ottavio Gigli, 2 vols., (Florence: Successori Le Monnier, 1909), I, 276- 77. For the fullest account to date of early modern singing of the *Commedia*, see John Ahern, "Singing the Book: Orality in the Reception of Dante's *Comedy*," in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U of Toronto P, 1997),214-39. For a thorough introduction to the relationship between illuminators and their advisors, see Jonathan J. G. Alexander's *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), esp. Chapter Three: "Programmes and Instructions for Illuminators," 52- 71. As he notes (54), the instructions were usually covered, erased, or trimmed away by the time the manuscript was finished. For an example of the inscribed, unfinished miniatures from Budapest MS italien 1, see the illustration of *Purgatorio* XVI (fol. 38v), in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 377a. For reproductions of most miniatures in this manuscript, see Forditotta Babits Mihály, *Dante Alighieri Isteni Színjáték* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1965).

6. For examples of the Copenhagen illustrations, see Brieger, et al.

7. For Millard Meiss's discussion of the close parallels between the Musée Condé miniatures and the frescoes of the Last Judgment and Thebaid in the Camposanto at Pisa, see "The Smiling Pages," in *Illuminated Manuscripts...*, 1,57-70. Meiss believed these frescoes were by Francesco Traini, but, in *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: Simonelli, 1974), Luciano Bellosi adduces documents attributing them to Buffalmacco. For a reproduction of the illustration, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 5.

8. For one indication that Dante was right-handed, see *Purgatorio* 12.133: "with the fingers of my right hand outspread, I found but six letters" ("con le dita de la destra scempie trovai pur sei le lettere"). All quotes of the *Commedia* are from Charles Singleton's three-volume translation (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970- 75).

9. For a reproduction of the Guarneriana image, see Guido Biagi, "*La Divina Commedia*" *nella figurazione artistica e nel secolare commento*, 3 vols. (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1921-39), I, p. 7.

10. For a reproduction, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 5.

11. See, for example, the image of *Inferno* I (fol. 1r) in Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Plutei 40.7, as illustrated in Paul Schubring's *Illustrationen zu Dantes "Göttlicher Kömodie," Italien*, 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert (Vienna: Amalthea-Verlag, 1931), pl. 16.

12. For an illustration of Dante setting out alone, see the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master's ca. 1440 illustration of *Inferno* I (fol. 1v) in Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 2017, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 46a. For an illustration of Dante by Virgil's side in the dark woods with which the narrative begins, see the illustration from the 1440s of *Inferno* I, (fol. 1r) in British Museum MS Yates Thompson 36, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 17a.

13. For an example, see the ca. 1420 Florentine miniature of *Inferno* I (fol. 1v) in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional MS Vitrina 23-2, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 15.

14. Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978; orig. 1967),278-93.

15. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall and K. S. B. Rohan, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 98 (Turnhoult: Brepols, 1991), 1.13.24-26,38.

16. For more on this process in relationship to author-portraits, see David Hult, *Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la Rose"* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986),99.

17. In "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979; orig. 1969), Michel Foucault notes (127-29) that the other three criteria in Jerome's *De viris illustribus* to verify authorship are the standard of quality in a text, its harmony of ideas and doctrine, and its stylistic uniformity. See also Avaristo Arns, *La technique du livre d'apres Saint Jerome* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1953), esp. 173-82. For Jerome's text, see *Divi Eusebii Hieronymi . . . opera omnia. . .* (Paris: Apvd Clavdivm Chevallonivm, 1533-34).

18. *Postilla super librum Paralipomenon*, prologus, Hugonis Cardinalis Postilla seu expositiones in Veteris et Novi Testamentum (Paris: Apvd Clavdivm Chevallonivm, 1530-45), quoted and translated by A. J. Minnis in *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (1984; 2nd ed. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1988), 11.

19. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 6a.

20. See Minnis for the pre-modern definition of *auctor* (esp. 190-210) and *commentator* (94-95).

21. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 6a.

22. *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et Glose super "Comediam " Dantis or Commentary on Dante's "Inferno,"* ed. with notes and introduction by Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: SUP of New York, 1974),1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Commedia* commentaries are mine.

23. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, 'pI. 54a.

24. 0n the development of perspective, see John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (1957; 3rd ed. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1987).

25. 0n the status of perspective in the art of the early fourteenth century, see White, 23-102.

26. For reproduction of the Chantilly images for *Inferno* VIII-IX (fols. 76r and 83r), see Brieger, et al., II, pIs. 116b and 127b .

27. Noted by Jack Greenstein in "The Vision of Peace: Meaning and Representation in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's 'Sala della pace' Cityscapes,"*Art History*, 11 (1988),492-510.

28. For further discussion of how the inscription conflates the reader with the pilgrim/narrator, see John Freccero's "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell," *MLN*, 99 (1984), 769-86.

29. For a reproduction of this miniature, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 54b.

30. Guido, 56.

31. Guido, 56.

32. Guido, 4; trans. Vincenzo Cioffari and Francesco Mazzoni, "The Prologue to the Commentary of Guido da Pisa," *Dante Studies* 90 (1972), 131.

33. Guido, 49; trans. Vincenzo Cioffari, "Guido da Pisa's Basic Interpretation (A Translation of the First Two Cantos)," *Dante Studies*, 93 (1975), 21.

34. Guido, 48; trans. Cioffari, 19.

35. Guido, 19; trans. Cioffari, 8.

36. Guido, 18; trans. Cioffari, 7.

37. For the comparisons of the *Commedia* to Noah's ark and Ezekiel's vision, see Guido, 2. For the comparison of the *Commedia* to the writing on the wall, see page 1 of his commentary.

38. Guido, 2. For more on this echo of ecclesiastical phrasing, see Francesco Mazzoni, "Guido da Pisa interprete di Dante e la sua fortuna presso il Boccaccio," *Studi Danteschi* 35 (1958), 46.

39. For a more detailed discussion of the likelihood Guido advised the illuminators, see Meiss, 38-39,45-46, 55.

40. Guido, 4; trans. Cioffari and Mazzoni, 132.

41. For Jacopo's gloss on *Inferno* 2.118-20, see *Jacopo Alighieri: chiose all' "Inferno,"* ed. Saverio Bellomo, Medioevo e umanesimo, (Padua: Antenore, 1990), 98.

42. The passage from the recto of folio four in a manuscript described as simply "Batines" is quoted by Bruno Sandkühler in *Die frühen Dantekommentare und ihr Verhaltnis zur mittelalterlichen Kommentartradition*, Münchner Romanistiche Arbeiten, 19 (Munich: W. Fink, 1967), 222.

43. Natalino Sapegno, *Storia letteraria del Trecento* (Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1963), 117.

44. Pietro di Dante, 11 *"Commentarium " di Pietro Alighieri nelle redazioni Ashburnhamiana e Ottoboniana,* ed. Roberto della Vedova and Maria Teresa Silvotti (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1978), 14.

45. The relevant passages from the recto of folio fifteen in Laurenziana MS Ashburnham 841 are quoted in Latin by Mazzoni, 71.

46. Boccaccio, prologue, paras. 28-29.

47. For Boccaccio's discussion of Dante's discovery, see *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. Luigi Sasso (Milan: Garzanti, 1995), para. 24. For the description of Dante's habits, see the *Esposizioni*, prologue, para. 36.

48. *Trattatello,* paras. 24, 177.

49. *Trattatello,* para. 26.

50. Falso Boccaccio, *Chiose sopra Dante,* ed. G. G. Warren, Lord Vernon (Florence: Piatti, 1846),716; Benvenuto da Irnola, *Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola illustrato nella vita e nelle opere, e di lui Commento Latino sulla "Divina Commedia" di Dante Allighieri*, ed. Giovanni Tamburini, 3 vols. (Imola: Galeati, 1855-56), I, 13, 102; Anonimo Fiorentino, *Commento alia "Divina Commedia" d 'Anonimo Fiorentino del secolo XIV*, ed. Pietro Fanfani, 3 vols. (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1866-74), I, 25-26; Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco Buti sopra la "Divina Comedia,"* ed. Crescentino Giannini, 3 vols. (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62), I, 27 (quote), 34-35; Filippo Villani, *1l Comento al primo canto dell' "Inferno" di Filippo Villani*, ed. Giuseppe Cugnoni, Collezione di opuscoli danteschi inediti o rari, 31 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1896), 29-30.

51. Dante Alighieri, "Epistles," in *Opere minori*, vol. 3, book 2, ed. Arsenio Frugoni, Giorgio Brugnoli, Enzo Cecchini, and Francesco Mazzoni (1979; 2nd ed. Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1996), XIII, para. 19. For a thorough introduction to the extensive bibliography on the attribution of the epistle, see Robert Hollander, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993).

52. As reported by Sandkühler (137) in his analysis of an unpublished version of Bambaglioli's *proemio*.

53. For Jacopo's most direct references to the *accessus*, see *"Comedia" di Dante degli Allagherii col commento di Jacopo della Lana Bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, 3 vols. (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67), I, 103-5. For a short, clear definition and introduction to the *accessus*, see A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-c.1375: The Commentary-Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988),12-15. For the most direct discussion of the relationship between the *accessus* and early commentaries on the *Commedia*, see Bruno Nardi, "Osservazioni suI medievale 'accessus ad auctores' in rapporto all' 'Epistola a Cangrande'," in *Saggi e note di critica dantesca* (Milan and Naples, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1966), 268-305. For a short, direct discussion of the relationship between the *accessus* and Scholastic exegesis, see Sandkühler, 86-87. For a much longer, more thorough discussion of that relationship, see Minnis.

54. For Boccaccio's comparisons of Dante with the Prophets, see the *Trattatello*, paras. 149-50. For the references to the *Commedia* springing from divine grace, see, respectively, the *Trattatello*, para. 19; the *Esposizioni*, paras. 61-63; and an unspecified passage quoted by Mazzoni, 114.

55. For the comparison to the Prophets, see Benvenuto, I, 9-10, 20, and 22. For the quote regarding Dante's name, see Benvenuto, I, 14.

56. Francesco da Buti, I, 10.

57. Falso Boccaccio, 44.
58. For the comparisons, see Villani, 55-63. For the quotations, see, respectively, Villani, 28-29, and Villani's biography of Dante, as recorded in *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, scritte al fine del secolo decimosesto*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Milan: F. Vallardi, 1904), 89.
59. For one example of many, see the late fourteenth-century illustration of *Inferno* III (fol. 7v) in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica MS latini 4776, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 60a.
60. See, for example, the ca. 1370 Neapolitan miniature of *Inferno* III (fol. 4r) from British Museum MS Additional 19587 , as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 56b.
61. For a reproduction of the Yates Thompson gate to hell (fol. 5r), see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 66a.
62. For the Yates Thompson image of *Paradiso* XVII (fol. 159r), see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 473b.
63. For the image of medieval Florence and its humble neighbors, as described in *Paradiso* XVI (fol. 157r), see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 471c. For the image of the cities between the Adige and the Tagliamento (fol. 159r), see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 453a.
64. For a reproduction of this image from folio 8r, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 12b.
65. For a reproduction of this image from Biblioteca Comunale MS 32 in Imola (fol. 3v), see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 65a.
66. Among such parallels is the Master's crowning of Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, and Helen (fol. 63v; Brieger, et al., pI. 89b), which accords with Barzizza's extended remarks on how these queens abused their power for the pleasures of the flesh. See also the miniature of Barbariccia blowing a trumpet from his rear (fol. 255v; Brieger, et al., pI. 243a), a rude blast on which Barzizza dwells at considerable length in his commentary on *Inferno* 21.139. For a detailed discussion of Barzizza's dependance on Francesco, see Piero Giorgio Ricci's entry on Barzizza in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, I, 529. For Barzizza's commentary, see *Lo "Inferno" della "Commedia" di Dante Alighier col commento di Guiniforto delli Bargigi,* ed. Giuseppe Zacheroni (Marseilles: Leopoldo Mossy; Florence: Giuseppe Molini, 1838).
67. See Schubring, pI. 34.
68. Bruni, *Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogi*, in *Dialogi: Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin, La letteratura italiana: Storia e testi, 13 (Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1952),70. On the humanists' perceptions of the *quodlibeti* and such works, see Carlo Madrignani, "Di alcune biografie umanistiche di Dante e Petrarca," *Belfagor*, 18 (1963),33.
69. Bruni, 70.
70. Bruni, "Le vite di Dante e Petrarca," in *Le vite di Dante scritte da Giovanni e Filippo Villani, da Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Aretino e Giannozzo Manetti*, ed. G. L. Passerini (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1917), 220-21.
71. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"220-21.
72. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221.
73. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221.
74. For the comparison to Petrarch, see "Le vite . . . ,"207 . For the description of Dante's efforts to remain socially active, see "Le vite . . . ," 209.
75. For the description of Dante as a citizen, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"210. For the description of Dante as a soldier, see "Le vite . . . ,"207-9 (quote, 208-9).
76. For the militaristic description of Dante's planning, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221. For reference to the captivation of the reader, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"224.
77. On the virility of the poem, see "Le vite . . . ," 219-20. On the vivacity of the *Commedia*, see "Le vite . . . ," 224.
78. On the relationship between Bruni's portrait of Dante and the need to defend Florentine scholarship, see Madrignani, esp. 38.

79. Giannozzo Manetti, "Vita dantis poetae florentini," in *Le vite di Dante scritte da Giovanni e Filippo Villani, da Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Aretino e Giannozzo Manetti*, ed. G. L. Passerini (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1917), 237-81.

80. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ," 206.

81. On Manetti' s scrupulousness, see Carlo Dionisotti, "Dante nel Quattrocento," in *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi danteschi, 20-27 aprile 1965*, 2 vols. (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1965), I, 359-60.

82. On this growing belief and Manetti's promotion of it, see Dionisotti, 359-60.

83. Manetti, 259.

84. Manetti, 270.

85. Nibia, La *Commedia* (Milan: Ludovicus et Albertus Pedemontani for Guido Terzago, 1477-78).

86. Dionisotti,370.

87. As noted in Gianvito Resta's entry on Nibia in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 111,44.

88. Quoted by Dionisotti, 370.

89. Cristoforo Landino, *"Comedia" del divinopoeta Danthe Alighieri* (Venice: M. Bernardino Stagnio, 1536).

90. As transcribed in Manfred Lentzen, "Die "Orazione di Messere Cristoforo Landino Fiorentino havuta alla illustrissima signoria fiorentina quando presento el comento suo di Dante'," *Romanische Forschungen*, 80 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1968),537.

91. As noted by Dionisotti, 363-65.

Critiquing Early Modern White Supremacy: The Function of Medieval English Anti-Semitism in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, The Faire Queene of Iewry*

Jesse G. Swan

In the recent consideration of modern racialized features of early modern English literature, the function of white supremacy often remains under represented, if not entirely absent.[1] Some, however, do attend to the issue. Kim F. Hall, in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*[2] is one who does concern herself with "disrupting the language of white supremacy" (266), and all of her work provides fundamental and cogent models of procedure. One significant model in enunciating the dynamics of early modern white supremacist discourse is Hall's description of a "color complex" or "poetics of color in which whiteness is established as a valued goal" (69, 66). Drawing on early modern sonnet cycles, especially that of Sir Philip Sidney, Hall documents "several ways in which the English poetic project produced a politics of color that prepares generically, thematically, and economically a poetic for the 'new world' — a world in which blackness is not a purely 'aesthetic' indication of beauty standards but the site for the interplay of sexual politics and cultural and racial difference" (73). Understanding the cultural currency in early modern England of such a color complex, a complex that is, as is modern color prejudice, white supremacist, is essential if we are to interpret accurately the racialized dimensions of the period' s literature.

Equally important to a precise interpretation of the literature of Renaissance/early modern England, especially in relation to the nascent production of white supremacist discourse, is delineating the literature's medievalism. That is, how newly emerging cultural values, such as those associated with heredity and phenotype, are defined in relation to congeneric preexistent ones contributes to a full description of modern racialized discourse by detailing how established bigoted attitudes are incorporated into neoteric circumstances, such as those occasioned by the institution of colonial exploits. Such specification may be appreciated most in studying early modern English racialized discourse since it is only through such specification that the modern terms of such analysis — significantly "race" and "ethnicity" — can be understood to have developed into what they came to mean by the nineteenth century, but what they did not mean in any simple way in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[3] Terms such as "race" and "ethnicity" did carry prejudiced associations, but these were traditionally familial and religious, not somatic, although they were starting to come to take on imperial, if not Aryan associations, to use John Michael Archer's apt distinction.[4] Distinguishing what early modern authors understood to be medieval

bigoted attitudes as distinct from incipient ones is an additional method of enunciating the ways anti-black, white supremacist assumptions developed in English-speaking cultures. It can also, as I contend it does with Elizabeth Tanfield Cary, help demonstrate a self-conscious critique of the dehumanizing discourse coeval with the discourse's inception.[5]

Like Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale," Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queene of Iewry* assumes more than asserts a culturally current and preexistent anti-Semitism, and like William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice,* Cary's play draws on what Hall calls a culturally nascent color complex or poetics of color. Such points might be thought to be obvious since Cary advertises them in her title, but, as with Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" and Shakespeare's *Othello*, the issues and functions of the anti-Semitism and white supremacy have been variously overlooked, discounted, and in other ways avoided. Certainly such a critical condition is changing, as several recent essays on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Cary indicate,[6] but the changing condition has yet to produce a study that specifically addresses the confluence of a native or medieval English anti-Semitism and an emergent racist white supremacy in Cary's play. This is what I do in this essay. In doing so, I show how Cary draws on culturally current anti-Semitic attitudes to satirize those who hold them, and, further, I show how nascent forms of modern, racist white supremacy are ridiculed for their promotion of "fairness" and "whiteness." The vantage point from which such medieval as well as early modern bigoted attitudes are censured is a classically secular and humanistic one.[7]

A major reason the critiqued prejudice that was so obvious to the play's author and her audience has subsequently been obscured is that the social and generic contexts of the play have been, for whatever reasons or purposes, largely misapprehended, misconstrued, or underappreciated.[8] The most immediate and relevant social context of the play is Cary's elite coterie, the group for whom she wrote the play. Complex, to be sure, the general characteristics of the coterie I will emphasize here are those of the household of the Duke of York, Prince Charles. Having been given to Lady Elizabeth Carey and her husband Sir Robert Carey for rearing, Prince Charles was the center of the salon — if only due to the rigid imperatives of royal protocol. Our author Elizabeth Cary, daughter of the extraordinarily wealthy Chief Baron of the Exchequer and wife of Sir Robert Carey's cousin, Sir Henry Cary, was the literary head of the salon, something akin to what Ben Jonson tried to attain in the household of King James.[9] It is this group that received and read the closet drama that is *The Tragedie of Mariam*.[10]

How this group read the closet drama is the second important misconstruction that has obscured the function of the features advertised in the title. Usually conceived of as being read silently to oneself, the play has been interpreted as what I might call a library play or a study play or a lamp play. That is, ingenious poetic features that reveal themselves only through solitary meditation, done presumably in one's own closet by oneself, have largely dominated published interpretations.[11] I believe these are valid, but not sufficient. Certainly the play can be read to oneself as a poem, much as Shakespeare's plays can. However, viewing the work as an actual production renders alternative interpretations, as with Shakespeare's plays. By production, though, I do not mean what those few who have taken a performance perspective have meant.[12] By production, I mean a salon reading, an event with features of the masque traditions as well as the household readings of sermons.[13] What the salon would do with a closet or coterie drama such as *Mariam* would be to assign the various parts to various members of the group to read aloud. Who read what parts in this salon remains highly speculative, at least with the current documents known. Prince Charles's role similarly is undocumented, but given royal protocol and the Lady of the house's civil duty, it is likely that Prince Charles was the focal point of the lectors' dramatic or at least forensic renditions.

In this context, instead of the print context of Chancery Lane, *The Tragedie of Mariam* reveals itself quite easily as a humanist document that mocks what it, and I, take to be the parochial medieval tradition of what Bernard Glassman says were, in the period, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes without Jews*,[14] and the absurdly objectivist and reductionist early modern white supremacist equation of phonemic traits with moral worth, or what I call embodied racist white supremacy. That this coterie was intensely humanist, in contrast to the intensely Protestant household of the other prince, Henry, and the crypto-Catholic household of the queen, Anne, and the variously characterized households of the princess, Elizabeth, and the king, James, is suggested in numerous documents.[15] One such document is a report of the Venetian ambassador, Guistinian. Describing the quality of James's affection for the intellectual prince, the ambassador writes: "While talking on this point the young Duke of York, the King's second son, came in; he is the joy of the King, the Queen and all the Court. His Majesty began to laugh and play with him. In the course of his jokes he took up the Duke and said, 'My Lord Ambassador, you must make my son a Patrician of Venice."[16] While Henry gratified James's fantasy of being the defender of the faith,[17] Charles gratified his fantasy of being the learned philosopher king. The Carey salon cultivated such

possibilities for James in Charles through distinguishing itself from the competing cultural currents of the time in a recognizably intellectual manner.

One document suggestive of the learned, philosophical style is Cary's *Mariam*. Cary's play forges its humanistic themes through a layering of perspectives that can best be appreciated by gauging the characters and their statements dramatically in the social and coterie circumstances in which they were written and expressed. The humanist center is expressed simply and literally in Salome's husband's enunciation of the ideal of amicability. In rejecting the humble subordination of two of Herod's enemies who have been secretly preserved by him, Constabarus ingenuously exclaims:

> Oh, how you wrong our friendship, valiant youth!
> With friends there is not such a word as "debt":
> Where amity is tied with bond of truth,
> All benefits are there in common set.
> Then is the golden age with them renew'd,
> All names of properties are banish'd quite:
> Division, and distinction, are eschew'd:
> Each hath to what belongs to others right. (2.2.99-106)

Constabarus describes the ideal condition of the Patrician class, and the scene makes clear, especially in contrast to the scenes of Salome and Herod and in comparison with the scenes of Pheroras and Graphina — an ideal romantic couple kept apart by the harsh political machinations of Pheroras's brother, Herod — that it is unironic, literal, pathetic.

In such humanistic context, the vernacular anti-Semitism that persisted in its medieval form can be seen as mocked, especially clearly in the dramatically ironic instances. For example, in the Mariam-Salome exchange that forms the third scene of the first act, Mariam insists upon her racial and moral superiority to Salome. Passionately responding to Salome's claim that Mariam depends upon her office for her status, Mariam snorts:

> Though I thy brother's face had never seen,
> My birth thy baser birth so far excell'd,
> I had to both of you the princess been.
> Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
> Thou mongrel: issued from rejected race,
> Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight. (1.3.232-37)

In then insisting that both Mariam's ancestors and Salome's were "born of Adam, both made of Earth,/ And both did come from holy Abraham's line" (1.3.241-42), Salome makes the common English Reformation argument against racial bigotry, represented conveniently and

contemporaneously elsewhere by Aemilia Lanyer's poem, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum.*[18] Mariam immediately retorts to this defense by pressing Salome's active depravity:

> I favour thee when nothing else I say,
> With thy black acts I'll not pollute my breath:
> Else to thy charge I might full justly lay
> A shameful life, besides a husband's death. (1.3.243-46)

Sensational just in the expression, this exchange is humorous to the salon in its dramatic irony. Although the characters fight over racial superiority, to an anti-Semitic English audience they are both simply Jews, never mind that the Idumeans were forcibly converted to Judaism by Hyrcanus I over the years 134-104 B.C.E. To the humanist coterie, however, the fact that both of the characters would be perceived as Jews by vernacular, Protestant English people and that those people would think in anti-Semitic fashion that the characters' Jewishness was the relevant fact, provided an additional layer of critical irony, since the humanist coterie would understand that the moral difference in the characters is the only thing that matters. Largely because she's not perfect, the heroine Mariam is clearly a sympathetic character, suggesting that the coterie itself is not anti-Semitic. Through its humanist vision, it employs the jokes of the others — here vernacular medievalism — to mock those who hold medieval attitudes towards Jews. English anti-Semites, the dramatically ironic context makes clear, entirely miss the point of being responsible for one's own moral character.

Like the way the play mocks medieval attitudes towards and moral assumptions about Jews, the play also mocks the nascent, proto-empirical white supremacist views of the vernacular culture. For instance, and as if to be highlighting the contrast between the medieval and the new, the scene following that between Mariam and Salome presents Salome alone and complaining in the language of the vernacular color complex which Hall documents as current in England at the time. The scene is rife with the discourse, but I will focus only on the play on words that evoke recognition of the white supremacist ethic. Complaining about not being able to divorce her current husband, Constabarus, in order to take on her new object of sexual passion, Salome moans, "And now, except I do the Hebrew wrong,/I cannot be the fair Arabian bride" (1.4.279-80). Amphibolously, the locution draws on the color complex in its two parts. "Except I do the Hebrew wrong" is usually, and correctly, interpreted to mean that unless Salome violates Hebrew law forbidding women to seek a bill of divorce from their husbands, she cannot take on Silleus, the Arabian counselor she desires.[19] It also means, though, that unless Salome wrongs her husband, the Hebrew, she cannot take on Silleus. Referring to her obstacle-husband as "the Hebrew" clearly is denigrating in a racist

way. The line, "I cannot be the fair Arabian bride," similarly suggests dual references that draw on a poetics of color, one to herself, and the other to Silleus. Salome wants to be the "fair Arabian bride" in that she would become Arabian by marrying Silleus, and Silleus is the fair Arabian she is to be the bride of. The nascent white supremacy lies in "fair," meaning, of course, beautiful, but also phenotypically light, something the vernacular English considered neither Idumeans nor Arabians. Continuing in this vein, Salome is made to say that had she ever been fair, meaning just, she would have, when plotting to kill her first husband to take on her current husband, "blush'd at motion of the least disgrace:/ But [since she didn't] shame is gone, and honour wip'd away" (1.4.292-93). The color complex, as Hall details it, played on the inability of darker peoples to blush as light skinned peoples sometimes do, as it also played on the white supremacist association of dark phenotype with the appearance of dirt on lighter phenotypes, so that a very common joke among white supremacists was expressed in pseudo-maxims that asserted the futility of doing something by comparing it to the futility of "washing the Ethiop clean."[20] In these lines, then, Cary's coterie understands that they draw on early modern white supremacist assertions that those who cannot blush are unchaste, since the chaste blush at all things sexual, and so the dark other, such as the Idumean Salome, is by birth unchaste. Moreover, Cary's coterie understands that having honour "wip'd away" is the obverse of "washing the Ethiop clean," which would be why Salome is dark, morally, as she asserts she is, as well as somatically, as the vernacular audience would imagine her to be. Cary's salon would understand these racist jokes and they would then distinguish themselves from those others who laugh at them by themselves laughing at the anti-humanistic absurdity of thinking that her character is hereditarily rather than culturally and personally shaped.

This layering of perspectives to mock vernacular cultural currents and to distinguish the prince's coterie from other cultural currents is pressed most in the presentation of the Chorus throughout the play, which is stipulated in the "Names of the Speakers" to be "a company of Jews" (65). In the Chorus at the end of the first act, for instance, the company of speakers offers four stanzas of principles and two stanzas of application. The principles draw on a multitude of traditions. In each singular expression, the Chorus sounds cogent, but when coupled with any other of its expressions, it contradicts and is contradicted. For instance, the Chorus ends its first stanza with a statement about how foolish it is to seek when one does not have a single object to obtain: "Fond wretches, seeking what they cannot find,/For no content attends a wavering mind" (497-98). Cogent enough. The second stanza affirms how foolish it is to have a definite object to seek, in this case, wealth:

"Thus step to step, and wealth to wealth they add,/Yet cannot all their plenty make them glad" (503-04). Cogent enough, except when coupled with the sententia about needing an object to pursue. Perhaps both sententiae support the ultimate principle, the concluding couplet of the fourth stanza: "That man is only happy in his fate/That is delighted in a settled state" (515-16), but for a company of Jews to be saying this at the onset of what Cary's culture's historiography construed as the beginning of the Christian era is dramatically ironic, as it is dramatically ironic that a company of Jews would affirm such a principle in medieval England. Cary's coterie laughs at this "company of Jews" in part because the coterie knows the vernacular populace laughs out of anti-Semitic prejudice, but more accurately the coterie laughs at the "company" because it is a "company." That is, a company, as in actors, is generally not educated as is a prince's coterie, and, because of the differences in education, especially in languages, a company often is comprised of persons who hold vernacular values, not humanistic ones. By contrast, the members of Prince Charles's household who spoke the various parts, unlike actors, are not called a company any more than are those who dance in masques. Cary's humanistic coterie, then, can be understood to laugh at those, such as King James and Prince Henry, who employ acting companies, since acting companies can only employ and hold vernacular values, some medieval, others early modern, few classical. In this way, the functions of medieval anti-Semitism and early modern white supremacy serve to delimit the coterie's own identity as classically secular — and so not anti-Semitic — and humanistic — and so not gratified by the operations of the newly formed color complex so popular in the other courts.[21]

Such an identity is clearly appealed to in the Chorus's two stanzas of application. Unequivocally blaming Mariam for her tortured, conflicted reaction to the news of Herod's death, which turns out to be a false report but nonetheless motivates the action of the first act — that is, the first act presents the reactions of Mariam, Salome, and some others to the mistaken news of Herod's death that they all take to be accurate — the Chorus sings in its final stanza:

> Were Herod now perchance to live again,
> She would again as much be grieved at that:
> All that she may, she ever doth disdain,
> Her wishes guide her to she knows not what.
> And sad must be their looks, their honour sour,
> That care for nothing being in their power. (523-28)

The heavy-handed tip-off to Cary's humanist salon is the last word, "power," if it had not already thought the Chorus did not understand what it had seen, as many a company of actors seemed not to understand

what they performed. The focus on power and individual responsibility is dramatically ironic coming from a company and from Jews in medieval as well as in early modern cultural environments. Like Mariam subjected to the all-powerful tyrant Herod, companies and Jews were subjected to tyrannical social forces in England, forces that oppressed and exiled them when they did not, as Herod does Mariam, execute them. Cary's coterie, comprising women and men of elite but marginally elite ranks — because of his youth, poor health, intellectual inclinations, and secondary status to his elder brother and heir apparent Henry, Prince Charles possessed minimal influence — emphatically sympathized with Mariam because the group personally understood the utter shaping influence of social power above the individual, especially in a society of absolute monarchy. The Chorus blames Mariam for her conflicted attitudes and feelings, while Cary's coterie, in humanist fashion, would see immediately that the society Mariam is subjected to engenders her suffering. Mariam's tragedy is heightened by the cognizance that she is blamed for suffering at the hands of unjust power, even by those who also suffer from the actions of that power but do not realize their own complicity.

A further irony emphasizes the Chorus's failure to understand reality as humanists conceptualize it. Firmly condemning any desire for any kind of diverseness, the Chorus interprets the foiling of character between Mariam and Salome as one of highlighting similarities rather than differences. The Chorus sings that "Still Mariam wish'd she from her lord were free,/For expectation of variety" (517-18). While it is true that both Mariam and Salome desire variety, the quality of the variety is markedly different. Salome desires sexual and matrimonial variety, whereas Mariam desires variety of conversation companions, something the grotesquely jealous Herod cannot abide. Mariam also values a variety of emotional experiences as they, like a variety of conversation companions, help her explore the contours of her humanity. In this, Mariam resembles Pico's chameleon, a great emblem of Renaissance humanity.[22] Salome, by contrast, resembles medieval lust.[23] That the Chorus misinterprets kinds of variety and conflates all kinds together would be sardonically contemned by the humanistic coterie. And such sardonic contempt would be humorously elicited through intonation and gesture by the coterie speakers who comprised the company of Jews as well as by the reactions of those who were listening.

Such ironic layering may be obscure to a culture such as ours that values the literal over the ironic, especially in historical documents, and that labours under modem essentialist discourses of the self. To such an audience, the anti-Semitism and white supremacy of *The Tragedie of Mariam, The Faire Oueene of Iewry* may appear to be its author's rather than its culture's. Foucauldian historicism and literary biography, however, can challenge the hegemony of such a modern hermeneutic.[24]

In challenging usual assumptions, not only are Cary and her play represented in a more ethical mode, but the critique of racist white supremacy also gains a history coeval with the construction of the dehumanizing, murderous discourse. Further, the function of Cary's medievalism, that is, of the employment of medieval anti-Semitic prejudice in the critique of early modern white supremacy, locates precisely the confluence of several discourses culturally and socially. And through such locating actions, finally, we can better assess the usefulness of Renaissance humanist texts to our post modern projects, academic, political, personal.

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NOTES

1. See, for instance, the collection of essays edited by Joyce Green MacDonald, *Race, Ethnicity. and Power in the Renaissance*, Cranbury, NJ: Associate UP , 1997, or the "Forum: Race and the Study of Shakespeare," edited by Margo Hendricks, *Shakespeare Studies* 26, ed. Leeds Barroll, Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 1998.

2. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995.

3. For "race" being defined in terms of "a distinct ethnical stock," the OED records the earliest such usage in the nineteenth century (2c. 1971). For "ethnic" being defined in biological terms (i.e., as "stock"), the OED similarly records the earliest such usage in the nineteenth century (2. 1971). Before the nineteenth century, "ethnic" was a religious term, not at all inextricably linked to the body. "Ethnic" referred to non-Christian, pagan people, as in John Milton's disdainful treatment of the inclusion of Sir Philip Sidney's "Pamela's Prayer" in the *Eikon Basilike*. Milton writes in *Eikonoklastes* that Charles and his apologists fell into God's "foolish trap as hath exposed them to all derision" for including "without being able to discern the affront [to God] rather than the worship of such an ethnic prayer" (Milton, *The Complete Prose Works*, 8 vols., gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-1982. VoI. 3, p. 364.). The ethnicity of the prayer does not derive from a genealogy but, rather, from the specifically religious connections. Before the nineteenth century, people could change their ethnicity, as did Leo Africanus, sixteenth-century historian of Africa and convert to Christianity patronized by Leo X, by professing Christian values, or, according to Milton, as did Charles I by falling away from Christian piety.

4. "Antiquity and Degeneration in *Antony and Cleopatra*," *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance*, ed. Joyce Green MacDonald. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 1997. pp. 145-64.

5. For a history of anti-black, white supremacist attitudes in the west as beginning in the early modern period, see, for example, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1992, and, especially, Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983.

6. On Chaucer, see, for instance, John Archer, "The Structure of Anti-Semitism in the *Prioress's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 19 (1984): 46-54; Albert B. Friedman, "The *Prioress's Tale* and Chaucer's Anti-Semitism." *Chaucer Review* 9 (1974): 118-29; Emmy Stark Zitter, "Anti-Semitism in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 25 (1991): 277-84. On Shakespeare, see, for instance, Janet Adelman, "Iago's Alter Ego: Race as Projection in *Othello*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 12544; Dympna Callaghan, "'Othello was a white man': Properties of Race on Shakespeare's Stage." *Alternative*

Shakespeares 2, ed. Terence Hawkes. London: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 192-215; Walter S. H. Lim, *The Arts of Empire: The Poetics of Colonialism from Ralegh to Milton*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998; Joyce Green MacDonald, " Acting Black: *Othello*, *Othello* Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness." *Theatre Journal* 46 (1994): 231-49; Michael Neill, "'Mulattos,' 'Blacks,' and' Indian Moors' : *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 361-74; James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996; Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Othello*: *A Contextual History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. On Cary, see, for example, Suzy Beemer, "Masks of Blackness, Masks of Whiteness: Coloring the (Sexual) Subject in Jonson, Cary, and Fletcher." *Thamyris* 4 (1997): 223-47; Dympna Callaghan, "Re-Reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*." *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker. London: Routledge, 1994. Pp. 163- 77; Kim F. Hall, "Beauty and the Beast of Whiteness: Teaching Race and Gender." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 461-75.

7. Explaining how Cary's play represents "an extended constitutional critique of the basic terms of the civil order" (147), which is the "founding inequality" (137) of the law subjecting women to men, Laurie J. Shannon, in "The Tragedie of Mariam: Cary's Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourse," *ELR* 24 (1994): 135-53, sees Cary's play elaborating "the moral implications of the issues that absorbed the century before it and would contort the century that followed" (137) in a way that suggests a critical distance on the part of the author as well as "what I salute here as a feminist or reforming wisdom" (153). Cary is seen as presenting and critiquing early modern anti-feminist founding discourse.

8. On the resiliency of medieval anti-Semitism, see, for instance, Richard Utz, "The Medieval Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder: Toward a History of Literary Reception," *The Year's Work in Medievalism XIV* (1999): 23-36. For the obscuring tendencies in Shakespearean criticism, see Margo Hendricks, "'Obscured by dreams': Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 37-60. On how to help people see whiteness, see, for instance, Kim F. Hall, "Beauty and the Beast of Whiteness: Teaching Race and Gender," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1999): 461-75; Peter Erickson, "Seeing White," *Transition* 67 (1995): 166-85; Richard Dyer, *White*, London: Routledge, 1997; and Bell Hooks, *Killing Rage, Ending Racism*, New York: Henry Holt, 1995.

9. Cary and her husband Henry were second cousins to Sir Robert Carey and his wife Elizabeth, the latter "having charge of the Duke of York" during his minority (qt. from CSP-Domestic 1609: 527. The Duke of York at this time is, of course, Prince Charles, later Charles I.). The state papers and extant personal correspondence detail the lavish existence of this group, which includes an extraordinary entry into London by Elizabeth Cary and her husband Henry as well as many royal fund dispersals, a large but not wholly unrepresentative one being on 20 February 1611 for over 4,677 pounds "to Lady Carey" for rearing the royal boy (see *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure. II vols. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, I: 273- 74; CSP-domestic 1611-1618: 11 *et passim*). Sir Robert was the youngest son of Sir Henry Carey, the first Baron Hunsdon, first cousin of Elizabeth I and her Lord Chamberlain of the Household, and Sir Robert, like his father, was a favorite of Elizabeth I. Sir Robert, though, made his greatest move in being the first to convey the news of the queen's death to James VI in Scotland. From this point on, Sir Robert surpassed all his elder brothers in advancement throughout his career, eventually to the Earldom of Monmouth with Charles's ascension to the throne.

10. Rosemary Kegl, in "Theaters, Households, and a 'Kind of History' in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*," *Enacting Gender on the Eng:lish Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999. Pp. 135-53, stresses the household tradition of dramatic performances in interpreting *Mariam* in relation to the more public theatrical tradition more commonly thought of, though she does not

locate a specific household as I am suggesting. The household and theatrical traditions create a crisis in genre for Kegl and lead her to a considerably different conclusion than mine about the play's engagement of racialized issues. Mariam is seen "to offer a dynastic 'kind of history' that would challenge her husband's authority precisely by discrediting his family name," and this dynastic kind of history offered by Mariam also 'solves' what has become a gender problem for the play — subduing Mariam's unseemly challenge to her husband's dynastic authority while managing to retain the ethnic, national, and religious hierarchies on which she had based her objections" (149). For convenience, all citations to *Mariam* are to the edition by Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson, *The Tragedy of Mariam The Fair Queen of Jewry*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1994.

11. For a recent such essay, see Susan B. Iwanisziw, "Conscience and the Disobedient Female Consort in the Closet Dramas of John Milton and Elizabeth Cary," *Milton Studies* 36 (1998): 109-22. For a recent analysis of the play in relation to a biography of Cary written by one of her daughters and Cary's historical source, *The Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus*, tr. Thomas Lodge, London: 1602, see Naomi J. Miller, "Domestic Politics in Elizabeth Cary's T*he Tragedy of Mariam*," *SEL* 37 (1997): 353-69. Two richly rewarding expositions employing such close study are Shari A. Zimmerman, "Disaffection, Dissimulation, and the Uncertain Ground of Silent Dismission: Juxtaposing John Milton and Elizabeth Cary," *ELH* 66 (1999): 553-89; and Nancy A. Gutierrez, "Valuing *Mariam*: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 10 (1991): 233-51.

12. Some performance considerations are given by Alexandra G. Bennett, "Female Performativity in *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *SEL* 40 (2000): 293-309; Alison Findlay, Gweno Williams, and Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright, "'The Play Is Ready To Be Acted': Women and Dramatic Production, 1570-1670." *Women's Writing* 6 (1999): 29-48; and Jonas Barish, "Language for the Study; Language for the Stage," *The Elizabethan Theatre XII.*, ed. A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee, Toronto: P. D. Meany, 1987, pp. 19-43, who sees Cary's closet play as being the most theatrical of the closet plays of the period. Also see Kegl, note 10.

13. A superb study of the effect of literary salon customs on literary production is Julie D. Campbell's "'Foolish Sport,' 'Delightful Games,' and 'Sweet Discourse': Intertextuality and the Inscription of Literary Circle Ritual in Sidney's *Arcadia*, Wroth's *Urania*, and Weamys's *Continuation* of the *Arcadia*," in *Critical Approaches to Eng:lish Prose Fiction* 1520-1640, ed. Donald Beecher, Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1998, pp. 63-84.

14. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1975.

15. Prince Charles's court was, arguably, the least influential of the royal courts before November 1612, the month Henry, the Prince of Wales and heir apparent, died. The courts of Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth were very Protestant ones, while the court of Queen Anne was crypto-Catholic if not actually Catholic (see David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984; David M. Bergeron, *Royal Family, Royal Lovers: King James of England and Scotland*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1991). James's has been variously characterized, David Norbrook (*Poetry and Politics*, pp. 197-201) doing so by focusing on its preference for the spectacular and sensual over the political or doctrinal. Though initially least influential, Charles's court became, *de facto*, quite important, at least after November 1612. Prince Charles's court is best understood as the product of the interplay amongst the more dominant and influential royal courts during the first decade of James's reign. See also Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I.* New Haven: Yale UP , 1992.

16. CSP-Venetian, 11: 95.

17. See, for example, W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. P. 40; and, especially, Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

18 . *The Poems of Aemelia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Ed. Susanne Woods. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

19. Weller and Ferguson's notes suggest such an interpretation, for instance.

20. See the emblem, "Aethiopem lauare" in Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems*. 1586, reproduced by Hall, *Things of Darkness*, p. 68.

21. Famously, Shakespeare's *Othello*, known then simply as "The Moor of Venis," was one of the first plays composed and performed for King James at Whitehall, and Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* was the first masque composed and performed for Queen Anne. See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930. Vol. 2, p. 331; *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel, New Haven: Yale UP , 1969.

22. See Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dig:nity of Man*. Tr. A. Robert Caponigri. Intr. Russell Kirk. Chicago: Gateway Editions, 1956.

23. On Medieval lust, see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. New York: Blackfriars with McGraw-Hill, 1964-1976. 2a2ae, 153 and 154.

24. This is an essay in Foucauldian historicism. In addition to the well known corpus of writings of Michel Foucault, see the cogent collection of lesser known, dispersed writing, *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Hill Cumorah 2000: An American Mystery Cycle[1]

Martin Walsh

The following is a report on an intriguing example of contemporary "medieval" drama. By this is not meant the reconstructions or reinterpretations of actual medieval dramatic texts as practiced by universities such as Bristol, Leeds, Lancaster or Toronto, or present-day municipalities such as York and Chester, or major theater companies in such special projects as Tony Harrison's *The Mysteries* (1979-84) at the National Theatre, London. This paper focuses, rather, on a contemporary tradition of religious drama which bears many striking similarities (as well, of course, as major differences) to the medieval dramatic enterprise, and one, moreover, that has a claim to being a completely indigenous North American growth. This is *The Hill Cumorah Pageant*, now in its sixty-fourth year, an outdoor evening spectacle staged for a short period each summer by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints (better known as the Mormons), near Palmyra, New York, some twenty miles to the east of the city of Rochester.

Superficially, *The Hill Cumorah Pageant* resembles the commercial ventures lumped under the collective title "Outdoor Drama," exemplified by such works as Paul Green's pioneering *The Lost Colony* (1937) staged at Roanoke, NC or his *Trumpet in the Land* (1972) commemorating the Moravian missionaries of eastern Ohio. Some more recent examples of the genre, still in production, include Alan Eckart's *Tecumseh!* (1974) in Chillicothe, OH and W. L. Mundell's *Blue Jacket* (1982) in Xenia, OH, both chronicling the Border Wars of the period 1790-1813 and the "tragedy" of Native American resistence.[2] These "symphonic dramas" (Green's phrase) are populist American attempts at Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* and feature large outdoor amphitheatres with natural backdrops (often including bodies of water in the playing area), recorded movie score-style music, large-scale dance numbers, and a choreography of other special effects, particularly battle scenes involving live fire, the explosion of blackpowder weapons, galloping horses, and dozens of combatants. These spectacles invariably enshrine popular patriotic values as they portray local history *cum* folklore often in the area or even at the specific site of the events portrayed.

The Hill Cumorah Pageant shares all of these characteristics, but unlike other Outdoor Dramas, it is, at every stage of its development and presentation, an act of devotion and expression of Faith. It is, moreover, a decidedly non-commercial venture, financed by the famously well-off LDS Church with its efficient system of tithes and "fast-pennies." The Pageant is absolutely free to the general public (including supervised parking), and there is no selling of "product" on site.[3] The Pageant remains at core an *offering* in the fullest religious sense of the term. It is a serious

dramatic distillation of the *Book of Mormon* in much the same way that English cycle drama is a dramatic precis of the Old and New Testaments. The analogy is quite precise, for the *Book of Mormon* is taken as "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" by the LDS Church in a fairly fundamentalist fashion.

To outline briefly the Mormon *mythos*:[4] this "other testament" is the proported translation made by Joseph Smith in 1827 of certain golden plates revealed and entrusted to him by an angelic personage, Maroni. Maroni was, in his mortal life, the son of Mormon, a prophet who had made an abridgement of the records of his people, a righteous remnant of Israelites who had voyaged to North America some 600 years before Christ. Internal dissensions within this immigrant group led eventually to the formation of two separate nations on the new continent, the *Nephites*, who followed in the ways of Old Testament righteousness, and the *Lamanites*, who reverted to a militant paganism and became their mortal enemies. But the Nephites, like their Hebrew forefathers before them, often lapsed as well and so required the astringent services of several notable prophets through the ages. These holy men also gave particularly precise and detailed accounts of the coming Messiah. The culmination of Nephite history was the post-Resurrection appearance of Christ Himself in the Americas wherein the fullness of His salvific message was revealed. Despite this Good News, the Nephites strayed yet again and finally succumbed to the belligerent Lamanites in an Armageddon somewhere in the vicinity of the Hill Cumorah, about four hundred years after Christ's coming. Mormon's golden tablets, secreted by Maroni in the hillside, were all that was left of this ancient Judeo-Christian civilization in what is now upstate New York.

The Hill Cumorah Pageant chronicles this often convoluted history in ten compact episodes, culminating in the scene of delivering the tablets to Joseph Smith on the very slope of the hill where the event purportedly transpired. *Representation* of sacred history thus is enacted on actual holy ground, much as a medieval saint's play might be enacted before the church bearing his or her mortal remains. One close European analogy is the *Mistere du siege d'Orléans* (c. 1425), commissioned by and performed in Orléans itself, the site of Jeanne d'Arc's miraculous victory.

As the Mormons' own promotional literature asserts, the pageant is "presented in the tradition of the great religious pageants begun in the Middle Ages, but with all the advantages of today's high technology."[5] The event is incredibly well-packaged into a fast-paced hour-and-a-half, along distinctly American entertainment lines. There are lots of "visuals" — vibrant color and a variety of textures in the costumes, plenty of action on a multi-level set, lots of quick cuts of a cinematic nature (facilitated by multiple actors impersonating the major characters), with

a lush orchestral and choral score running throughout. This is in contradistinction to the leisurely and protracted, dawn-to-dusk or multi-day events typical of medieval drama with their somewhat more "separated out" effects of music, spectacle, preaching, etc..

The Hill Cumorah Pageant is staged from dusk (about 9 p.m.) to darkness and relies heavily on an ultra-sophisticated sound-and-light system. All the voice-over narration, dialogue, and music is pre-recorded and superbly amplified. Actors gesture broadly to recorded dialogue, a device that is actually quite effective, given the distance over which one views the event.

The production presents a veritable arsenal of "special effects" — live fire, including leaping jets of flame, smoke and fog machines, coursing baptismal waters, and so on. The prophet Lehi's ship is constructed directly on stage and lightning destroys its mast in a storm. Several times, the flat-topped temple mounds of the set are filled with hundreds of battling Lamanites and Nephites. A huge belching volcano emerges from the stage floor, bringing destruction to the American cities at the very moment of Christ's crucifixion over the seas in Jerusalem. One of the most intriguing effects, however, is reserved for Messianic vision experiences: a fine curtain of water-spray is activated behind the symbolic scene which, when struck by powerful spotlights, creates a truly shimmering, visionary effect. The culminating impression of the Pageant also depends upon pinpoint spotlighting against the black of night — together with the use of a purely mechanical cable-rig which might not have appeared too strange to medieval framers of Ascension plays. Christ, in a brilliant white robe and with his arms spread wide, slowly passes down through the air from the top of Hill Cumorah and calmly steps off onto a pyramid top for His post-Resurrection appearance to the Americas. After a tender scene with the children of the New World, He returns, equally smoothly, back up into the night. The absolutely last moment of the pageant catches Christ again in mid-air, His white robe now complemented by a bright red stole, for a dramatic prefiguration of the Second Coming.

The Hill Cumorah Pageant relies as heavily on this cutting-edge stage technology as any Broadway production of Phantom of the Opera, Lion King, or the musical Titanic. These special effects, however, are never indulged in for their own sake but remain subservient to the purpose of presenting sacred history and LDS theology. The riveting theatrical effect of the airborne Jesus, for example, is no doubt supported by the Mormon notion of a "rending of the veil," the possibility of genuinely visionary experience even in these "latter days." Very much in the manner of the medieval theatric aesthetic, special effects are there to capture or recapture

a lay audience's attention for the subsequent (and invariably quieter) scenes of teaching and instruction.

The genesis and the current organization of the *Pageant* also bear interesting similarities with the medieval religious stage. The present high-tech spectacle began quite modestly in 1917 when western Mormons returned to the Joseph Smith farm near Palmyra to commemorate their "Pioneer Day." The acting out of selected scenes from the *Book of Mormon* joined sermons, athletic events, and a pilgrimage to the Hill Cumorah as part of the festivities. This yearly event grew into the "Cumorah Conference of the Eastern States Mission," and the dramatic interludes grew as well, both in length and in number of venues, including Smith's "Sacred Grove" and the Hill Cumorah itself, though in the early 1930s the casts were only about 30 strong with audiences of only about 200. In 1936, however, the desire was expressed to create "America's Oberammergau," and from 1937 onward the steep slope of the Hill Cumorah became the site of a full-scale pageant. The present configuration, entitled *The Hill Cumorah Pageant: America's Witness to Christ*, dates from 1988 and includes a script by the well-known science fiction and fantasy writer, Orson Scott Card, and a recorded score by Crawford Gates featuring, as might be expected, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. For many years the overall artistic director was Gerry Argetsinger of nearby Rochester Institute of Technology, whose wife Gail was largely responsible for the design of the stunning Hebreo-Mayan costumes.[6] Other committed Mormons with major Hollywood and Broadway credits (fight choreographers, etc.) have contributed to the high technical sophistication of the production over the past dozen years. And yet despite its technical gloss, the event remains true to its roots in religious retreat. The steady, organic development of the *Pageant* out of the Cumorah Conference — its fusion of recreation, instruction, and community building — again closely parallels the development of vernacular religious drama out of medieval confraternities or trade guilds.[7]

Nowhere is the parallel with medieval drama more compelling to the jaded theatre-goer than in *The Hill Cumorah Pageant*'s performers and audiences. As with almost all aspects of production, the performers of the *Pageant* are registered members of the LDS Church working on a voluntary basis. Potential participants go through an application process. Applications for the 2001 production, indeed, were already being picked up in the *Pageant* Office during the 2000 run. Some 650 performers and 100 stage crew are thereby selected. The majority are youth from Utah and other western States, but with a significant number of local Mormons as well. It is also common for entire families from distant parts of the country to enlist in the *Pageant.* One experiences very much a "summer camp" atmosphere, these nearly thousand-strong performing pilgrims

being accommodated in a variety of ways — put up by family and friends, camping in the campground or trailer park, and so on. Every participant contracts for a week of rehearsal and a week-and-a-half of performances. As might be expected, youthful performers are fiercely loyal to their particular ensemble within the cast as a whole, be it Lamanite warrior or female Harvest Dancer. The role of the tyrannical and sybaritic King Noah, who burns the prophet Abinadi in Episode 5, is usually given to a portly individual who plays it with the same relish one would imagine Herods and Pilates brought to their roles in the English Cycles. And obviously great care is taken with the casting of the Christ(s) and such important prophetic figures as Lehi, Nephi and Maroni.

The rehearsal process involves fairly rigorous drilling in massed-blocking, complicated choreography, and stage-combat. Only those few volunteers with "lines," that is, characters who have to mime to the recorded dialogue, ever see anything like a script. The rest of the population learns by rote from the professional stagers. My impression from informal interviews conducted during two days at Cumorah is that there are a substantial number, perhaps even a majority, of newcomers to the *Pageant* every year. It is look upon as a distinct honor to be chosen and is obviously a major commitment of one's time and resources, but it is also, equally obviously, a great deal of fun, especially for the youth. If dependence on teenage enthusiasm, stamina, and athleticism is essential to the process, this would in part explain the high degree of "turnover." It was, in fact, hard to find "veterans," let alone whole dynasties of players, as one readily finds in a place like Oberammergau, for example. This "mobility" of the performers is another of the uniquely American traits which distinguish *The Hill Cumorah Pageant* from those produced by sedentary urban communities of the Middle Ages. *Hill Cumorah* is medieval drama as summer vacation.

This is not to denigrate the dedication, indeed the devotion, which these players bring to the pageant. On a performance day, they can be found all over the Cumorah grounds, ready to greet fellow Mormons or gently proselytise outsiders like the author. These might be young married couples, the father of one of those families "vacationing" at the *Pageant*, youthful Elders, or other officers of the Church. Their sincerity and enthusiasm, as well as their absolute commitment to the literal truth of the *Book of Mormon,* is quite remarkable. The writer particularly remembers one young woman, who would be participating in the *Pageant* later that evening, sitting halfway up the Hill under a tree and pouring over the "Book of Alma" for guidance and inspiration.[8] Even the early afternoon technical run-throughs would begin with a lengthy invocation by one of the Mormon Elders. The theatrical disciplines of costuming, reviewing, blocking, and making one's "call" are everywhere informed by a religious

sense of purpose. Some two hours before "show time," group prayer and hymn-singing commence. At about the hour-mark before curtain, most of the costumed performers, as well as many of the running crew, are out in the enormous seating-area, greeting the audience, friends, family, and strangers alike, distributing referral cards or scene summaries, and generally showing off their finery. This democratic mingling with the audience ends with a trumpet fanfare from the hillside stage, and with the first strains of the overture, the entire acting body, over six hundred strong, surges down the lanes of the audience and swarms over the multiple temple-platforms of the set, seeming to cover every available square foot. At the final measure of the overture, the entire cast turns abruptly to face the audience in a kind of reverse curtain call, a moment no doubt arranged to honor to these inspired players at the start of *their* Pageant.

Of the nature and composition of the audience, one is somewhat less certain. Free seating is provided for some 6,000 spectators (all of these seats taken by performance time), with the grassy areas beyond available for hundreds more picnickers and lawn-chair viewers. Clearly, it is hard to survey such an audience. Yet, despite the general atmosphere of a large outdoor summer fete, complete with fast food and romping children, one nevertheless experiences a crowd which is quite familiar with what is going on and very relaxed in its attitude. Obviously, there were hundreds of fellow Mormons — actors in previous *Pageants* and family members of current performers (unlike the Mennonites or Amish, Mormons cannot be discerned simply by their dress). But a fair number of non-Mormon locals who have grown up with the event, "fellow travellers" so to speak, were also present. One got the distinct impression, however, that curious outsiders like the author were definitely in the minority. This was an audience that, while not exactly a *congregation*, was nevertheless a very specially constituted *community*, a community at one with the presenters of the event, anxious to be thrilled and instructed, inspired and entertained — a community, in fact, which distinctly recalls, if not precisely replicates, those which gave rise to the great religious dramas of the millennium just past.

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NOTES

1. This report is based on a two-day visit to *The Hill Cumorah Pageant* in July of 2000. Further interviews and behind-the-scenes investigations are planned for the 2001 production, at which point a more structured survey of the audience will be attempted.
2. *The Hill Cumorah Pageant* is indeed listed in the "Outdoor Drama in America" checklist of the Institute of Outdoor Drama in Chapel Hill, NC.
3. Advertising to the outside world is rather low-key. The writer encountered only one billboard for the 2000 production, and that just outside Palmyra. Brochures for the

event can often be found at tourist locales in the Finger Lakes region, but generally speaking, the Pageant remains a fairly well-kept secret. It is, moreover, not exploited commercially at the performance site. Sweat shirts, t-shirts, and postcards are on sale in the Pageant Office at Cumorah, but only for participants. There is a bit of selling of Pageant souvenirs out on the sidewalks of the Palmyra's Main Street during the performance week, but all in all, the event is miraculously free of commercialism. The same cannot be said of an international box-office success like the Oberammergau Passion Play, to name one obvious parallel.

4. The Mormon sense of history, world view, and conception of the afterlife and the Deity are significantly different from other sects of American Christianity. The revelations given to the prophet Joseph Smith were all intended to restore the original Church of Jesus Christ which was seen as absent from the Earth at that time. The Mormon project, therefore, was a complete overhaul of Christian theology and historiography and involved not simply the recovery of the *Book of Mormon* but subsequent revelations of Smith as well, gathered in the volumes known as *Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price* (often grouped together for Mormon study as "The Triple Combination"). The latter two books include Smith's retranslations and emendations of the Bible itself. Thus the "restoration" of what was ancient and original was perceived by other Christians as total novelty and invention on the part of the church's founders and accounts for a good bit of the hostility encountered by the LDS church in its early decades. Much of this background is processed, for the non-Mormon, by Mormon convert Coke Newell in a recent book, *Latter Days: A Guided Tour through Six Billion Years of Mormonism*, an excellent general introduction to the Mormon mythos and ethos.

5. Promotional brochure for the 1999-2001 performances.

6. Background information from Prof. Gerald Argetsinger's in-house, five-page "History of the Hill Cumorah Pageant" obtained from the Pageant Office.

7. The "look" of these costumes is no doubt influenced by the historical work of Mormon scholars, particularly those affiliated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). A good example of such work is John L. Sorenson's *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: FARMS Research P, 1998), which is a very nicely produced picture-book of ancient Central American art and architecture. Interestingly, contemporary Mormon scholars readjust Joseph Smith's sense of *Book of Mormon* geography from his own Finger Lakes region to Mesoamerica. Smith seems to have shared the early Republic's fascination with the "Mound Builders" (Jefferson et al.), and this "vanished civilization" no doubt influenced, at some level, the conception of his Nephites and Lamanites. But Mesoamerica is obviously a better place to search today for evidence of kingdoms, cities and suitably grand Armageddons.

8. One noticed a lot of silent reading of the *Book of Mormon* (mostly by men) at the Mormon historical sites in the area. Palmyra indeed affords an interesting American parallel to a medieval pilgrimage center such as Rome, Santiago, or Tours. Of course, one does not *process* from one holy site to another in the district, rather one takes one's car, but there are plenty of such "stations" to visit — particularly the Joseph Smith farm with its replica log-cabin, later frame-house, and the quietly inspiring "Sacred Grove," a stand of ancient trees where Smith received his initial vision; but also the farm of early disciple Martin Harris, the grave of Smith's older brother Alvin back in Palmyra, and the Grandin Printing House on Main Street where the *Book of Mormon* was first published. One culminates one's day of religious tourism, then, with the sacred representation at the spiritually-charged Hill Cumorah itself.

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Medievalism in the Making:
A Bibliography of Leslie J. Workman

Richard Utz

The following bibliography is intended to memorialize the decisive role Leslie Workman, and independent scholar, played in the genesis and development of medievalism as a widely-recognized academic subject. The texts cited below afford a revealing look at the obstacles — institutional, methodological, and terminological — in the way of establishing medievalism as a conceptual framework that would be inclusive of the various ways in which post-medieval minds have remembered the Middle Ages. William Calin once called him "a nineteenth-century man in the tradition of Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, and, above all, Scott," and Leslie Workman's record shows that he was indeed something like a Victorian explorer or empire builder, mapping out a new territory, building railways and bridges, improvising, facilitating access, preparing paths for others. I am one of those numerous others and will remain indebted to the "Founder" for his pioneering work on medievalism, because it made me conscious of the constructedness of my own scholarly practices. More importantly, Leslie Workman gave me his loyalty, friendship, and love, rare and precious gifts which I shall cherish for the rest of my life.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Kathleen Verduin without whose gracious help I could not have compiled this bibliography. I have added a moderate number of annotations to some titles where I thought such additional information might be of value.

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Buchanan, Scott, Texas Tech University, "British Origins: the Debate in the Victorian Periodic Press"

Calin, William, University of Florida, Plenary Speaker

Carter, Catherine, Western Carolina University, "What's Love Got To Do With It? Ellis Peters' History-Mysteries and Popular Romance"

Chrstensen, Peter G., Cardinal Stritch University, "Daphne Du Marier's *Castle Dor*: History, Romance, and Recurrence"

Clarey, Jo Ellyn, Michigan Women's Studies Association, "Popular Femme/inism: Partnering Medieval Social History and Modern Detective Genre"

Clem, Bill, Northern Illinois University, "The Prioress and Anti-Semitism (Again?): A Psychoanalytic Reading"

Damsen, Silver, California State University, "Alternative Endings in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde"

Flores, Carol, Ball State University, "Intertexuality in the Age of Victoria: New Forms and Associations"

Fugelso, Karl, Columbia University, "Historicizing the Divine Comedy: Renaissance Responses to a 'Medieval' Text"

Gale, Tara Leigh, University of Alberta, "The Disappearance of the Archangel, a Late Medieval Mystery"

Galik, Mark, Michigan State University, "Sublimation of Chivalric Violence: Verbal Dueling in John Milton and Roger Williams"

Gonyer-Donohue, Jen, University of Washington, "Representations of Sanctity and Incorrupt Bodies: A Rereading of Book II of Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present*"

Hunt, Martha, Ball State University, "Whose Garden Is It Anyway? Territorial Imperatives in the Cloister"

Johnson, Graham, Saint Louis University, "Tennyson's Pivotal Idyll: Pelleas and Ettarre"

Johnson, Michael, Buffalo State College, "*Eldils* and Ministering Spirits Defend Us"

Jones, Timothy, Augustana College, "The Desire for Outlaws"

Kelly, Keith, Western Michigan University, "Resurrecting Hereward: Reflections of an Anglo-Saxon Outlaw"

Kugeares, Sophia Manoulian, University of South Florida, "Mysterious Miniato: Now Where Are Those Bones Anyway?"

Kuzmenko, Laura, University of Toronto, "Fierce Love Sent Through the Eye"

Lampe, David, Buffalo State College, "Judging John: Bale, Shakespeare, and Post-Modern Fictions"

Levy-Navarro, Elena, University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, "The Revolution of Dust: Medievalism in John Donne's Late Representations of Death"

Lingan, Edmund, State University of New York, "Modern Mystery Plays: The Role of Medieval Dramas and Contemporary Constructions in Symbolist Theatre"

Livingston, Michael, Western Michigan University, "Reliving and Revealing the Real Robin: Parke Godwin's *Sherwood*"

Marck, Nancy Anne, Daeman College, "'Blended Virtues': Dante Alighieri's Ideal of Womanhood in Dante Gabriel Rosetti's Beatrice Poems and Paintings"

Montaño, Jesse, Hope College, "The Blood of the Conquistadors: Medievalism in US Latino Literature"

Morgan, Gwendolyn A., Montana State University, "Medieval Saints and Modern Mystics: Joan of Arc in Contemporary Film"

Nankov, Nikita, Indiana University, "Stories and Histories: Constructing Russian Imperial Identity in the 15th - 16th Centuries"

Rewa, Michael, University of Delaware, "Excalibur at the Millennium's End: Cullings from the *Camelot Courier*, 1900-2000"

Rutten, Stuart, University of Toronto, "*Sterbelied* as Final Heroic Boast in *Orvar-Odds saga* and *Beowulf*"

Sandvik, Ron, University of Northern Iowa, "Robin Hood's Progeny: Hello, I'm Johnny Cash"

Shippey, Thomas, Saint Louis University, "The Historical Vision of Alfred Duggan"

Simmons, Clare A., Ohio State University, "Bad Baronets: A Medievalist Reading"

Smith, Nate, Indiana University, "The Toxic Cloud of Unknowing in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*"

Smith, Scott, Western Michigan University, "Crossing Boundaries in Brazil: Metamorphosis in John Updike's Revision of Tristan"

Smoje, Dujka, Université de Montréal, "Music as Sacred Time: Experiencing Medieval Polyphony in 20th Century Music"

Swain, L. J., Western Michigan University, "C. S. Lewis: The Last Medieval Theologian"

Swan, Jesse, University of Northern Iowa, "Critiquing Early Modern White Supremacy: The Function of Medieval English Anti-Semitism in Elizabeth Carey's *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queen of Jewry*"

Toswell, M. Jane, University of Western Ontario and Wadham College, Oxford, "Two New Letters by Auden on Anglo-Saxon Metre and *The Age of Anxiety*"

Utz, Richard J., University of Northern Iowa, "Editing Chaucer: John Koch and the Forgotten Tradition"

Waddy, N. Helena, State University of New York, "The Medieval Origins of the Family Relationships Shaping Nazi Joining Patterns"

Walsh, Martin W., University of Michigan, "*Hill Cumorah 2000*: A Mormon Passion Play in the New Millennium"

Walter, John, Saint Louis University, "Stretching the Imagination: Changing Perspective in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*"

Whobrey, William, Yale University, "Medieval Books in Eighteenth Century Libraries"