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**A Mediæval Miscellany
Essays by Brian S. Lee**

Edited by Victor Houliston

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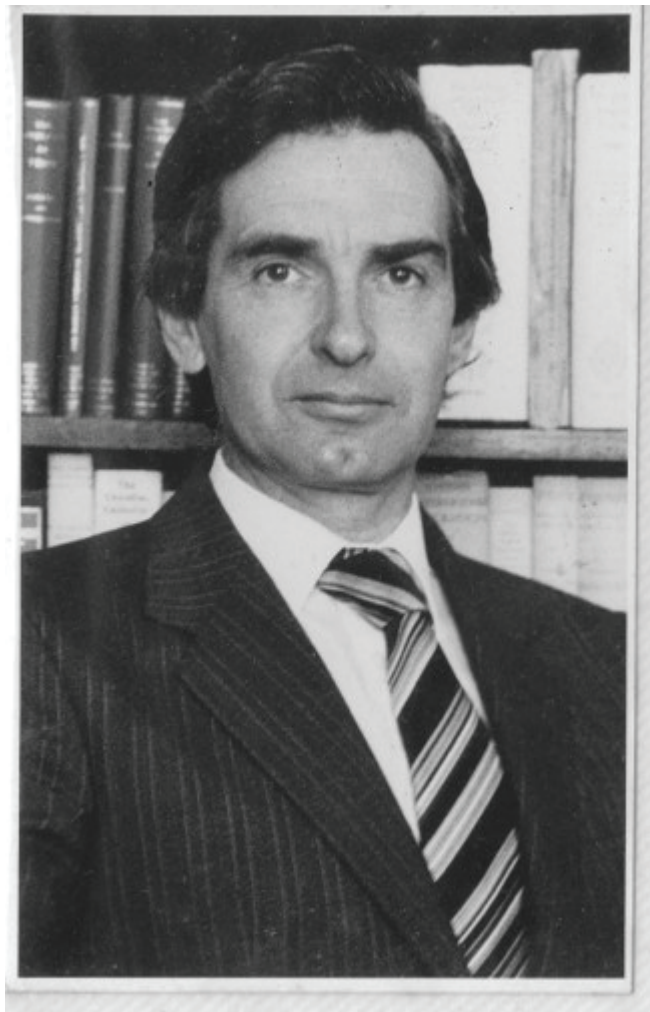
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Brian S. Lee

Editor's Introduction

Brian S. Lee is a graduate of Cape Town, Oxford and London Universities, and in 1980 was a visiting fellow at Harvard. He taught English, Latin and Religious Studies at schools in Cape Town, Zambia and London, and lectured at UCT in English language and literature, with a special interest in the Middle Ages, for 33 years before retiring. He recently translated *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* into Middle English verse (2013 and forthcoming). He and his wife Anne now live in a leafy suburb near the fynbos covered slopes of Table Mountain.

Brian Lee has been, from its beginnings in the early 1970s, a stalwart of The Medieval Society of Southern Africa and its successor, The Southern African Society for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Indeed, the range of his articles presented here mirrors that evolution, registering his acute awareness of historical continuity and change. The Renaissance topics treated in *A Mediæval Miscellany* are approached from a mediæval angle. So, for example, he focuses on the perverse use of Chaucerian quotations and adaptations in two anti-feminist tracts of the seventeenth century ('Walter Charleton and the Matron of Ephesus'). He reminds us that Chaucer's work itself needs to be read as a whole, at a time when critical enquiry is becoming more fragmented and mediæval literary studies often reduced to a few Chaucerian tales, selected for their apparent modernity. Many of these articles may be read as cautionary tales about selective misreading of the past.

Several pieces undertake an historical survey of a recurrent figure, *topos*, or narrative: Godfrey of Bouillon, Appius and Virginia, miracle tales of the Virgin Mary, the seven ages of man, the lover and the

statue. These studies have an affinity with *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing, MI, 1952), a magisterial work by Morton Bloomfield, the keynote speaker at the first biennial conference of the Society. There is more to this than weaving the strands into intriguing combinations, instructive as that is, or even practising the Renaissance art of the anatomy, as Lee does with historical, encyclopedic, morality, euphuistic and satiric Virginia ('Well done of rash Virginius'). It also entails asking the question why certain stories, even (or perhaps especially) when they seem as painful and illogical as that of Appius, Virginia and Virginius, have such a lasting appeal.

Lee is not shy to consider archetypal, mythological and even psychoanalytic interpretations of the material he has so painstakingly gathered. He also relishes finding analogues and echoes in Ruskin, Browning, Hawthorne and others. What he will not do is read *The Squire's Tale* as if it were a precursor of a modern short story ('The Question of Closure in Fragment V'), or a Tudor interlude as if were a failed Shakespearean comedy ('From Hall Floor to Traverse and Stage'). He warns against judging *Piers Plowman* outside its framework of Scriptural reference ('Antichrist and Allegory in Langland's Last Passus'). About genre and context he is always scrupulous: one of his most suggestive readings is that of an ungrammatical letter written in the early seventeenth century by a ship's passenger in protest at his treatment by the captain at the time of a wreck off the West Australian coast ('The "Grosse Villanies" of Captain John Brookes'). Its interest, Lee argues, is not that the letter-writer might have made a good novelist if he had been born a hundred or so years later; it is that it would be over a hundred years before readers could be found whom novelists could entertain by inventing just such a letter.

The relation between historical fact and fabulous reinvention is pursued in 'This is no fable'. He performs a skilful balancing act between recognizing the uses to which incredible stories could be put—self-mutilation by priests jealous of their chastity, followed by miraculous reconstruction; the devil comically foiled in his recording of the chatter of foolish congregants—and the quest for the likely historical circumstances that might have given rise to the story in the

first place and its subsequent proliferation. In his treatment of 'Godfrey of Bouillon: The Ninth Worthy' he uses the contrast between the heroic myth and the gruesome reality of the crusades to highlight the power of the *aide memoire* to shape the past. If a third Christian hero is needed to make up the number of the nine worthies, Godfrey must perforce be measured to requirement, even if it means modulating his story into magic or romance.

Three of the articles focus on *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer was the master of narrative genre; he was also, Lee argues, adroit in pairing tales of very different kinds so as to exploit those very differences. *The Squire's Tale* seems loose and potentially interminable in comparison with *The Franklin's Tale*, which offers such a tidy *denouement* (even if critics do not always accept the offer). But Chaucer was not, in Lee's view, merely poking fun at the Squire by allowing him to ramble on just long enough not to tire the listener's patience before he is interrupted by the Franklin. Romance is endless, and questioning the pertinence of details about the driving instructions for the flying horse, as we are naturally disposed to do, alerts us to analogous inconsistencies and potential for endless ramification in *The Franklin's Tale*. Unless Dorigen can be brought to finish her lament, the real issues will be avoided. Chaucer has therefore very skilfully to overcome her resistance to closure, both through the internal dynamic of the tale, its colours of rhetoric and its plotting, and the juxtaposition with *The Squire's Tale* where the dangers are writ large. Nor can one say *The Squire's Tale* exists only to show up the superiority of *The Franklin's Tale*; the two form an indivisible if not seamless pair, the texture of each complementing the other.

Something similar could be said about *The Physician's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale*. Once again we have a tale that is read only by scholars and one that is read by most English undergraduates. Here Lee, invoking Bakhtin, designates the former as monologic and the latter as dialogic; one belonging to a static world of epic time where roles are fixed and the story-line unalterable; the other to a world of confrontation, unpredictability and interchange ('Justice in *The Physician's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale*'). Does this mean *Pardoner's Tale* good, *Physician's Tale* bad? Or does it rather mean that the two are in 'dialogic contrast' with each other, as Lee's title suggests? Do these two worlds not need each other?

Critical strictures on literary works may be the result of undiplomatic reading. Lee defends the reputation of *Piers Plowman*'s final passus and of *The Man of Law's Tale* by appealing to underlying theological principles. Because we know how the world will end, we can allow *Piers Plowman* to end as it does, back in the field of folk with so much unresolved. If allegory sometimes seems one-dimensional, that is only because we forget the diversity of the device and its allusive riches. Similarly, what is to us a remarkably drab presentation of Custance, the central figure in *The Man of Law's Tale*, serves to enforce the notion of 'Christian adornment', the clothing of divine righteousness which requires a particular kind of informed imagination to appreciate.

Brian Lee meets the challenge of marrying the intricacies of textual editing to creative interpretation with indefatigable good humour and wit. Appropriately, one of the earliest essays reproduced here concerns a late-medieval poem on the seven ages of man, anticipating, perhaps, his own progression through the sequence ('A Poem "Clepid the Seven Ages"'). It is a tour de force of archival exploration, uncovering and restoring multiple manuscript copies overlooked by the editor of the *Variorum As You Like It*. Lee demonstrates how different was the approach of medieval authors from Jacques' cynical survey. They in turn moralized what was a neutral *topos* in antiquity. Similarly, in his piece on 'Statuesque Love' ('Florimell and Galatea') he elaborates on the difference between medieval and post-romantic views of love and creativity. That men make idols of the women they are in love with was a medieval commonplace; that a human creator can legitimately, or admirably, create an ideal beloved would be blasphemy. In this respect Spenser, though rehabilitating sexual desire in marriage, looks backward, contrasting the true Florimell, Nature's creature, with the false, a fabrication of a witch.

It is true that it is Spenser who creates the true Florimell, but not to fulfil erotic fantasy; rather, to fashion a speaking picture, a notable image of virtue. This is *imitatio* rather than artistic *hubris*. And Lee goes on to suggest that Shakespeare cannot be properly understood without an awareness of the medieval heritage, especially Chaucer. The playwright does not endorse Jacques' fashionably sceptical portrayal of the cycle of life from mewling and puking to toothless impotence, for the speech is no sooner ended than Orlando appears, bearing the

old man Adam on his back, anything but a used-up scrap of humanity. Lee crosses swords with critics who dismiss Queen Margaret's curse, when she commits Richard of Gloucester to the extreme ministrations of the worm of conscience, as belonging to a pre-Christian theology. Her vindictiveness reflects, as in a broken mirror, orthodox teaching about the economy of repentance and remorse. Chaucer took hell seriously, and his Parson's quotations from St Jerome, St Bernard and St Anselm continued to be retailed, and augmented, by spiritual writers in the reformation era. Even James Joyce, despite repudiating the Jesuit preaching of his school days, was haunted by the agenbyte of inwit.

Lee's expertise in pre-Shakespearean drama, the subject of his Oxford M. Litt. thesis, is on display in his discussion of mediæval children, piteous and pert, and his review essay of Richard Southern's lavish book on *The Staging of Plays before Shakespeare*. He analyses a schoolboy play from Winchester, *Occupation and Idleness*, to counter suggestions that in mediæval eyes children could be pitied or punished but not listened to. On-stage interaction in this play suggests, instead, that both the boy on stage and the boys in the audience could escape from the constraints of adult authority. An ability to reconstruct the behaviour of players and audience in a Tudor dining-hall also helps to bring to light the attractive qualities of interludes that can seem so much less than playful when compared with later drama. Lee ends his review with some conjectures about the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*. There may be something mischievous about superimposing an earlier dramaturgy onto Shakespeare's staging, especially when Lee takes Southern to task for first questioning and then assuming the historicity of Henry VIII's walking out on a domestic performance. If so, it is not incompatible with the blend of wit and seriousness that characterizes so much of the writing.

This collection may be read as a counterpart to, and invites comparison with, *An English Miscellany*, which Brian Lee compiled and edited in honour of W.S. Mackie, the first De Beers Professor of English Language at the University of Cape Town. Among the big names represented in that collection are G.K. Hunter, Robert Burchfield, Norman Blake and A.J. Smith. It might be observed how this reflects the former colonial character of English studies in

Southern Africa, where professors were appointed from Britain and conducted their research in leisurely visits to the great repositories of rare books and manuscripts. That period of deference has passed: Lee's articles represent a sustained and lively engagement with the worldwide republic of letters, entering fearlessly into debate with major figures in the field.

An English Miscellany also reminds us of the former structure of English departments, divided equally between mediæval studies, designated 'Language', and modern, designated 'Literature'. That would surely be anachronistic now, but these articles, navigating the alterity and the continued presence of the Middle Ages, are offered here as a challenge to the Society to promote global mediævalism in a new, postcolonial context. With the increasing availability of digital copies of rare books and manuscripts, including, for instance, almost the entire manuscript collection of the Vatican Library, it is to be hoped that we shall see a reinvention, reconfiguration and reintegration of local and international mediæval studies.

VICTOR HOULISTON

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Complete List of Articles by B. S. Lee (arranged in chronological order)

- 'Two Arthurian Tales: What Tennyson Did to Malory'. *UCT Studies in English* 1 (1970): 1–18.
- 'Callanan's "The Outlaw of Loch Lene"'. *Ariel* 1.3 (July 1970): 89–100.
- 'Self-Expression is Exacting'. *English Language Tutorial Scheme Occasional Papers* 2 (University of Cape Town, February 1971): 1–11.
- 'Antichrist and Allegory in Langland's Last Passus'. *UCT Studies in English* 2 (1971): 1–12.
- 'From Hall Floor to Traverse and Stage' (review of Richard Southern, *The Staging of Plays Before Shakespeare*). *UCT Studies in English* 5 (1974): 77–82.
- 'Lucidus and Dubius: A Fifteenth-Century Theological Debate and its Sources'. *Medium Aevum* 45 (1976): 79–96.
- 'A Poem "Clepid the Sevene Ages"'. In *An English Miscellany Presented to W.S. Mackie*, ed. Brian S. Lee (Cape Town, 1977).
- 'Patience in Perspective'. *UCT Studies in English* 9 (1979): 5–22.
- 'Some Medieval Short Stories: The Didactic Imperative'. Proceedings of the Conference of the Association of University English Teachers of Southern Africa, University of Durban-Westville, Natal, July 1979.
- '"This is No Fable": Historical Residues in Two Medieval *Exempla*'. *Speculum* 56 (1981): 728–60.
- '*Gubernacio Hominis*: A Fifteenth-Century Allegorical Poem'. *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981): 230–58.
- 'Jonah in *Patience* and Prudentius'. *Florilegium* 4 (1982): 194–209.
- 'The Martial Conclusions of Tennyson's *Maud* and Lawrence's England My England'. *UCT Studies in English* 12 (1982): 19–37.
- 'Johnson's Poetry: a Bicentenary Tribute'. *English Studies in Africa* 28.2 (1985): 81–98.
- 'Margery Kempe, an Articulate Illiterate'. In *Oral Tradition and Literacy: Changing Visions of the World*, ed. R. Whitaker and E. Sienart (Durban, 1986).
- 'Chaucer's Handling of A Medieval Feminist Hierarchy'. *UNISA English Studies* 24 (May 1986): 1–6. Abstract in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 13 (1991): 323 (No. 103).
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- [Review of Ruth Ames, *God's Plenty: Chaucer's Christian Humanism*]. *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 10 (1988): 116–19.

- 'Florimell and Galatea: Statuesque Love in the Middle Ages'. *UNISA English Studies* 27.1 (1989): 1–8.
- 'Cure and Carnage in *The Siege of Jerusalem*'. *UNISA Medieval Studies* 4 (1991): 22–35.
- 'The Question of Closure in Fragment V of *The Canterbury Tales*'. *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 190–200.
- 'The "Grosse Villanies" of Captain John Brookes'. *Viator* 24 (1993): 421–34.
- 'The Petition of John Payn, Victim of Jack Cade's Rebellion, for Financial Redress'. *Southern African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1994): 108–18.
- '"Deuourd, and brought to naught by little bits": Textual Destruction and Spiritual Transfer in Medieval English Literature'. In *Change and Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Rosemary Gray et al. (Pretoria: UNISA, 1995).
- 'Exploitation and Excommunication in The Wife of Bath's Tale'. *Philological Quarterly* (1995): 17–35.
- 'Queen Margaret's Curse on Richard of Gloucester'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 7 (1994): 15–21 (published 1996).
- 'Godfrey of Bouillon: The Ninth Worthy'. *UNISA Medieval Studies* 6 (1997): 79–93.
- 'Justice in *The Physician's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale*: A Dialogic Contrast'. *Chaucer Yearbook* 4 (1997): 21–32.
- '"Well done of rash Virginius": Renaissance Transformations of Livy's Account of the Fall of the Decemvirs'. *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (1997): 331–60.
- '"A Girdle Round About the Earth": Some Medieval Perceptions of the World'. *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* 6 (1998): 41–50.
- 'The Fit Pageant in *Love's Labour's Lost*'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 11 (1998): 38–40.
- 'Seen and Sometimes Heard: Piteous and Pert Children in Medieval English Literature'. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 23 (1998): 40–48.
- 'Gulliver in Brobdingnag: A Journey Back to Infancy'. *English Academy Review* 15 (1998): 116–129.
- 'Walter Charleton and the Matron of Ephesus: Chaucerian Parody in the Seventeenth-Century Anti-Feminist Controversy'. *The Year's Work in Medievalism* 16 (2001): 9–20.
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- 'Christian Adornment in *The Man of Law's Tale*'. [Enarratio:] *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 10 (2004 for 2003): 31–48.
- 'Family Values and the Boundaries of Christendom in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*'. *Southern African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14 (2004): 23–38.
- 'The "Mayde Child" in *The Shipman's Tale*'. *Southern African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 15 (2005): 55–68.
- 'Apollo's Chariot and the Christian Sub-text of *The Franklin's Tale*'. *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36 (2010): 47–67.
- 'Sossius, Talbot, and the Parthian scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 22 (2010): 1–6.
- 'Pride, Queen of the Sins; Pious Legends, and "The Metamorphosed Monarch"'. *Southern African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 19 (2009, published 2011): 1–40.
- 'Chaucer and "the Cook's Tale of Gamelyn"'. *Southern African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (2014): 47–69.
- '*Hostilis Inrisio*: Some Instances of "derision with a certain severity" in Medieval English Literature'. In Alan Baragona, Elizabeth L. Rambo (eds.), *Words that Tear the Flesh: Essays on Sarcasm in Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Cultures* (Berlin and Boston, 2018).



Godfrey of Bouillon: The Ninth Worthy

But a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains, and I know
The voice that shook our palaces—four hundred years ago:
It is he that saith not ‘Kismet’; it is he that knows not Fate;
It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey in the gate!

G. K. Chesterton, *Lepanto*

The mediæval love of mnemonic symmetry produced the *topos* of the Nine Worthy, traditional examples of great warriors laid low by death. ‘For,’ as Caxton writes in the Preface to his edition of Malory (1476), ‘it is notoyrly knowen thorough the unyversal world that there been nine worthy.’¹ Clearly it was the object of such listing to make them known, education in a largely illiterate or semi-literate culture being most easily fostered by readily-remembered groupings of popular figures. The present paper examines how popular they were, and particularly what claim the last of them, Godfrey of Bouillon, had to be included among them.

They were three pagans, three Jews and three Christians, historical or pseudo-historical proofs of the unreliability of Fortune. Gower in *The Praise of Peace* lists them as follows:

See Alisandre, Ector and Julius,
See Machabeu, David and Josue,
See Charlemeine, Godefroi, Arthus,
Fulfilde of werre and of mortalite. [war]
Here fame abit, bot al is vanite; [Their fame abides]
For deth, which hath the werres under fote,
Hath mad an ende of which ther is no bote.² [remedy]

¹ *Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. E. Vinaver, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford, 1967), I, cxliii.

² John Gower, *English Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1900–01), II, 489.

The vestigially oral culture of the Middle Ages found such brief lists useful as memorial aids. Jacques de Longuyon, whose early fourteenth-century romance *Les Voeux du Paon*, translated into Scots as *The Avowis of Alexander*, contains apparently the earliest extant treatment of the Nine Worthy,³ did not invent the *topos*, though he may have established its best-known form.⁴ Mnemonic lists were not readily discarded, in spite of the print culture that Caxton introduced into England, promoting literacy and the increased scope for discursive detail and novelty that literacy fosters. By the late fifteenth century dramatic and iconographic representations of the Worthies and literary allusions to them were legion.⁵ Shakespeare may well have seen dramatic portrayals of them, which no doubt prompted his send-up of the *topos* in *Love's Labour's Lost*: Gollancz prints a fifteenth-century mumming-play in which each Worthy speaks a single couplet.⁶

The concept was a politically useful one when a potentate had to be welcomed or flattered. In his stanzas on the kings of England, Lydgate describes 'the fifte Herry' as 'Able to stond among the worthy nyne'.⁷ In 1431, the English king, Henry VI, entered Paris preceded by all the eighteen worthies of both sexes,⁸ and in 1456 his Queen, Margaret, who was herself to gain a reputation as a female Worthy,

³ French and Scots texts in vol. 2 of *The Buik of Alexander*, ed. R. L. Ritchie, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1921–29).

⁴ I. Gollancz (ed.), *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (London, 1915), Appendix VI; Ritchie (ed.), *The Buik of Alexander*, I, cxlviii–ix.

⁵ R. Wyss, 'Die Neun Helden: Eine ikonographische Studie', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 17 (1957): 73–106; K. Holtgen, 'Die "Nine Worthies"', *Anglia* 77 (1959): 279–309; H. Schroeder, *Der Topos der Nine Worthies in Literatur und bildender Kunst* (Gottingen, 1971); E. Hancock, 'The Nine Worthies: their influence on culture from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985.

⁶ Gollancz (ed.), *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Appendix XIII.

⁷ John Lydgate, 'The Kings of England', in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. R. Robbins (New York, 1959), p. 6.

⁸ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924), trans. F. Hopman (London, 1979), p. 70.

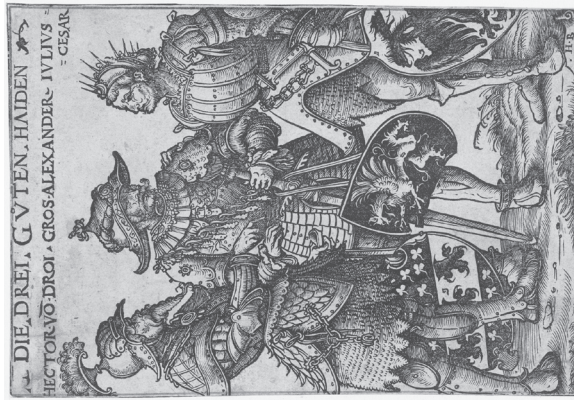


Figure 1: The Three Pagan Heroes: Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Woodcut by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1516–1581), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 2: The Three Jewish Heroes: Joshua, King David and Judah Maccabee. Woodcut by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1516–1581), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 3: The Three Christian Heroes: Charlemagne, King Arthur and Godfrey of Bouillon. Woodcut by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1516–1581), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

was welcomed to Coventry by a pageant of Worthies, each reciting a laudatory stanza in rhyme royal.⁹

Thomas Nashe, in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, describes how the Duke of Saxony was kept waiting in the rain while the orator of Wittenberg University 'ran through all the Nine Worthies with praising and comparing him'.¹⁰ It would, therefore, have been politically appropriate for the King of Navarre and his young lords in *Love's Labour's Lost* to welcome the visiting Princess with a pageant of the Worthies, if only the pageant had not been so unworthily performed and received.

Lydgate's attempt in his *Ballad of Good Counsel*, lines 85–119, to expand the list was not altogether successful: he managed to forget Godfrey of Bouillon, although, voluminous as ever, he mentions several others besides the remaining eight, and then nine famous women.¹¹ In fact the number and composition of the Worthies varied: Holofernes himself seems not quite certain,¹² Nashe in *The Unfortunate Traveller* refers to 'the nine worthies, David, Solomon, Gideon, and the rest',¹³ and by the time of *The British Grenadiers* the tradition was in tatters:

Some talk of Alexander,
And some of Hercules,
Of Hector and Lysander,
And such great names as these.

No fewer than forty are celebrated in 'Saint Georges commendation to all Souldiers', a broadside ballad printed in 1612, including the strangely compound 'Sir Tristram de Lionel', Iason and Gedion (oddly allies in the conquest of the Amorites), Richard I, whose French

⁹ *The Coventry Leet Book*, ed. M. D. Harris, 4 vols, EETS o.s. 134–35, 138 & 146 (London, 1907–09), II, 289–91.

¹⁰ Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *Elizabethan Fiction*, ed. R. Ashley and E. Moseley (New York, 1953), p. 236.

¹¹ John Lydgate, *Ballad of Good Counsel*, in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), pp. 288–89.

¹² William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. G. R. Hibbard, *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1990), 5.1.105–18 and note (pp. 185–86)

¹³ Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, 242.

nickname presumably accounts for the astonishing assertion that 'He gored the Lion with his naked hand', and even non-combatants like Mandeville, who wrote of his travels, and 'Saint Iaques of Spaine, that neuer yet broke Lance'. Another version of the ballad, 'A brave warlike Song', with a similar refrain, deals more conservatively with the usual nine.¹⁴ These ballads witness to the longevity of popular interest in the heroes of mediæval romance; perhaps the clash between the young lords, writers of fashionable Petrarchan love-lyrics, and the learned Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* arises from the young courtiers' up-to-date scorn of this popular tradition, while the pedant wishes to propound his classically correct notion of how the heroes in their heyday deserved to be admired.

Various differing lists of Women Worthies were from time to time promulgated. In Thomas Heywood's *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World* (1640), the Jews are Deborah, Judith and Esther, the pagans Bunduca (Boadicea), Penthesilea and Artimesia, the Christians Elpheda (Æthelflæd, daughter of King Alfred), Margaret of Anjou, and Elizabeth.¹⁵ The three women in Shakespeare's *I Henry VI* are all termagants likely to have reminded a contemporary audience of Women Worthies. Thus when the Dauphin, overcome by Joan of Arc's swordswomanship, cries

[T]hou art an Amazon,
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.¹⁶

he is commending her as a Woman Worthy. Though Margaret of Anjou does not show her fearsome military prowess in this play, she will do so in the sequels; an informed contemporary audience would be aware of what England was in for as a result of Suffolk's policy of marrying her to the pliant King Henry. The Countess of Auvergne hopes to become,

¹⁴ *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. G. Day, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1987), I, 87–89.

¹⁵ Eugene Waith, 'Heywood's Women Worthies', in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. N. T. Burns and C. Reagan (London, 1971), pp. 222–38. See also Ann McMillan, 'Men's Weapons, Women's War: The Nine Female Worthies, 1400–1600', *Medievalia* 5 (1979), 113–139.

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, ed. A. S. Cairncross, The Arden Shakespeare (1962; rpt London, 1997), I. ii. 103–04.

by the capture of Talbot, 'as famous . . . As Scythian Tomyris by Cyrus' death' (II. iii. 5–6). Tomyris, the decapitator of Cyrus the Great, often appears in groups of the Worthies.¹⁷ For example, Huizinga mentions Deschamps' 'rather bizarre heroines. Among them we find Penthesilea, Tomyris, Semiramis'.¹⁸ Unfortunately for her, the Countess does not succeed in emulating Tomyris: she is forced to recognize that Talbot is 'no less than fame hath bruited' (II. iii. 67).

The Worthies are usually grouped together as a mirror of brittle fortune in the *contemptus mundi* tradition. Their fame may abide, as Gower says, but they are emblems of mortality, for death has had the last word. In *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, lines 3218–455, they are being rolled round on Fortune's wheel.¹⁹ At the culmination of his European conquests, King Arthur dreams that Fortune places him in the throne on top, and then whirls him under to destruction. Six kings have already fallen, and two are still climbing (Charlemagne and Godfrey, historically later than Arthur, have yet to reach the top of the wheel). In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* Elde describes them as

nyne of the beste
 Pat euer wy in this werlde wiste appon erthe,
 Pat were conquerours full kene and kiddeste of oper,
 (lines 297–99; cf. 580–83)

but he is a mirror of the imminence of death, which came to them as

¹⁷ Waith, 'Heywood's Women Worthies', 234–35; *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1938), I, 321; J. Planché, 'The Nine Worthies of the World, in Illustration of the Paintings in Amberley Castle', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 20 (1864): 315–24.

¹⁸ Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p. 70. Deschamps gives a conventional list of male Worthies and a highly unusual one of female Worthies in a poem suggesting it's high time France and England made peace: *Œuvres Complètes de Eustace Deschamps*, ed. Gaston Raynaud and Queux de Saint-Hilaire, 11 vols, Publications de la Société des anciens textes français (Paris, 1878–1903), I, 199–200. Less bizarre are the milder but nevertheless heroic Roman women Lucretia, Veturia and Virginia, illustrated in a sixteenth century woodcut by Hans Burgkmair, who additionally has Esther, Judith and Jael for the Jews and saints Helena, Brigita and Elsbeta for the Christians. Women Worthies varied: male authors were spoilt for choice!

¹⁹ *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Valerie Krishna (New York, 1976), pp. 127–34.

it is about to come to him.²⁰ Stephen Hawes uses them as emblems of posthumous fame in his *Passtyme of Pleasure*, lines 5523–85, a poem that ends rather oddly with the hero's account of his own death: 'Lyke as I am so shall you be all dust' (line 5487). The Nine Worthy are dead, though their fame survives them; but Time eventually will destroy Fame, and in the end Eternity will destroy Time as well.²¹

'Earth upon Earth', a favourite fifteenth-century reflection on mortality, acquires in one manuscript several extra stanzas incorporating the theme of the famous Nine who are now all dead:

9. Arthur was but erth, for all his renown;
No more was kyng Charlis, ne Godfrey of Bolown;
But now erth hath torned þer noblenes vpsodown;
& thus erth goth to erth, by short conclusion.²²

Whether the poet knew it or not, Godfrey shared this sentiment, for William of Tyre notes that when the Turks of Samaria to their surprise found him seated not in state but on the ground with his back against a bale of straw, he explained 'that it was no shame to a man mortel to sytte vpon therthe / ffor theder muste he retorne after his deth, and lodge there in his body and become erthe'.²³

The Worthies thus belong in the *ubi sunt* tradition,²⁴ represented by the anonymous thirteenth-century Latin lyric '*Cur mundus militat sub vana gloria*', which lists several of the famous departed, including

²⁰ *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, in *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages: An Anthology*, ed. Thorlac Turville-Petre (London, 1989), pp. 67–100.

²¹ Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. W. Mead, EETS o.s. 173 (London, 1928), pp. 210–14.

²² *The Middle English Poem Erthe upon Erthe*, ed. H. Murray, EETS o.s. 141 (London, 1911), pp. 26–27.

²³ *Godeffroy of Boloynne, or The Siege and Conqueste of Jerusalem*, translated from a French version of William of Tyre by William Caxton (1481), ed. M. Colvin, EETS e.s. 64 (London, 1893), pp. 307–08.

²⁴ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 95–96 and 108–110.

Julius Caesar.²⁵ William Nevill inserts a version of this, expanded in aureate style, towards the end of *The Castell of Pleasure* (1518):

Where is Sampson for all his grete strength
 Or where is the sage Salomon for all his prudence
 Dethe hath and wyll deuoure all at lenth
 For where is ulysses for all his eloquence
 Where became Crassus for his ryches and opulence
 Where is luces for all her chastyte
 Where is alexander whiche subdued to his obedyence
 Moche of the worlde by his marcyalyte
 Where is Tully whiche had pryncypalyte
 Ouer all oratours in parfyte rethoryke
 Where be all the iiij. doctours of dyuynyte
 Where is arystotyll for all his phylosophy and logyke.

Be not all these departed frome this transytory lyfe . . .²⁶

Only one Worthy of the traditional nine appears in these lists, Nevill substituting Alexander for Julius Caesar in the Latin poem.

The Worthies are literary figures whose historicity was taken for granted. Their value to the Middle Ages was moral and imaginative, and differed from the modern historian's interest in what might be reliably inferred about them when they were alive—if, indeed, some of them were ever alive at all. It was enough that authorities, written or spoken, preserved their memories.

Joshua, David, and Judas Machabaeus of course feature prominently in the Vulgate Bible; the authority of Holy Writ, however, was such that retellings of their stories by preachers and commentators were

²⁵ 'Quo Caesar abiit, celsus imperio?' (33), *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. F. J. E. Raby (Oxford, 1959), pp. 433–44; ME translation in *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford, 1924), pp. 237–39. 'Dic, ubi Salomon, olim tam nobilis, / vel ubi Samson est, dux invincibilis' (29–30) becomes 'Telle me where is salamon, sumtyme a kinge riche? / or sampson in his strenkeþe, to whom was no man liche?' (13–14); 'Where is bicomme cesar, þat lord was of al?' (17).

²⁶ *William Nevill: The Castell of Pleasure*, ed. R. D. Cornelius, EETS o.s. 179 (London, 1930), p. 111. Cf. Deschamps, Balade cccxcix, *Oeuvres Complètes*, III, 182–83: 'Force le corps, qu'est devenu Sanson? / Ou est Auglas, le bon praticien? / Ou est le corps de sage Salemon? / Ne d'Ypocras, le bon phisicien?' (1–4). At line 21 he asks 'Ou est Artus, Godeffroy de Buillon?'

not subject to the imaginative embellishments that diversified the expanding careers of more secular heroes. Julius Caesar, too, was well enough known from classical texts read in the Middle Ages to make it difficult for an accretion of apocryphal narratives to gather round his name. Chaucer, for example, cites Lucan, Suetonius and Valerius in the Monk's tragedy of Caesar's rise and fall.²⁷ Caesar is, however, mentioned in connection with the romances listed in the *Prologue to Cursor Mundi*.²⁸ The list alludes, among other persons, to five of the Nine, the three Jews and Godfrey being absent. (Oddly, in *Gologros and Gawayne* 1233–35, it is the three Christians who are omitted, being replaced by Sampson and Salamon.)²⁹ Nevertheless Godfrey belongs with Hector, Alexander, Charlemagne and Arthur, the respective heroes of the four major cycles of mediæval romance, as his qualities and achievements passed rapidly into legend.

The most influential historical account of him for the Middle Ages was that of William of Tyre, eventually translated into English, somewhat clumsily, by Caxton from a rather inaccurate French version. Until then, says Caxton in his *Prologue*, the history of this 'thyrd of the Cristen prynces', was 'not knowen emonge vs here'.³⁰ The little that was known of him seems to have come from the summary in de Longuyon's *Les Voeux du Paon*, where he is said to have wasted 'Roumenie' (the district between Constantinople and Antioch), defeated Couberant at Antioch, and been crowned in Jerusalem, where he reigned for a year. This is essentially the information given in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, 513–19, and in 'Ane Ballet of the Nine Nobles' (c.1440).³¹ In the sixteenth century Godfrey is noticed by William Stewart, as 'This Godefryde . . . Quhilk numberit is amang the nobillis nyne'³²

²⁷ *The Canterbury Tales* VII.2719–20, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Oxford, 1987), pp. 250–51.

²⁸ *Cursor Mundi* (Prologue), in *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. J. Bennett and G. Smithers, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1968), pp. 184–89.

²⁹ Gollancz (ed.), *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Appendix XII. For this couple in Deschamps and Nevill, see n. 26 above.

³⁰ *Godeffroy of Boloyn*, ed. Colvin, 3.

³¹ Gollancz (ed.), *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Appendices VII and X; Ritchie (ed.), *The Buik of Alexander*, I, cxlviii–ix.

³² Quoted in *OED*, s.v. noble, sb., B.1b.

and achieves his highest literary fame in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Torquato Tasso. Here he features in an allegorical, idealistic and erotic romance far removed from the ravaged and ravenous hordes who bled and butchered under their fanatical leaders on the burning sands of Palestine. Fairfax's translation of Tasso in places imitates the *Faerie Qveene* so closely that, in Lamb's phrase, he does not merely follow at Spenser's heels but actually treads upon his toes.³³ Already for William of Tyre Godfrey looms larger than life. As a fighter Godfrey performs prodigies of strength, shooting down a massive Turk too big for lesser Crusaders to cope with, single-handedly killing a bear that had bitten and embraced him, and chopping a dangerous horseman in half so that the top half topples on to the field while the horse trots back into the city with the lower half still in position on the saddle. Less engagingly, Godfrey twice demonstrates his strength to an admiring Arab by proving that no matter what quality of sword he is offered he can still slice a camel's head off at a single blow.³⁴

To noble rank and outstanding physical prowess, prime ingredients of chivalric romance, Godfrey could add religious fervour, or at least a reputation for fervour, because he played so crucial a part in the first Crusade, which was for mediæval Christians the latest great conquest combining physical warfare and spiritual victory over those who were perceived as the enemies of God. If anyone deserved a place among the Worthies it was surely the conqueror whose election as first Christian King of Jerusalem established him as *primus inter pares*.

That the conquest itself was almost unparalleled in irreligious brutality and quite incompatible with the Christianity established by the Prince of Peace made no difference to Godfrey's title to be acclaimed a Worthy. If he could hardly have prevented the horrors of the sack of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099, he can certainly not be absolved from a good deal of the responsibility for what happened. While he and the other Counts were thanking God in the holy places for their victory, their soldiers rampaged through the streets and houses, massacring, in two days, some forty thousand more or less defenceless inhabitants. 'Passionate and irrational,' Anna Comnena

³³ Edward Fairfax (trans.), *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, by Torquato Tasso, ed. K. Lea and T. Gang (Oxford, 1981), p. 17.

³⁴ *Godeffroy of Boloigne*, ed. Colvin, 102, 113, 161, 310.

calls the Frankish Crusaders.³⁵ So they were. The massacre is vividly summed up in al-Modafer's stirring call to the Arab chieftains in Baghdad:

What eye can close its lids in sleep, indifferent to events which would wake all sleepers?

Your brothers in Syria have nowhere to rest save their horses' backs or the bellies of the vultures.

The Roumis cover them with ignominy, and you, you let your gown trail softly, like someone who has nothing to fear.

How much blood has been shed! How many beauteous maidens have nothing but their hands with which to hide their charms.

Will the chieftains of Arabia sit down under such an insult? Will the warriors of Persia submit to such debasement?

Would to God that if they will not fight for zeal of religion, they would show themselves jealous of the honor of their women!³⁶

The cost in human suffering, both to themselves and their enemies, that the religious fervour of the Crusaders occasioned, is not the least remarkable feature of the Frankish invasion of Palestine. These monstrous ironclad 'Roumis', with their idolatrous zeal for holy images, must have seemed to the Moslems of Syria infinitely more barbarous than the Greek Christians they already loathed heartily enough.

Nor had the Greeks much reason to admire rather than be amazed at their barbarity. They seemed entirely lacking in the virtue of civilized prudence: Anna Comnena comments:

For the nation of the Franks in general is self-willed and independent and never employs military discipline or science, but when it is a question of war and fighting, anger barks in their hearts and they are not to be restrained; and this applies not only to the soldiers but to the leaders themselves for they dash into the middle of the enemies' ranks with irresistible force, especially if their opponents yield a little. But if the enemy with strategic skill often sets ambushes for them and pursues them methodically,

³⁵ *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, trans. E. Dawes (1928; rpt London, 1967), p. 283.

³⁶ Zoe Oldenbourg, *The Crusades*, trans. Anne Carter (London, 1966), p. 206.

then all this courage evaporates. In short, the [F]ranks cannot be resisted in their first attack, but afterwards they are exceedingly easy to master both because of the weight of their arms and from their passionate and irrational character.³⁷

It was a contempt reciprocated then and later. The fifteenth-century German pilgrim friar Felix Fabri preferred and would rather trust a Moslem than a Greek Christian, and his was by no means an isolated expression of Western intolerance.³⁸

Legends soon accumulated. It was the historical Raymond, Count of Toulouse, who refused a crown of gold where Christ had worn a crown of thorns—not Godfrey as William of Tyre³⁹ and subsequent legend maintained: for instance, Latin verses on copper engravings of the Worthies made in 1464 include, under ‘gotfridus de bulion’ the lines

*jhrem subiugavit et locum sanctum
coronam spineam portavit tantum*⁴⁰
[He conquered Jerusalem and the holy place,
but wore only a thorny crown]

and in similar vein in the *Coventry Leet Book* the actor portraying Godfrey presented himself to Queen Margaret:

I Godfride of Bollayn Kynge of Jerusalem
Weryng þe thorny crowne yn worshyp of Jhesu . . .⁴¹

Godfrey was elected because he had a larger popular following than Raymond, and adopted the spirit, if he could not claim the letter, of Raymond’s *bon mot* by avoiding the title of king in favour of that of Chief Advocate, implying that he was there to serve and protect rather than rule over his subjects.

³⁷ *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, 283.

³⁸ H. Prescott, *Jerusalem Journey: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1954), p. 184.

³⁹ *Godeffroy of Boloyn*, ed. Colvin, 291.

⁴⁰ R. Loomis, ‘Verses on the Nine Worthies’, *Modern Philology* 15 (1917–18): 211–19 (p. 216).

⁴¹ Loomis, ‘Verses on the Nine Worthies’, 218; *The Coventry Leet Book*, II, 291.

Anna Comnena describes Godfrey as 'very rich and very proud of his bravery, courage and conspicuous lineage; for every Frank is anxious to outdo the others'.⁴² The Emperor's policy was to take advantage of this rivalry in order to prevent the Counts uniting, for, 'aware of their rascality from previous experience', he believed—with more than a little justification as far as Bohemond, if not Godfrey, was concerned—that while in appearance making the journey to Jerusalem, in reality their object was to dethrone the Emperor and to capture the capital'.⁴³

Once the holy war had ended with the massive extermination of the infidel within the sacred city, Godfrey settled down to become, not a Worthy warrior, but a cagey feudal prince willing to negotiate commercial treaties and a peaceful *vade mecum* with his Moslem neighbours.

Perhaps Godfrey's subsequent reputation as a Worthy depended to a great extent on his early death, before he had had time to tarnish his character as charismatic liberator of the holy sites by having to grapple with the difficulties of enforced coexistence with non-Christian former enemies.

The spiritual qualities of the Crusaders were emphasised by early Western historians, Robert of Rheims, for example, regarding Godfrey as more a monk than a soldier.⁴⁴ From there it was an easy step into romance. Godfrey was soon given a magical ancestry, and a place in a branch of the *Lohengrin* cycle.

According to the *Chanson du Chevalier au Cygne et de Godefroi de Bouillon*, his grandfather was a swan-knight who arrived at Nimwegen in a boat drawn by a swan (his untransformed brother) to defend the widowed Duchess of Bouillon from a would-be usurper. The swan-knight marries her daughter Beatrice, who unfortunately cannot resist asking who he is, whereupon, as swan-knights will, he sadly departs. This motif is evidently a variation of the Cupid and Psyche myth: a cautionary tale suggesting that it is not for women to enquire too closely into the secrets of their husbands, but they will do it.

⁴² *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, 250.

⁴³ *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, 258.

⁴⁴ J. France, 'The Election and Title of Godfrey de Bouillon', *Canadian Journal of History; Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire* 18 (1983): 321–29 (p. 322).

Beatrice and the swan-knight have a daughter Ida, who marries Eustace of Boulogne, and becomes the mother of Godfrey and his brothers. One of the earliest, and the cruellest, versions of the story of the swan-children is found in the Latin *Dolopathos* of Johannes de Alta Silva, but it contains no reference to Godfrey.⁴⁵ Variations occur in the Old French *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*,⁴⁶ in the short English alliterative poem *Chevelere Assigne* (again without reference to Godfrey),⁴⁷ and in the much longer prose romance of *Helyas, Knight of the Swan*, printed by Copland.

Like most of his fellow Worthies, then, Godfrey of Bouillon enters the list of popular heroes because of what he did in romance literature rather than in life. Doubtless, as Pearsall suggests,⁴⁸ bald narratives like that of the *Chevelere Assigne* attained an inflated reputation because of the putative connection of the swan-knights with Godfrey of Bouillon, but equally the popularity of the swan-knight romances must have added greatly to his, and helped establish him as the Ninth Worthy. Copland's romance concludes, neatly for our purposes: 'Thus endeth the life and myraculous hystory of the most noble and illustrious Helyas knight of the swanne, with the birth of the excellent knyght Godfrey of Boulyon, one of the nyne worthiest, and the last of the three crysten.'⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Jean de Haute Seille [Johannes de Alta Silva], *Dolopathos*, trans. B. Gilleland (New York, 1981), pp. 71–76.

⁴⁶ *La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, ed. H. A. Todd (Baltimore, MD, 1889).

⁴⁷ *The Romance of the Chevelere Assigne*, ed. H. Gibbs, EETS e.s. 6 (London, 1868).

⁴⁸ Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London, 1977), p. 183.

⁴⁹ Gibbs (ed.), *The Romance of the Chevelere Assigne*, vi.

‘This is no fable’: Historical Residues in Two Mediaeval *Exempla*

The moral anecdote, numerous examples of which survive from the homiletic literature of the Middle Ages, was typically an uncritical blend of fact and fiction. Homilists were cheerfully ready to sacrifice historical accuracy to rhetorical effectiveness; if, as they often did, they implied or claimed that their stories were true, they did so in order to make the implausible credible and the lesson they were illustrating thereby more persuasive. A preacher who kept his hearers attentive with lurid *exempla* relied not simply on their unsophisticated appetite for the marvellous, but also on the church’s belief that miracles were a proof of divine favour and of the sanctity of those who performed or benefited from them.

‘Þis is no fabull þat I sey 3ow’, a priest assures his congregation as he retells the story of Theophilus, the disgruntled cleric who sold himself to the Devil but whose pact was cancelled by the gracious intervention of the Virgin. For evidence the priest need only refer to the authority of Holychurch: ‘It is euery woke songe and rad in holychurch in remembrance of þe good Ladies kyndeness and grace.’¹

With or without such authority, didactic purpose demands that an instructive anecdote should receive credence. Wanton women who ruin priests, counsels Robert Mannyng, ought to remember the fate of the priest’s concubine whose body was dragged off by fiends even though she had set her sons to guard her coffin from them. Don’t scoff at this tale, Mannyng warns:

¹ *Middle English Sermons*, ed. W.O. Ross, EETS o.s. 209 (London, 1940), pp. 260–61. For the Theophilus legend, see Karl Plenzat, *Die Theophiluslegende in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters*, Germanische Studien 43 (Berlin, 1926). Examples include ‘Lapsus et conversio Theophili Vicedomni’, in *The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha*, ed. Sister M. Gonsalva Wiegand (St Louis, 1936), pp. 158–91; ‘Historia Theophili metrica’, attributed to Marbod of Rennes, *PL* 171, 1593–1604; and an account in *The South English Legendary*, ed. Karl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 87 (London, 1887), pp. 288–93.

3e wommen, þenkeþ on þys tale,
And takeþ hyt for no troteuale!²

Even Chaucer takes time out to remind his more sophisticated audience that Livy's story of Apius and Virginia is sober history:

[T]his is no fable,
But knownen for historial thyng notable;
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute.
(*The Physician's Tale*, 155–57)

Chaucer's Physician would not stoop to fantasy. The truth of his tale makes its moral all the more powerful. Chastity really is a virtue worth going to any lengths to preserve, and Livy, as everyone agreed, was a dependable historian. Yet Chaucer has no compunction about using the version of his story found in the *Roman de la Rose*, without seeming to care that it might be less reliable than its original.³

Of course the priest, Mannyng, and Chaucer were not historians; but even most mediæval historians, when not dealing with their own times or the immediate past, were little better than 'undiscriminating compilers', as Father Delehaye calls them, 'guileless half-barbarian clerks' who confused history and legend. Hagiographers in particular used 'those conventionalized and dressed-up writings that were set down long after the events alleged and without any observable relation to fact'.⁴ The favourite history book of the Middle Ages was probably

² *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 119 and 123 (1901 and 1903; rpt. London, 1973), p. 256 (lines 8079–80).

³ 'The Physician's Tale', in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd edn (Boston, 1957), pp. 145–47. For the sources, see E. F. Shannon in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and G. Dempster (Chicago, 1941), pp. 398–407. Chaucer developed a more objective historical sense than most of his contemporaries: see M. W. Bloomfield, 'Chaucer's Sense of History', *JEGP* 51 (1952): 301–13, reprinted in *Essays and Explorations* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), pp. 13–26.

⁴ Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. D. Attwater (New York, 1962), pp. 52 and 49. Cf. Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), p. 25: 'A critical study of the remote past, as distinct from mere compilation of earlier sources, called for tools and equipment which were lacking in the Middle Ages ... The writer's own time and the immediate past offered more scope to his talents and more amenable material.' For the considerable achievement of English historians up to the end of Edward I's reign, especially Bede, William of Malmesbury, and Matthew

the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais (d. 1264). Vincent sometimes has reservations about the reliability of his sources, but that does not prevent him from quoting them. He could not resist incorporating everything that came to hand into his vast historical hold-all. Thus he interrupts his account of first-century church history to insert, after apocryphal details of the life of the Blessed Virgin, a compilation of patently implausible miracles from a book known as the *Mariale magnum*, simply, it would seem, because it was there.⁵

Historical events, and those often twisted out of recognition, formed only one of several possible sources of *exempla*. 'Le fond de l'*exemplum* embrasse ... toute la matière narrative et descriptive du passé et du présent,' says J.-Th. Welter. The homilists sought to encourage virtue and warn against the dire consequences of vice; they glorified God, the Virgin, and the saints; they poked fun at the Devil; perhaps above all their desire was to entertain—always, of course, in order to instruct, but sometimes unquestionably at the expense rather than in the service of edification.⁶

Such are the two *exempla* that concern us here. One attacks lechery, the other irreverence; each in some variants involves a pope, and one a deacon; the Virgin takes a hand in both (literally, in one case); the Devil keeps a low profile in one, but is squarely caught out in the other. This paper shows that both derive, in part at least, from historical events. But the events have been conflated with legendary material from other anecdotes and altered by the accretions of many repetitions till they have become hard to recognize.

Paris, see the detailed survey by Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550–c.1307* (London, 1974).

⁵ *Bibliotheca mundi seu Speculum majus Vincentii Burgundi*, 4 vols (Douai, 1624). Vol. 3, the *Speculum morale*, is spurious. For Mary legends 'ex Mariali magno' see vol. 4, *Speculum historiale*, pp. 250–66 (7.81–121). For Vincent's attitude to history, see Joseph M. McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphases in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 105–06. On Vincent see also S. Lusignan, *Préface au Speculum maius* (Montreal/Paris, 1979).

⁶ Narrative *exempla* 'se traduit par le conte des animaux et la fable pour les animaux ou par le récit ou l'anecdote proprement dite et ayant pour acteurs Dieu, la Vierge, l'homme et le diable'. But especially men, and mostly clergymen: 'le monde ecclésiastique: évêques, prêtres, moines, clercs, ermites': J.-Th. Welter, *Lexemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1927), p. 79. On *exempla* see also G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 149–209 (chapter 4).

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Pope Leo, according to the *Golden Legend*, 'was a great wrecker and avenger on himself'. He obviously took his temptations seriously, for when during mass a woman kissed his hand, enflaming him with fleshly desire, 'he cut off his hand that same day privily, and threw it from him'. Afterwards the people complained that he was no longer performing divine service as usual. Then he put his trust entirely in the Blessed Virgin, who with her own holy hands reattached his severed hand. So he went forth to the people and described the miracle, brandishing aloft the restored limb for all to see.⁷ That Jacobus de Voragine should begin his account of Pope Saint Leo the Great with a miracle of the Virgin⁸ is indicative of the state of mediæval hagiography. It is more important to stress Leo's holiness, determination, and devotion to the Virgin, even if his carnal susceptibilities have to be admitted as well, than it is to ensure historical accuracy.

⁷ For the *Legenda aurea* (c.1263–67) of Jacobus de Voragine (c.1230–98), I have consulted the edition printed by H. Gran (Hagenau, 1510), but provide references to *Jacobi a Voragine, Legenda Aurea*, ed. Th. Graesse, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1850); for the anecdote, see pp. 367–68, and cf. *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, ed. F.S. Ellis, 7 vols (Dent, 1900), IV, 10. The story also occurs in *The Facetiae of the Mensa philosophica*: see the catalogue by Thomas Dunn, Washington University Studies 5 (St. Louis, 1934), 23.104. The section on Luxuria in the 'Tractatus exemplorum' as preserved in MS Bodley Rawlinson C.899, fol. 177^r, concludes with a brief notice of the fact that Leo cut his hand off and received a celestial substitute from the Blessed Virgin. The story is also in the *Tabula exemplorum*, ed. J.-Th. Welter (Paris, 1926), but Welter merely summarizes, 'De manu amputata Leonis pape', without transcribing it (p. 44, no. 157).

⁸ The fullest catalogue and discussion of Mary legends is by A. Mussafia, 'Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden' (1–5), *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Sitzungsberichte* 113 (1886): 917–94; 115 (1887): 5–92; 119 (1889), Abh. 9, 1–66; 123 (1890), Abh. 8, 1–85; 139 (1898), Abh. 8, 1–74. Cf. H.D.L. Ward, 'Miracles of the Virgin', in *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, ed. H.D.L. Ward (vols 1–2) and J.A. Herbert (vol. 3), 3 vols (London, 1883–1910), II, 586 ff. See Eileen Power's introduction to *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin by Johannes Herolt*, trans. C. C. Swinton Bland (London, 1928). The original, *De miraculis Beate Virginis*, concludes the volume cited in note 10 below. See also *Le livre des miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres écrit en vers au XIIIe siècle par Jean le Marchant*, ed. Pierre-Alexandre Gratet-Duplessis (Chartres, 1855); Evelyn Underhill, *The Miracles of Our Lady* (New York, 1906); and Ruth Wilson Tryon, 'Miracles of Our Lady in Middle English Verse', *PMLA* 38 (1923): 308–88.

Deprived of its biographical context, the legend is repeated almost verbatim by Arnold of Liège, whose extensive and unorganized compilation of often perfunctory anecdotes was translated into Middle English (*An Alphabet of Tales*) in the fifteenth century.⁹ Johannes Herolt, called 'Discipulus', includes the legend in his *Promptuarium exemplorum* under the letter *L* as a warning against *luxuria*. His version is also identical to de Voragine's, apart from some copying errors, but it concludes, 'Hoc valet ad tactum mulieris': the tale is a useful one to remember if a woman touches you.¹⁰ Which is not anti-feminist, but simply good moral sense, especially for a priest. Better still, according to Vincent of Beauvais, to avoid the contact entirely. Vincent has a tale of a monk who took the precaution of wrapping up his hands before carrying even his own mother across a stream. When she inquired why he covered his hands, he replied that a woman's body is a fire, and touching her put him in mind of what the touch of other women felt like.¹¹

Versions that identify Leo take it for granted that he was Leo I, the Great. Pope from 440 to 461, Leo I secured the condemnation of the Eutychean and Nestorian heresies at the council of Chalcedon, extended the authority of the papacy in the West, and persuaded Attila not to attack Rome.¹² After the anecdote, de Voragine's account

⁹ *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mary M. Banks, EETS o.s. 126–27 (1904–05; rpt London, 1972). Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 424–28, attributes the *Alphabetum narrationum* (compiled 1308) to Arnold of Liège rather than, as Banks does (though with a later correction), to Etienne de Besançon (d. 1294). Cf. Welter, *L'exemplum*, 304–19.

¹⁰ Johannes Herolt, *Sermones discipuli de tempore et de sanctis, vna cum Promptuario exemplorum* (Strasbourg, 1492), L. 26, Sig. aa; Welter, *L'exemplum*, 399–402. De Voragine's 'vir dei in semetipsum seuissimus vltor insurgit, et eadem die manum se scandalizantem occulte penitus amputauit' has become in Herolt, by homoeoteleuton, 'vir dei eandem [*sic*, to make sense] manum se scandalisantem penitus amputauit'. Arnold's version of the anecdote, in Bodleian Library, MS University College D.67, fol. 70r, and BL MS Harley 268, fol. 139r, is de Voragine's, but contains Herolt's conclusion: 'hoc valet ad tactum mulieris et temptationem carnis'.

¹¹ *Speculum historiale*, 615 (15.97). Cf. *Vitae patrum* 5.4.68 (PL 73, 873) and *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. T. F. Crane (London, 1890), pp. 46–47 (no. 100).

¹² Otto of Freising, *Chronicon*, ed. R. Wilmans, in *Supplementa tomorum I, V, VI, XII. Chronica aevi Suevici*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 20 (Hannover, 1868; rpt. 1963), pp. 83–301 (209–10, 4.26–27). On Leo I see T. G. Jalland, *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great* (London, 1941).

continues, 'Hic Chalcedonense concilium celebravit, solas virgines ibidem velari instituit', or, in Caxton's translation, 'This Leo the pope held the council at Chalcedon and ordained virgins to be veiled.' No doubt a useful decree for so susceptible a pope; though it is hardly likely that de Voragine meant to imply any connection between anecdote and decree when he juxtaposed them.¹³ Matters of greater historical significance he relegates to a later place in his account; whatever his priorities, they are scarcely those of a historian.

Andrew of Wyntoun, chronicling the deeds of Leo I, translates the anecdote into Middle Scots verse, but not from Jacobus de Voragine.¹⁴ Wyntoun's main source throughout his chronicle was 'Frere Martin', that is, Martinus Polonus or Oppaviensis (Martin of Troppau, d. 1278), whose *Chronicon* details the activities of emperors and popes and was frequently copied. His version of the anecdote is somewhat superior to de Voragine's. In the section on Pope Leo I some manuscripts insert the following paragraph:

Huius manum cum quedam femina communicando cum aliis in die pasche osculata fuisset, tantam temptacionem ex hoc in carne concepit, ut manum que occasio fuerat scandali, clam amputaret et a se penitus reiceret. Verum cum tumultus contra ipsum invalesceret, quod missam non celebraret, ipse in angustia constitutus, totum se beate Marie virgini commisit. Cui vigiliis et oracionibus intendenti beata Maria manum portans visibiliter apparuit et sibi suam manum apposuit, de quo miraculo non solum beatus pontifex gratias egit, sed etiam in suis predicacionibus ipsum miraculum frequenter omnibus publicavit.¹⁵

¹³ Of course the decree was not directed simply against the dangers of virginal charm, as the *Liber Pontificalis* shows: 'Hic constituit, monacha non acciperit velaminis capitis benedictionem, nisi probata fuerit in virginitate XL annos': *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH Gesta Pontificum 1 (Berlin, 1898), p. 105. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, 3 vols (Paris, 1886–1957), I, 239, reads 'LX annorum'; see further p. 241, n. 13.

¹⁴ *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, 6 vols, Scottish Text Society 54 (Edinburgh, 1903–14), IV, 14–15.

¹⁵ *Martini Oppaviensis Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum*, ed. L. Weiland, in *Historici Germaniae saec. XII*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 22 (Hannover, 1872), pp. 377–475; see p. 418. On Martin see also L. Weiland, 'Zur Ausgabe der Chronik Martins von Troppau', *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 12 (1874): 1–79.

Martin's version is probably closer than the others so far mentioned to their ultimate common source. Martin includes explanatory phrases that de Voragine (and hence Arnold and Herolt) take for granted, like 'in angustia constitutus', 'manum portans visibiliter apparuit', and 'gratias egit'; they embellish with rhetorical flourishes like 'manum suam suis sanctissimis manibus illi restituit & reformauit' (Herolt gets the word order wrong and omits *illi*; *Alphabet* has 'with hur holie handis sho restorid his hand agayn vnto his arm'), and add unnecessarily that she commanded him to go forth and say mass as usual. Perhaps accidentally, Herolt, who copies de Voragine, uses Martin's *publicavit* instead of *praedicavit*, where *Alphabet* has *prechid*.

A fuller and more interesting version of the legend is found in the *Scala celi*. Shortly before 1300 Johannes Gobius, Junior, made a tidily arranged collection of pious anecdotes, among which, in the section headed 'Virgo dei genitrix', he grouped a numbered series of proofs of the Virgin's graciousness. Number thirteen, beginning 'Tredecimo membra restaurat', illustrates her healing of physical mutilations and contains the stories of John of Damascus, Pope Leo (who is, however, not named), a monk whose tongue was cut out by heretics, and a Jew-slayer who was punished by having his hands cut off. In each case the Virgin answers the victim's prayers by miraculously restoring the truncated member. I translate from the *Scala celi*:

We read in the lives of the Roman pontiffs that there was a certain priest living in sin who begged the Blessed Virgin to take that temptation away from him. One day while he was praying and weeping, she appeared to him and promised that he would be both freed from his sin and advanced in dignity. In time, his sin overcome, he was made pope; and he continued steadily praising and serving her. On the Feast of the Assumption he was celebrating mass, when the woman he had loved in his youth kissed his hand. Gazing on her beauty, the softness of her mouth, and her sweetness, he remembered his former delight, and began to yield to lustful thoughts. But when he raised his eyes, he saw the Queen of Glory passing in front of him with face averted and understood her displeasure. At once he was sorry and began to weep copiously. While weeping he looked up at her again, and saw that she had turned a little towards him; somewhat comforted, he finished saying mass. Then he went home and secretly cut off the

hand that had been the cause of offence to him. But when after a while the people of Rome began to voice complaints against him because he did not say mass or go into the church, he turned to the Virgin with the most copious flood of tears and prayed, 'O Lady, my words are feeble and my mind is inadequate and all my inward being longs to pour out the praises I owe you for your great blessings, because the purity of your life grants me immortality and through your virginity my soul is espoused to God and made constant by Him. Because you conceived I am redeemed from captivity, because you gave birth I am saved from eternal death, because you bore a Child I am restored who was lost, and brought from the exile of this world's wretchedness into the homeland of everlasting bliss. Then help me by your resourcefulness, seeing you have justified sinners, saved the lost, healed the sick, raised the dead, and destroyed the snares of the Devil.' Then suddenly a new hand fell from heaven, and the penitent received it and showed the people that he was healed.¹⁶

¹⁶ Johannes Gobius, *Scala celi* (Lubeck, 1476), fol. 120v: 'Legitur in commentariis Romanorum pontificum quod fuit quidam clericus carnaliter viuens a beata virgine requirebat vt ab eo hanc temptationem auferret. Cum autem quadam die cum lacrimis instaret, apparuit ei beata virgine promittens et peccati liberationem et persone exaltationem. Tandem deuicto peccato factus est papa; et dum perseueraret in laudibus et seruicio eius, dum in die assumptionis missam celebraret, mulier quedam quam in iuuentute sua amauerat manum eius osculata est, ad cuius pulchritudinem attendens, ad mollitiem oris et ad suauitatem recordatus est pristine voluptatis, cepit inclinari ad turpem consensum. Et dum oculos eleuasset, vidit reginam glorie transeuntem coram eo nec respicere eum volentem, et cognita eius indignatione penitere incepit et habundanter flere, et dum sic flendo iterum eam respiceret vidit quod aliquantulum vertebat ad eum: et recepta aliquali consolatione missam compleuit. Et ingressus domum clam manum que fuit materia scandali sibi amputauit. Cum autem post aliquod tempus populus Romanus contra eum murmuraret eo quod non celebraret nec ingrederetur ecclesiam, ipse ad virginem cum maximis lacrimis accessit sic dicens: O domina, lingua mea deficit, mens mea non sufficit, et omnia interiora mea sollicita sunt vt tantorum beneficiorum tibi exoluant debitas laudes, nam per vice tue integritatem mihi incorruptio donatur, per tuam virginitatem anima mea Deo desponsatur et ab eo adamatur. Per tuam fecunditatem captiuus sum redemptus, per tuum partum de morte eterna sum exceptus, per tuam prolem perditus sum restitutus, et de exilio presentis miserie in patriam eterne beatitudinis sum reductus. Adiuvu ergo me per tuam fecunditatem que peccatores iustificauit, damnatum saluauit, egrotum sanauit, mortuum suscitauit et laqueos demonis conculcauit. Tunc subito manus de celo noua lapsa est et data flebili eum sanum populo demonstrauit.' G. Huet, 'Un récit de la "Scala Celi"', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes* 76 (1915): 299–314, prints one

This version has been elaborated, most notably by the insertion of the pope's rhetorical prayer, to emphasize his devotion to the Virgin. But his behaviour reminds one of nothing so much as Lancelot's, when he runs mad after Guinevere discovers he has been in bed with Elaine. The pope repents his former life of carnal indulgence and is promoted by the favour of his noble Lady. But then he relapses and suffers the anguish of remorse. The woman he lusts after is so attractive that only by a desperate act of self-mutilation can he punish himself severely enough for his defection from the real object of his devotion. She displays all the jealous whims and capricious power of a courtly lady whose favour a moment's indiscretion can forfeit. But when her lover abases himself humbly before her, cajoles and flatters, she turns graciously towards him again and restores him to bliss.¹⁷

Gobius' version of the story is not, however, a missing paragraph from *The Allegory of Love*; rather, it has become a variant of the anecdote known as 'The Virgin's Bridegroom', which had a long run of popularity right up to modern times. Its numerous tellers include William of Malmesbury, Vincent of Beauvais, Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and William Morris in *The Earthly Paradise*.¹⁸ It describes how a young man betrothed to the Virgin (or to Venus, in William of Malmesbury's version) forgets his vows and marries. The Virgin appears and sadly or angrily reminds him of her prior claim, whereupon he leaves his bride and enters a monastery, or becomes a hermit devoted to the service of the Virgin, or dies and completes his nuptials in the courts of her Son. 'Per tuam virginitatem anima mea deo desponsatur', prays the pope in the *Scala celi*. The love relationship is central to Gobius' version, even though pope and Virgin are not

of Gobius' stories from a manuscript copied in 1301, and so dates the work to the last years of the thirteenth century. Cf. Welter, *Lexemplum*, 319–25.

¹⁷ On the relation between courtly love and the worship of the Virgin, see C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 8, 20, and Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* (Manchester, 1977), pp. 83–86. Boase's book is a survey of scholarship; for a recent work on some of the literature of courtly love, see *In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature*, ed. Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou (Washington, 1975). Guinevere's jealousy and Lancelot's madness are related in Book 11 of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford, 1967), II, 804–06.

¹⁸ P. F. Baum, 'The Young Man Betrothed to a Statue', *PMLA* 34 (1919): 523–79.

actually married with a ring (most variants of ‘The Virgin’s Bridegroom’ include such a marriage).¹⁹

The spectacularly laconic conclusion of the story suggests that Gobius has edited out the fuller description of Leo’s cure which his source probably contained. Gobius does not bother to explain how Leo justifies his failure to say mass, or, since the amputation was performed secretly (*clam*),²⁰ what proof he gives of his cure. Evidently his word is sufficient. The people get little more in de Voragine’s version either: ‘omni populo quid sibi contigerit praedicauit, et manum restitutam omnibus euidenter ostendit’. It seems to be taken for granted that where conditions are right for a miracle, one may be presumed to have occurred.

The missing ending is extant in the manuscripts from which Mussafia prints a much extended version of the legend. This version comes apparently from the same vaguely identified source as Gobius: ‘Romanorum testimonio didicimus et in commentariis pontificalibus scriptum invenimus.’ Only the pope’s rhetorical prayer is not there. Mussafia prints also a French translation in 139 octosyllabics, and elsewhere the first four lines of what appears to be a Latin rendering of the French, also in octosyllabics.²¹

¹⁹ E.g., ‘Puer annulum suum digito imaginis [Virginis Mariae] quem habebat sursum erectum, indidit’ (Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, 7.87); ‘In signum amoris et memoriae annulum aureum digito militis [Maria Virgo] apponebat’: *A Selection of Latin Stories from MSS. of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1842), p. 65 (no. 71).

²⁰ De Voragine uses *occulte penitus*, Herolt *penitus* only, which Caxton and *Alphabet* render *privily*; Martin, apparently preserving the source of both this tradition and that of Gobius, balances *clam* and *penitus* synonymously.

²¹ Adolfo Mussafia, ‘Marienlegenden’, 5 (1898), 33–36 (Abh. 8, Latin prose and French versions); 2 (1888), 90 (no. 77, Latin version, from a fifteenth-century manuscript at Florence):

Uns joines clers, de Rome nez
Cesarius ert appelez;
ses peres ot num Patricor,
del lignage al senator.

Cil clers vivoit trop charnelment

Ortus Rome Cesareus
avis erat eximius
patricique filius,
is vivens voluptuose

Cesarius also cuts his hand off in BL Add. MS 33956, fol. 73^v (early fourteenth century; see Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, II, 674 (no. 23). This is an abridged version of the one Mussafia prints, omitting for example Cesarius’ later name of Leo

The main additions, too long to quote, may be summarized. A well-born youth named Cesarius lives carnally but becomes pope, as in Gobius, and is renamed Leo. He serves the Virgin diligently, but the ancient serpent who through a woman overcame Adam, deceived David, and made Solomon apostate, tempts him to veer from his goal of sanctity. He has a friend with him when he amputates his hand, which he does according to his understanding of scripture ('iuxta preceptum evangelicum, ut sibi videbatur'), but instead of casting it from him he preserves it in myrrh and balsam. He lies sick on his couch though implored to get up and say mass, till the people decide he must be a heretic. He is summoned to a council, whose leaders wish not to accuse him but to ask what the matter is. Not knowing how to reply, he groans and asks the Virgin's help. She appears in person, bringing a celestial hand and praising Leo's zeal for chastity. Only he can see her clearly and make out what she is saying. He shows both his celestial hand and the severed one to the amazed company and then returns to his clerical duties, priest and people praising the Virgin together.

A noteworthy feature of this version is the council at which Leo is required to vindicate himself. He does not simply return to his neglected church, brandishing his new hand and exhorting the people to resist temptation, but is summoned before the leaders of the city, *civitatis primates*, to answer to a charge of heresy. Though they assure him he is not on trial, he needs a miracle to exculpate himself. He has had the foresight, in this version only, to equip himself with a preserved hand as evidence that the miracle has taken place. The scene could easily be a garbled recollection of some historical incident. A prelate facing deposition, arguing in council to retain or regain his see in spite of accusers who wish him condemned, would greatly strengthen his case if he could show miraculous sanction for his incumbency. Alternatively, it might easily come to be believed that such a prelate who won his case had been divinely vindicated by miracle.

Before investigating a likely historical parallel, it is necessary to consider possible reasons why the legend took the form it did.

and the council at which he displays his new hand and the severed one he preserved 'conditam aromatibus'. On fol. 75^v, col. 2, the scribe begins to tell of Pope Leo, but recognizing the anecdote after a few lines breaks off with the reference *supra*. Cf. Welter, *Lexemplum*, 265–72.

Leo's drastic action is an unduly literal response to Christ's injunction in Matthew 5: 30, 'if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.'²² Since Leo 'had a huge temptacion in his flessch', it was reasonable for him, 'simpliciter preceptum evangelicum intelligens', to remove the offending member.²³ However, in view of the nature of his temptation, Leo's response is explicable not only theologically but also psychologically, as a symbolic action: the monk Helyas, in *An Alphabet of Tales*, dreamed explicitly of undergoing surgery to assist his devotion to celibacy. Poor Helyas had charge of 300 women, a burden surely too great for any monk to bear. When he could no longer resist the temptations incidental to his duties, he fled, prayed, and dreamed that three angels 'layd hym down, & one of þaim held his handis & anoder his fete, & þe thrid with a rasur cutt away bothe his balok-stonys, not as it was done, but as hym thought it was done'. Asked how he felt now, he replied he felt relieved of a heavy burden; and when he awoke he was able to return to the monastery without suffering any further temptation.²⁴

Leo's mutilation was not a dream, even if we must account it a fable. The fiction that he might actually have cut his hand off could have

²² Translation from the Authorized Version. Vulgate: 'si dextera manus tua scandalizat te, abscide eam et proice abs te'. Curiously, the only version which mentions that Leo's action is in accordance with his understanding of Scripture has to omit the last clause, as Martin and de Voragine do not, so that Leo can produce the severed hand in council. Gobius omits the clause, but does not make Leo produce the hand.

²³ Quotations are from *Alphabet*, 299 (no. 435), and Mussafia, 'Marienlegenden', 5 (1898), 34 (Abh. 8).

²⁴ *Alphabet*, 88–89 (no. 127). An analogous tale of mutilation to assist celibacy occurs in de Vitry's *Exempla*, ed. Crane, 103 (no. 246, from *Vitae patrum* 5.5.37, PL 73, 883–84). A lewd woman wagers she can seduce a holy hermit; pleading cold and hunger, she tricks her way into his cell and exposes her feet and legs before his fire. He overcomes temptation by burning his fingers one by one in the candle to remind himself that Hell is hotter. Horrified, the woman dies of fright. When her evil companions come next morning to jeer at him, her corpse and his burnt fingers attest his innocence. At their entreaty, the compassionate hermit resuscitates her, and she leads a holy life thereafter. Richard Rolle, similarly tempted, saved his fingers by making the sign of the cross instead of putting them in the candle: 'I perceyuede wele þare was na womane, bot þe deuell in schappe of woman. Therefore I turnede me to Gode ... makand þe crosse with my fyngere in my breste: and alls faste sho wexe wayke, & sodanly all was awaye': *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle de Hampole*, ed. G. G. Perry, EETS o.s. 20 (London, 1866), p. 6.

been assisted by other tales of amputation,²⁵ of which the wholesale truncation of Pope Silvinus (Sylvester II, d.1003) is an extreme example. Silvinus was an earlier Faust, or Theophilus: he did homage to the Devil in return for a promise that he would live to say mass in Jerusalem.²⁶ The Devil tricked him, however, for soon afterwards he discovered that a church in which he had just said mass was called Jerusalem. But when fiends came to collect him he escaped, unlike Faustus, by doing violent penance. He cut off all his limbs and had the *stok* that remained put in a cart and dragged off by wild beasts to be buried wherever they stopped, which proved to be conveniently at the church of St John Lateran.²⁷

More than one *exemplum* illustrates how far monks were prepared to go if temptation forced them to mortify the flesh.²⁸ St Benet in *Handlyng Synne* would excoriate lust from his flesh by rolling naked

²⁵ A common folktale motif: Type 706, ‘The Maiden without Hands’, A. Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, Folklore Fellows Communications 184 (Helsinki, 1961). For two brutal but aseptic examples, see ‘The Cruel Stepmother’ and ‘Daughter Doris’ in Katherine M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folktales* (London, 1970), pp. 197–200 and 201–02. Virgin martyrs in the hagiographic traditions usually suffer a variety of more or less painless mutilations.

²⁶ Shakespeare, following Holinshed, depicts Henry IV as being misled by a similar prophecy: 2 *Henry IV*, IV. v. 232–40.

²⁷ *Jacob’s Well I*, ed. A. Brandeis, EETS o.s. 115 (London, 1900), pp. 31–32. The story is in Martin’s *Chronicon*, 432, and runs in part: ‘licet autem sceleratissimus esset, de misericordia Dei non desperans ... iussit precidi et demum truncum mortuum super bigam poni, et ut ubicumque animalia perducerent et subsisterent, ibi sepeliretur. Quod et factum est.’ Wyntoun’s account of the mutilation (*Chronicle*, IV, 212–14), is vivid:

Than gert he pare his tounge out tak,
That with the feynd sic wordis spak;
Syne gert smyte of his handis twa,
That with þe feynd þe band couth ma;
And efter þat syne baith his feit,
That for to mak þat cunnand zeid.
Thus of his membris he maid devisa,
That seruit the feynd in þat seruice;
Bot his saull for till endure
He commendit till his Creature.

(Wemyss MS, 1049–58.)

²⁸ As prescribed in Colossians 3: 5. Cf. Romans 8: 13.

in the thorns and thistles growing in painful proximity to his cell.²⁹ A monk in *Jacob's Well*, who was enamoured of the sweet smell of a lady's kiss, as a *memento mori* when she died dug up the body and kept it in his cell to sniff at whenever he felt tempted to recall the once sweet odour of her kiss.³⁰ A story to interest Swift or Poe, and disenchant any Romeo willing to believe that unsubstantial death is amorous.

Silvinus, Leo, Benet, and the necrophilic monk all punish themselves, but in many anecdotes of this kind the punishment is not self-inflicted. A relatively mild example is the story of a woman who loses the use of her hand while working on a Sunday but is cured at the shrine of St Hilary.³¹ No doubt she was at fault; but in some stories, notably that of John of Damascus, the justice of the punishment is called in question. The victim complains to the Virgin, and is inevitably cured, though sometimes, it must be admitted, only because as Mother of Mercy she need pay scant attention to justice. In his *Index exemplorum*, F.C. Tubach treats the story of Leo as a variant of the story of John of Damascus.³² It is true that chirotomy is common to both, and they are adjacent in the *Scala celi*, but Leo deliberately mortifies his flesh, while John is mutilated under protest, as a punishment for a crime he did not commit. They do not seem more closely related than they are to other tales of mutilation. John taught a Saracen to write just as he did, and his pupil, growing jealous, forged a treasonable letter and left it for the emperor's servants to find. Theodosius, being merciful, commuted the death sentence and contented himself with merely cutting off John's hand. Disgusted by the injustice he had suffered, John waved the stump before a statue of the Virgin, complaining bitterly that after all his long service she had not looked after him better. She was duly impressed, and restored his

²⁹ Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne', ed. Furnivall, 238–40 (7473–536). Mannyng's source takes the story from Gregory the Great's *Life of St. Benedict: Gregorii Magni dialogi*, ed. U. Moricca (Rome, 1924), pp. 78–79 (2.2; PL 66, 132).

³⁰ *Jacob's Well*, 219, from *Vitae patrum* 3.11 (PL 73, 744); cf. de Vitry's *Exempla*, 102 (no. 245). Also in *Speculum historiale*, 616 (15.97), and *Alphabet*, 93 (no. 132).

³¹ BL MS Sloane 2478, fol. 18b (early fourteenth century): Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 514 (no. 51). The three and a half lines of the anecdote in the manuscript are faded and barely legible.

³² F.C. Tubach, *Index exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, Folklore Fellows Communications 204 (Helsinki, 1969), no. 2419.

hand. The miracle prompted Theodosius to investigate the case more thoroughly, and the true culprit was discovered.³³

Evidently cajolery was not the only means of soliciting the Virgin's aid. One of the less edifying, to modern ears, of her miracles was performed on behalf of an anti-Semitic amputee who claimed her assistance on the dubious but sufficient ground that he had lost his hands for killing a Jew who had blasphemed against her.³⁴ He prays and weeps, as Gobius knows how to make his characters pray and weep, but evidently rather for the loss of his hands than in contrition for his crime. However, the Virgin seems to feel that the killing was justified, as many another slandered lady might, for she cures him promptly and without remonstrance.

The Virgin's ability and willingness to heal, typically dispensing her mercy to those who seem to deserve it least, is frequently attested. A blasphemous carter lost his leg in a storm that hit the cart and oxen he was cursing. He hid the leg in a hole in a church of the Virgin, and prayed. She dispatched St Hippolytus to graft the leg back on, Hippolytus being a martyr whose dismemberment in the Decian persecution would give him a special facility in reassembling those suffering similar afflictions. In order to teach the carter a lesson, Hippolytus allowed him to limp for a year before healing him completely. Chastened and restored, the carter retired to a life of eremitic seclusion, but his troubles were not over, for the Devil would not let him be. His story has a sequel reminiscent both of Leo's temptation and of the monk with the corpse. The Devil, disguised as a naked woman, came to tempt him in his cell. After many fierce struggles he managed to exorcise her by dropping a priest's stole over her head. The effect of this happy device anticipates Poe: she promptly putrefied into a heap of rotten carrion. It was opined that the Devil must have reanimated some dead woman for the purpose of the temptation.³⁵

³³ *Scala celi*, fol. 120^v. Other occurrences include *Alphabet*, 262 (no. 381), and *Jacob's Well*, 277–79.

³⁴ *Scala celi*, fol. 121^r. Cf. Mussafia, 'Marienlegenden', 3 (1889), 39–43 (Abh. 9).

³⁵ *Legenda aurea*, ed. Graesse, 503–04 (ch. 113); Caxton, *Golden Legend*, IV, 232–33; *Speculum historiale*, 1099–1100 (27.9–11). In Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols (Cologne, 1851), II, 68 (7.48), the Virgin anoints and cures a nun's leg injured by too much genuflecting. In *The Minor Poems*

The *Liber Pontificalis* gives no indication that Leo I may have been such a pope as the anecdote suggests, and nothing seems to be known about the way he spent his youth. Mary legends did not become common before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and by their very nature involved a radical reinterpretation of the events on which they were based, so that there was plenty of scope for confusion to have arisen about the identity of Leo. An anecdote inspired by one Pope Leo could easily have been attributed to the earliest and greatest of that name.

A likely candidate seems to be Leo III, the pope who crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor. He had not retained the papal see without opposition. The previous year, 799, a conspiracy had been launched against him: the Roman populace, stirred up by Leo's opponents, set upon him, injured him physically, and forced him to flee to Charlemagne; he recovered, publicly exculpated himself by denying the charges (which included lechery) against him, and was reinstated. Admittedly these adventures are duly recorded of him by Martin, Wyntoun, and Vincent, without any indication that they could have had anything to do with the tempted Leo who cut off and regained his hand. But the traditions were already distinct when these writers transmitted them. Failing closer historical parallels, the possibility that incidents in the anecdote derive from incidents in the life of Leo III deserves consideration. After all, he had the right name, was accused of immorality, was reported to have been mutilated (in tongue and eyes, though not in hand, and of course by others, not by himself) and miraculously cured, was absent for a while from his clerical duties till recalled by the populace, and was reinstated, with the help of Charlemagne rather than of the Virgin, after justifying himself by his own explanation of events.

In response to rumours of Leo's immorality, Alcuin wrote loyally in 798 of the 'religious life and righteousness of our Lord the Pope, and the outrages he suffers from the children of discord'.³⁶ The next year he

of the *Vernon Manuscript Vol. I*, ed. Karl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 98 (London, 1892), pp. 156–57, she replaces the lower leg of an amputee whose leg had burned like fire from the foot to the knee.

³⁶ Translations are quoted from Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York: His Life and Letters* (York, 1974); this quotation from Letter 100. Alcuin's letters are in *PL* 100, 139–512 and *Epistolae Karolini aevi (II)*, ed. E. Duemmler, MGH *Epistolae* 4 (Berlin, 1895),

received, and for safety burnt, a letter from Arno of Salzburg detailing the complaints levelled against the pope.³⁷ Apparently a rival faction was seeking to have Leo deposed. 'I understand,' Alcuin writes to Arno, 'that there are many rivals of the Pope who wish to depose him by scheming accusations, seeking charges of adultery or perjury against him and then ordaining that he should clear himself by swearing a most solemn oath, their secret intention being that he should resign his office without taking the oath and retire to some monastery.'³⁸ Whether or not the charge of immorality had any foundation, the fact that it was made might account for the association of Leo's name with an anecdote about a holy man carnally tempted.

What Alcuin called 'the long struggle between pastor and people'³⁹ might have ended suddenly in 799 when the Roman mob tried to lynch Leo in the streets. In his prose history entitled *Speculum regum*, Godfrey of Viterbo, following the *Liber Pontificalis*, names two of Leo's closest associates as the instigators of the assault on him and says that it took place in front of the altar (he was, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, attacked twice): 'primicerius eius nomine Campolus et camerarius eius nomine Pascalus' were chief mutilators.⁴⁰

Accounts of the nature of his injuries vary. Alcuin seems at first to have understood that Leo was blinded. 'Has not the worst impiety been committed in Rome, where the greatest piety was once to be seen? Blind in their hearts, they have blinded their own head.' That was in May, but by August he knew that 'God . . . has restrained the hands of the wicked from carrying out their evil will, though they wished in the blindness of their hearts to put out their own light.'⁴¹ Ekkehard in his *Chronicon universale* cites various conflicting authorities for his

pp. 1–493.

³⁷ Allott, *Alcuin*, Letter 65.

³⁸ Allott, *Alcuin*, Letter 102. This is no. 108 in *PL* 100, 324–29 and no. 179 in *Epistolae Karolini aevi* (II), 296–97, Alcuin's famous letter to Arno in August 799 indicating 'crimina adulterii vel periurii' as the charges brought against Leo, and going on to advise, in support of papal primacy, that the pope should neither take an oath nor resign. The chief judge should not be judged.

³⁹ Allott, *Alcuin*, Letter. 62, dated 801.

⁴⁰ Godfrey of Viterbo, *Speculum regum*, in *Historici Germaniae saec. XII*, ed. Pertz et al., 21–93 (29). So in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, II, 4.

⁴¹ Allott, *Alcuin*, Letters 103 and 71.

doubts as to whether Leo lost one eye or both or neither.⁴² Otto of Freising, cautious historian, uses the word 'seems': Leo was attacked 'ita ut oculi eius eruti viderentur'.⁴³ Other accounts were less restrained. The *Annales Xantenses* for 799 record that 'Eodem anno Romani Leonem papam excecaverunt et lingua detruncaverunt, atque in custodiam miserunt'.⁴⁴ The *Liber Pontificalis*, which contains a lengthy and, it seems, largely trustworthy account of the life of Leo, also claims he lost both tongue and eyes. The mob did what they thought was sufficient when they waylaid Leo in the street; then finding it wasn't, they followed him into the monastery where he had taken refuge and did the job thoroughly, right in front of the altar itself.⁴⁵ Liutpold Wallach writes, 'While many sources report that Leo actually suffered the full Byzantine punishment of blinding and cutting out the tongue, the *Annales Laureshamenses* alone report that the Romans wished to blind him'.⁴⁶ Actually these annals report that the Romans not only wished to blind him but did in fact cut out his tongue, and wished also to kill him.⁴⁷

It was doubtless in the interests of Leo's admirers to exaggerate the extent of his injuries in order to make the miracle of his recovery more

⁴² Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon universale*, ed. G. Waitz, in *Chronica et annales aevi Salici*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 6 (Hannover, 1844), pp. 33–223 (168–69).

⁴³ Otto of Freising, *Chronicon*, 226 (5.30).

⁴⁴ *Annales qui dicitur Xantenses*, in *Scriptores rerum Sangallensium. Annales, chronica et historiae aevi Carolini*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 2 (Hannover, 1829), pp. 219–35 (223).

⁴⁵ *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, II, 1–34. The two attacks, first in the street and then in front of the altar, are described on pp. 4–5.

⁴⁶ Liutpold Wallach, *Diplomatic Studies in Latin and Greek Documents from the Carolingian Age* (Ithaca, 1977), pp. 308–09. Chapter 15, 'The Genuine and Forged Oath of Pope Leo III', is reprinted from *Traditio* 11 (1955): 37–63; and chapter 16, 'The Roman Synod and the Alleged Trial of Pope Leo III', from *The Harvard Theological Review* 49 (1956): 123–42. Wallach's conclusion, that Leo was in no sense on trial at Charlemagne's council, is supported by the words of the 'civitatis primates' in the version of the anecdote printed by Mussafia (n. 21 above): 'Non te, pater, accusamus, sed cur ad celebranda misteria divina non accedis, inquirimus.'

⁴⁷ *Annales Laureshamenses*, in *Annales et chronica aevi Carolini*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 1 (Hannover, 1826), pp. 22–39 (37): '799 ... instigante dyabulo Romani comprehenderunt dominum apostolicum Leonem in ipsas Laetanas, quod est 7. Kai. Maias, et absciderunt linguam eius, et voluerunt eruere oculos eius et eum morti tradere.'

noteworthy. Alcuin writes unspecifically of ‘the remarkable recovery of the Pope’, attributing it to ‘the mercy of Divine protection.’⁴⁸ Otto ignores it. The *Liber Pontificalis* recounts how the miracle that God, or St Peter, performed in restoring Leo’s sight and speech so rejoiced the faithful and confounded his enemies that many flocked to him, and he went, thus fortified, to seek redress from Charlemagne. Undoubtedly the physical attack on Leo was a miscalculation on the part of his enemies, if indeed they had intended to stir the populace up to such a sudden flood of mutiny. For the fact of his survival soon fostered rumours of a miraculous cure, interpretable only as divine sanction for his papacy and proof of his innocence. So it was not difficult for Charlemagne to acquit Leo and condemn his accusers instead. Angilbertus, whose *Carmen de Karolo Magno*, if genuine, was written before 814, gives powerful support to the legend of Leo’s miraculous cure. Although Wyntoun’s octosyllabics translate Martin’s prose rather than Angilbertus’ hexameters, it may be interesting to compare the two verse renderings of the critical incident.⁴⁹

Carnifices geminas traxerunt fronte fenestras,
Et celerem abscindunt lacerato corpore linguam.
Pontificem tantum sese extinxisse putabat
Plebs pietate carens, atrisque infecta venenis;
Sed manus alma Patris oculis medicamina ademptis
Obtulit, atque novo reparavit lumine vultum.
Ora peregrinos stupuerunt pallida visus,
Explicat et celerem truncataque lingua loquelam.
Cum sociis magnus paucis fugit inde sacerdos ...
(lines 364–72)

He techit þe Romanis Cristin fay,
Bot felly him demembrit þai;
For his toung þai tyt out quyte
Out of his mouth for gret dispite,

⁴⁸ Allott, *Alcuin*, Letter 71.

⁴⁹ Angilbertus (Engelbertus), *Carmen de Carolo Magno*, in *Scriptores rerum Sangallensium*, ed. Pertz et al., 393–403 (pp. 399–401); also ‘Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa’, in *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (I), ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 1 (Berlin, 1881), pp. 366–79. Wyntoun, *Chronicle*, IV, 144–46.

And syne þai put out his eyne twa,
 And banyst him demembrit sua
 Fra Rome out of þe papis se.
 Bot 3it efter restorit wes he,
 And throu myrakle neuerpeles
 3it spak he efter and said his mess.
 (Wemyss MS, lines 199–208)

For Angilbertus and Wyntoun there is no question but that the miracle occurred and was needed.

Nor is there for Godfrey of Viterbo, who in the prose portions of his *Pantheon*, which he inserted to clarify the elegiacs that by his own admission caused him difficulty, relates how the wounded Leo was conveyed by faithful friends to the basilica of St Peter, 'ubi virtute Dei oculos et lumen oculorum et linguam cum loquela recepit'.⁵⁰ The author of the *Annales Altahenses*, similarly impressed, records that he 'videns loquens venit ad Carolum'.⁵¹ For Vincent, the tradition of two assaults is enough to imply two miraculous cures. First Leo's attackers tore out (*evellunt*) his tongue and eyes, but they were divinely restored; then the attackers did a more thorough job (*eruunt radicitus*), but again a miraculous cure was effected, this time in the monastery of St Erasmus.⁵² After two such ready miracles, it almost seems faithless of Leo to have fled so precipitately to Charlemagne.

Charlemagne called a council, at which not Leo but his accusers were on trial. Perhaps because they had desired to force an oath upon him that they hoped he would be unwilling to swear, a tradition developed that he took an oath of purgation at Charlemagne's council. Otto says that he did so spontaneously on the holy gospel: 'nemine cogente ex bona conscientia de obiecto crimine coram omnibus supra sacrosancta euangelia se purgavit'.⁵³ However, Wallach has shown that

⁵⁰ Godfrey of Viterbo, *Pantheon*, in *Historici Germaniae saec. XII*, ed. G. H. Pertz et al., MGH SS 22 (Hannover, 1872), pp. 107–305 (216–17; 23.7–8). On Godfrey of Viterbo see Lucienne Meyer, *Le légendes des matières de Rome, de France et de Bretagne dans le 'Pantheon' de Godfroi de Viterbe* (Paris, 1933).

⁵¹ *Annales Altahenses*, in *Supplementa tomorum I, V, VI, XII. Chronica aevi Suevici*, ed. Pertz et al., MGH SS 20 (Hannover, 1868), pp. 782–824 (783).

⁵² *Speculum historiale*, 961 (23.176).

⁵³ Otto of Freising, *Chronicon*, 226 (5.30).

the so-called oath of purgation current in Leo’s name since the ninth century is a forgery and argues that the *Liber Pontificalis* preserves a truer tradition of what Leo might have said: ‘Quia de istis criminibus falsis, quibus super me imposuerunt Romani qui inique me persecuti sunt, scientiam non habeo, nec talia egisse me cognosco.’⁵⁴ Evidently he did make some public announcement, which in time could have been remembered as the mingled confession, gratitude for divine mercy, and exhortation it became in the anecdote we are considering.

It is apparent that the history of Leo’s expulsion from and return to the holy see underwent exaggeration and falsification even before it was remodelled under the influence of folktale and pious *exemplum* into a miracle of the Virgin and an exhortation to avoid lechery. Add those ingredients, and the sea-change into something strange if not particularly rich does not seem inconceivable.

2

As an illustration of the sin of sacrilege, Robert Mannyng inserted in *Handlyng Synne* (lines 9261–314) the story of a devil recording the idle chatter of two women gossiping while the priest was saying mass. Mannyng’s French source does not include the anecdote, but if it is difficult to say where he found it, that is not because it is unknown elsewhere. Indeed, variants of it are so numerous that a thorough discussion would take many pages and be hard put to avoid repetition. There are at least eight Middle English versions: in prose it occurs in *An Alphabet of Tales*, no. 481, in the *Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*,⁵⁵ and twice in *Jacob’s Well*;⁵⁶ in verse it occurs in Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne* and in three closely related versions, where it serves as an illustration for the poem ‘How to Hear Mass.’⁵⁷ Twice as many Latin

⁵⁴ *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, II, 7. Wallach, ‘The Roman Synod and the Alleged Trial of Pope Leo III’, 136.

⁵⁵ *Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, ed. Thomas Wright, EETS o.s. 33 (London, 1868), pp. 41–42.

⁵⁶ *Jacob’s Well*, 114–15 (chapter 17, ‘De accidia), and 232 (chapter 36, on idle words, thoughts, and deeds).

⁵⁷ *Reliquiae antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts*, ed. Thomas Wright and J.O. Halliwell, 2 vols (London, 1845), I, 59–60, from BL MS Harley 2954, fol. 75;

versions are either available in modern editions or summarized by J. A. Herbert in his catalogue of romances in British Library manuscripts. The anecdote is well represented in the vernacular languages of Europe, from Scandinavia to Spain; the Aarne-Thompson folktale index claims thirty-seven occurrences in German.⁵⁸ Since these have been fairly well documented in two lengthy German articles,⁵⁹ the main emphasis here will be upon the English and Latin versions. It will be convenient to analyze the narrative constituents of the anecdote before examining what historical basis any part of it may have had.

The version in the *Alphabet* is conveniently short and refers to one of the earliest and most influential of the Latin versions, that of Jacques de Vitry. Both are so terse as to be almost trite, containing only a minimum of what is found in other variants.

Iacobus de Vetriaco tellis at þe devull wrate in a kurk all maner ydul wurdis þat was wretten þer, and when he had not parchment enogh to write on he drew it oute with his tethe & his handis, & he drew so faste at he rappid his head agayn þe wall. And þer was a holie man at saw hym, and he askid hym what he did, and he tolde hym all þat is before said.

M. M. Banks notes that *wretten* is an error, for the Latin manuscripts of Arnold of Liège (BL. Harl. 268 and Arundel 378) read 'verba ociosa que ibi dicebantur'. De Vitry (c.1180–1240), the Augustinian canon who, according to a manuscript quoted by Welter, moved the whole of France with his *exempla* as no one before or since has moved it,⁶⁰

Minor Poems of the Vernon MS Vol II, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 117 (London, 1901), pp. 500–03 (lines 281–396); *The Poems of John Audelay*, ed. Ella Whiting, EETS o.s. 184 (London, 1931), pp. 74–77 (no. 9, lines 264–347).

⁵⁸ Aarne and Thompson, *Types of the Folktale*, no. 826, 'Devil writes down names of men on hide in church'. Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1630 (a), and A. H. Krappe, 'Les sources du Libro de exemplos', *Bulletin hispanique* 39 (1937): 5–54 (p. 45).

⁵⁹ J. Bolte, 'Der Teufel in der Kirche', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* 11 (1897): 249–66; Wildhaber, *Das Sündenregister*, 3–36. Cf. C. G. N. de Vooys, *Middelnederlandse Legendes en Exempelen* (1900; rpt Groningen, 1926), pp. 166–68.

⁶⁰ Prologue to 'De habundancia exemplorum', quoted by Welter, *Lexemplum*, 118. Jacques de Vitry, *Exempla*, 100 (no. 239). BL MS Harley 268, fol. 163v, 'Ociosa verba precipue in ecclesia non sunt dicenda Iacobus de uittriacio Diabolus in ecclesia scribebat verba ociosa que ibi dicebantur et cum non sufficeret cedula ...'.

cannot have been Arnold's direct or only source for this anecdote. He does not mention the head-rapping of the demon, of which much is made in other versions, and adds that when the priest described to the congregation what the demon he had seen told him he was doing, the people repented and the demon erased what he had written.

Essential features of the narrative are: (1) idle words are spoken in church, (2) a devil records them, (3) a holy man observes him, (4) the devil is foiled. Each of these features, particularly (2) and (3), undergo elaboration, and (4) is sometimes deleted. Variants tend to emphasize different features according to the purposes for which they are told. Those which like the three in copies of 'How to Hear Mass' are intended as admonitions against careless behaviour in church emphasize (1), those which stress the value of contrition emphasize (4), the mainly comical concentrate on (2), and those written to commend a saint emphasize (3). Some of the more elaborate combine more than one of these purposes.

(1). The sins that the devil records are various. In the *Liber exemplorum* and in Herolt's closely related version in the *Promptuarium exemplorum* the devil is writing 'peccata que fiebant in ecclesia, ridendo, loquendo servitium Dei impediendo';⁶¹ in addition Herolt makes the devil explain when cornered that he has written 'verba inutilia: risus et dissolutiones que fiunt in ecclesia'.⁶² The devil in the *Speculum exemplorum* is even more explicit: 'Dic scripsi omnia peccata mendacia: detractiones, aspectus impudicos, cogitationes immundas, vanitates, et omnia peccata populi tui qui hodie in ista ecclesia commiserunt'.⁶³ In a Swedish tale recorded from memory

⁶¹ *Liber exemplorum ad usum praedicantium*, ed. A. G. Little (Aberdeen, 1908), from Durham MS B IV 19, fols. 21–103, a two-part manual for the use of preachers, written probably between 1275 and 1279 by an English Minorite friar who had spent some time in Ireland. See no. 113 (pp. 67–68). In the Durham manuscript the anecdote begins, fol. 65r, 'Quantum repungnent saluti Christianorum inordinaciones que fiunt in ecclesia testatur exemplum . . .', where Little has silently corrected MS *inordinanes*. See Welter, *L'exemplum*, 290–94.

⁶² Herolt, *Promptuarium exemplorum*, Sig. [X 6], E 16 ('Ecclesia').

⁶³ *Speculum exemplorum ex diuersis libris in vnum laboriose collectum* (Deventer, 1481). Welter, *L'exemplum*, 386–91. Although the article begins 'Legitur in scala celi quod fuit quidam sacerdos deuotus qui celebrata missa retro altare vidit diabolum scribentem in pergamento longissimo,' it bears little relation to the version in the *Scala celi* (for which see notes 91 and 95 below).

by Emil Svensen, who heard it first in the 1860s, a farmer sees a devil writing the names of those misbehaving in church: some are whispering, some sleeping, and some shining mirrors.⁶⁴ Gregory, in BL Add. 18347, sees his congregation sleeping.⁶⁵ In BL Arundel 506 the devil is recording the misdeeds of a lady wearing a long train—but here the story has been conflated with an *exemplum* against feminine pride.⁶⁶

Usually, however, it is two chattering women who are disturbing the service. Such are those in the English versions of ‘How to Hear Mass’. The Harley manuscript printed by Wright in fact mentions ‘iij wyvys’, and there certainly appear to be three in the woodcut illustration to the *Buch des Ritters vom Thurn von den Exempeln der Gottesfurcht und Ehrbarkeit* printed at Basel in 1493. This illustration also shows two devils, one standing and the other lengthening the parchment with his teeth.⁶⁷ But on a misericorde at Ely cathedral the two chattering

⁶⁴ John Lindow, *Swedish Legends and Folktales* (Berkeley, CA, 1978), pp. 159–61 (no. 77). Cf. Bolte, ‘Der Teufel’, 249–50. D. Jakobson, ‘Den onde i kyrkan’, *Skanska Folkminnen* 3 (1926): 91–97, gives some half dozen Norse versions of the anecdote.

⁶⁵ ‘Legitur de beato Gregorio quod cum multi dormirent cum predicaret diuina reuelatione uidit dyabolum scribentem et cum nesciret quid scriberet rogauit dyabolum ut sibi concederet quod posset scriptura legere et dictum est ei quod dyabolum scribebat peccata negliencie et somnolencie eorum qui in predicatione dormiunt et statim hoc populo nunciauit et secunda confessione illos aperto negliencie absoluit et statim scriptura diaboli abrasa est’ (BL Add. 18347, fol. 116v; Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 599, no. 6).

⁶⁶ ‘Quidam vir sanctus sedit in quadam ecclesia et venit quedam mulier intrans ecclesiam habens caudam magnam in suis vestimentis sicut solent magne et diuites habere mulieres et venit dyabolus portans cutem pergameni volens in illam scribere facta mulieris predicte ille timens ne totum posset scribere in illam pellem debuit eam extendere qua a manibus et dentibus eius extracta cum magno impetu de pariete in terram cecidit quod videns vir sanctus cepit ridere mulier hoc videns rubore concussa timuit quid deliquisset quesuiuit quare rideret qui totum factum exposuit quod audiens mulier caudam illam super limen ecclesie resecauit fecit dicens se uelle illam uestiam portare ad confusionem dyaboli quamdiu duraret’ (BL MS Arundel 506, fol. 20v, col. l; repeated, with a few errors, fol. 29, col. 1: Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 547, no. 95, and p. 552, no. 147). In de Vitry’s *Exempla*, 101 (no. 243), a holy man sees a devil laughing who has seen another devil fall into the mud when an overdressed lady lifts the train on which he was tobogganing: cf. *Latin Stories*, ed. Wright, no. 16, and Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, I, 287.

⁶⁷ Richard Muther, *German Book Illustration of the Gothic Period and the Early Renaissance (1460–1530)*, trans. Ralph R. Shaw (Metuchen, NJ, 1972), p. 428, Plate

women are being embraced by a devil.⁶⁸

Talking in church was a frequent subject of reproof, both for laymen and novices, and canon laws were formulated to deal with it. Mass was a familiar ritual (Leo, we recall, was easily distracted), and conducted in a language most of the congregation would not understand: it probably provided working wives with the best opportunity they got for social exchanges. Among Stephen Langton's statutes for the diocese of Canterbury (1213–14) is 'Commoneat etiam quilibet sacerdos parochianos suos ut in ecclesia orationibus vacent, non clamoribus, non vanis confabulationibus,' while in the *Collectio canonum* (c.1014–1023) it is laid down that 'omni tempore in ecclesia tam a populo quam a clero summum silentium fiat,' except of course when giving due praises to God. First-time defaulters should go on bread and water for a day. For a second offence the punishment was increased to three days, and to seven for a third; after that corporal punishment was in order, so that everyone might beware.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, as in the *Speculum morale* of pseudo-Vincent of Beauvais, 'De Silentio,'

125; originally reproduced from the *Buch des Ritters* in R. Muther, *Die deutsche Bücherillustration der Gothik und Frührenaissance (1460 bis 1530)*, 2 vols (Munich, 1884), II, 125. Wildhaber, *Das Sündenregister*, 20–29, also gives this and six other illustrations.

⁶⁸ Reproduced by G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 177. On chattering women, see also idem, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 387.

⁶⁹ *Councils & Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church. II, AD 1205–1313*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), I, 31 (no. 35). Langton's statutes precede the Fourth Lateran Council and are the earliest surviving for any English diocese (*Councils and Synods*, I, 23). The need for reverence during the saying of mass, on the part of both priests and parishioners, is enjoined at some length in John of Pecham's Canons of the Council of Lambeth in 1281 (*Councils and Synods*, I, 894–95). The statute from Chichester Statutes 3 (1292) that enjoins parishioners to attend mass silently and devoutly instead of running noisily and unnecessarily about the churchyard and adjacent areas (*Councils and Synods*, I, 1117, no. 4) is evidently directed at the sort of behaviour reflected in Mannyng's much anthologized story of the dancers of Kolbigk, on the significance of which see R. L. Greene (introd.), *The Early English Carols*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1977), pp. xxiv, xlvi–iii. *Collectio canonum in quinque libris*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 6, ed. M. Fornasari (Turnhout, 1970), p. 432 (3.240, 'De taciturnitate in ecclesia'); for the date see p. xvii.

warnings are admonitory and less legalistically severe,⁷⁰ although the author of *Jacob's Well* certainly did not regard inattention in church as a merely amusing peccadillo. In his second relation of the anecdote, to illustrate the evils of idle thoughts, words, and deeds (his first relation was an illustration of sloth), he comments darkly that the devil had to draw his parchment broader, because they never leave off sacrilegious chattering: body and soul will perish if they don't amend.⁷¹

(4). Penitential manuals like Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* emphasize the importance of confession. Among the many sins which some people do not realize they need to confess are those that occur 'eke if he tale vanytees at chirche or at Goddes service, or that he be a talker of ydel wordes of folye or of vileynye, for he shal yelden acountes of it at the day of doom' (10, 378).⁷² In de Vitry's *exemplum*, the deletion of the devil's record follows repentance. In the *Liber exemplorum* and in Herolt's *Promptuarium exemplorum*, the devil is forced to delete what he has written when the people confess. In BL Arundel 506 the devil, rather curiously, is required to read out what he has written; when the people hear their sins they weep, and the record is expunged: 'missa dicta precepit dyabolum ut legeret scripturam quam scripsit; cum autem populus audiret peccata sua scripta a dyabolo fleuerunt amare omnes audientes et ita deleta fuerunt eorum peccata.' Tears are similarly effective in BL Add. 15833; there the contrite crying of the congregation prompts the devil to expunge his record: 'dum fortissime lacrimati essent cepit dyabolus delere ea que scripsit'.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Speculum morale*, cols 871–74 (3.4, 'De silentio'), contains ten good reasons, with *exempla*, for silence.

⁷¹ *Jacob's Well*, 232.

⁷² *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Robinson, 239.

⁷³ BL MS Arundel 506, fol. 22: Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 548 (no. 110); BL MS Add. 15833, fol. 174^v: Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 596 (no. 161); Welter, *L'exemplum*, 285–86. Tears of contrition are the subject of de Vitry's *Exempla*, 126 (no. 301): a penitent who cannot speak for tears is told to write his sins, but when the priest takes the paper to the bishop, he finds it blank. Other versions of this anecdote are in Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, II, 10; in *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle*, 7; in *Jacob's Well*, 12; and in BL MS Royal 7.D. I: Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 484 (no. 59). Absolution without penance may be allowable if contrition is great enough. So Alan of Lille, *Liber poenitentialis*, PL 210, 290: 'Posset tamen perpendi tanta contritio, quod nulla deberet sequi satisfacio,' citing the cases of Mary Magdalene and the thief on the cross.

In the *Speculum exemplorum* the writing simply vanishes, to the devil's confusion: 'Tunc sacerdos assumpto pergamento et peccatis lectis populo nunciauit, cumque ad monitionem sacerdotis perfecte fuissent confessi, illa tota scriptura fuit de pergamento deleta. Et sic demon confusus recessit.'

The deletion of the devil's record is obviously inspired by such biblical verses as Hebrews 10: 17, and especially Colossians 2: 14, 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,' but may also show the influence of a tale like that of Augustine of Hippo in the *Golden Legend*. Augustine sees a devil carrying an inventory of sins. He asks whether any of his own are there, and the devil says he has a record of the fact that Augustine has forgotten to say compline. To the devil's chagrin, Augustine is quick to make good the omission, and the annoyed devil finds his record blank.⁷⁴

When asked, the devil has no option but to explain, or read out, or deliver up his record, however unwillingly. The mere fact that a holy man detects him at his mischief seems enough to render him impotent; he is like a conjuror discomfited when someone sees through his trick. In *Handlyng Synne* the devil does not even wait for his record to be investigated, but retires in comic dudgeon:

And when he parceyved þat y wyste,
He al to-drofe hyt with hys fyste,
And went a-wey, alle for shame;
Parfore y logh and hadde gode game.⁷⁵

This preserves a folksy ending which in some versions has been overlaid with the Christian one in which the observer uses the record to secure repentance, and only then can the record be destroyed. Thus in BL Add. 15833, noted above, St Brice shows the devil to St

⁷⁴ K. Horstmann (ed.), *Sammlung altenglische Legenden* (Heilbronn, 1878), pp. 87–88 (lines 1517–48), with Latin text from the *Legenda aurea*. The Middle English version is from the smaller Vernon collection: see J. E. Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1400* (New Haven, 1926), p. 304. The book of sins is on the fiend's neck, 'Trussed, in þe maner of a sek': the Latin simply says that Augustine 'vidit daemonem librum humeris bajulantem'. For the sack of Titivillus, see note 82 below.

⁷⁵ *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'*, ed. Furnivall, 291 (lines 9295–98). In Yale MS Osborn a.2, line 9296 reads 'he al to rafe it be lyfe & lyste' [he tore it to bits, by leaf and edge].

Martin, who then bids the congregation pray for the ability to see what he and Brice have seen; when they see him they weep and he deletes his record. But fairies often steal from mortals while invisible: a common motif in folklore is that some mortal, generally with the help of a magic ointment, sees one of them at it, whose mischief is thus interrupted, and who usually reacts spitefully.⁷⁶ Martin has put the devil so thoroughly on display that it hardly needs the congregation's tears to complete his discomfiture.

(2). If the frustrated devil was originally a malicious goblin or brownie, in his scribal role he dramatizes the biblical warning that 'every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment' (Matthew 12: 36). At the day of judgment books recording the deeds of sinners are to be opened (Revelation 20: 12). It was an easy fiction to suppose that the devil, the accuser of the brethren, would have his record to present there. Forsake sloth, cautions the author of *Jacob's Well*, for the devil has a book against you, a compilation of janglings in church.⁷⁷ Moreover, the idea of a damning record is not confined to the Bible. Jacoby produces an ancient Greek example: 'Zeus schrieb, ähnlich wie später im Mittelalter der Teufel, die Taten der Menschen auf Tierhäute: φασί γὰρ τὸν Δία εἰς διφθέρας τινὰς ἀναγράφεσθαι τὰ πραττόμενα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.'⁷⁸

The knight of La Tour-Landry offers his daughters two illustrations of the perils of jangling in church. The second is in the usual form: while

⁷⁶ E.S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairytales* (London, 1891), chapter 4, especially pp. 59–71, examines tales of mortals who contravene the implicit prohibition against prying into fairy business. In *The South English Legendary*, ed. Horstmann, 306–07, devils are equated with nightmares and with elves of the woods and the high downs. Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. J. S. Stallybrass, 4 vols (London, 1882–1888), III, 984–1030 (chapter 33, 'Devil'), points out that the devil takes over from the ogres and goblins of folktale as Christianity replaces paganism in northern Europe.

⁷⁷ *Jacob's Well*, 115. Cf. p. 111, under the heading *Sloth*: 'As þe feend wryteth þi slauthe, slugnes, & ydelnes, idell woordys, ianglyng, & þi rownyng in cherche, & slepynges, & ydell talys, and alle þi synnes, & alle þin euyll dedys, for to more þi peyne in helle; Ryȝt so, aungelys wryteth & noumbryth þi gode werkys . . .'. Cf. 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life', 598, in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ and Other Religious Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 24 (London, 1867), p. 77: 'þe feendis writiþ my synnes faste'. And later 'I wole waissche a-Wey þat feendis write / With sorowe of herte and teer of yȝe' (lines 621–22).

⁷⁸ A. Jacoby, 'Volkskundliche Splitter', *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 23 (1920–21): 223–24, no. 2, 'Das geht auf keine Kuhhaut' (quotation from p. 224).

St Martin of Tours is saying mass, his deacon and eventual successor Brice 'toke up a gret laughinge', and being asked why, explains 'that he saw the fende write alle the laughinges that were betwene the women atte the masse'. The first, not included in our count of English variants of this anecdote because it is so different from the others, 'is conteyned in the gestis of Athenes' and concerns a hermit who kept a chapel for pilgrims. One company disgraced themselves by talking and jangling while he was saying mass for them: 'and as he loked on hem and sawe her folysse countenaunce, he was ware that there was atte eueriche of her eeres an horrible fende, that wrote alle that thei saide, and loughe hem to scorne; and the blak orible fendes yede lepinge on her hedys, hornes, and riche atyre', like birds hopping from branch to branch.⁷⁹ The devils here are akin to those that swarm on the proud lady's train and tumble off in the mire when she lifts it—a true story, Caesarius of Heisterbach assures us: 'hoc contigisse veraciter'. Pandemonium has become a vast bureaucracy, employing hordes of ugly but athletic stenographers to keep its records up to date.

Here again we are dealing with a variant better regarded as a separate anecdote, although Tubach indexes it with the other. The devil in this anecdote is named Tutivillus and collects his evidence not on parchment but in a sack. The author of *Jacob's Well* repeats the two anecdotes separately, one after the other, but they are confused in a fifteenth-century religious lyric beginning

Tutiullus, þe deuyl of hell,
He wryteþ har names soþe to tel,
ad missam garulantes.⁸⁰

Tutivillus, however, is more usually occupied in loading up sacks of slurred syllables mumbled over by lazy monks at their devotions: 'Fragmina verborum Tutivillus colligit horum'. In two versions of 'How to Hear Mass' the recording devil is called *Rofyn* or *ruffyn*; generally he is nameless.⁸¹ Tutivillus, therefore, need not detain us as

⁷⁹ *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, 40–41 (ch. 28).

⁸⁰ *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford, 1939), p. 277.

⁸¹ *Poems of John Audelay*, no. 9: 'So hard Rofyn rogud his rolle' (line 300); and BL MS Harley 3954, in *Reliquiae antiquae*, ed. Wright and Halliwell, I, 60, 'So sore ruffyn toggud hus rolle'. The Vernon manuscript, line 313, has simply 'So harde raced he þat Rolle' (*Minor Poems of the Vernon MS Vol II*, ed. Furnivall, 501).

he did Bolte, for he belongs in a different story.⁸²

The recording devil easily becomes a comic figure, even at the expense of the moral. Chatterers warned to beware of him are not likely to take him seriously if he is always making a fool of himself. Scribbling furiously, he soon runs out of space and tries to lengthen his parchment, with ludicrous results: 'ille uolens cutem prolongare traxit eam dentibus et dum nimis traheret, cutis scissa est et demon cecidit de pertica. De hoc ergo risi.' So Gregory, who laughed while saying mass, explains to his shocked deacon Petrus.⁸³ Moral is, be reverent in church. Presumably it was not Gregory who was irreverent, but those whose sins outpaced the demon's scribal skills.

In 'How to Hear Mass' the devil's teeth lose their grip, and he cracks his head loudly against the wall. This time it is Augustine who cannot restrain a guffaw—not the illustrious bishop of Hippo who rushed off to make good his omission of compline, but the Augustine whom Gregory subsequently sent to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons. Since the devil's accident bears repetition, it is described first when Augustine sees it, and a second time when he explains why he laughed. Mannyng does not name the deacon in his anecdote and saves space by omitting the first description. I quote his version of the comedy from the Yale manuscript, which at this point does not differ materially from Furnivall's text, followed by the corresponding second description in 'How to Hear Mass' (Vernon MS). The first description is only slightly different: it substitutes the rather neat 'he chopped his cholle' for line 347, and adds that the 'clout' astonished the congregation:

⁸² Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, no. 1630 (b); Bolte, 'Der Teufel', 261–66. On Titivillus see also *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, ed. A. Dyce, 2 vols (London, 1843; rpt New York, 1970), II, 284–85; *The Vision and Creed of Piers Plowman*, ed. Thomas Wright, 2 vols (London, 1842), II, 547–48; and *OED*, s.v. Titivil. For examples see de Vitry, *Exempla*, 6 (no. 19); *Latin Stories*, ed. Wright, 44 (no. 46, 'De Tityvillo'); Caesarius, *Dialogus miraculorum* I, 181 (4.9); *Der grosse Seelentrost*, ed. Margarete Schmitt, *Niederdeutsche Studien* 5 (Cologne, 1959), p. 80 (no. 23).

⁸³ J. Klapper, *Erzählungen des Mittelalters* (Breslau, 1914), p. 258 (no. 33): 'Scribit dyabolus peccata hominum in ecclesia.' Klapper refers to Bolte, 'Der Teufel', 255, and to a version in octosyllabics: K. A. Barack (ed.), 'Bruchstücke mittelhochdeutscher Gedichte in der Universitäts und Landesbibliothek zu Strassburg', *Germania* 25 (1880): 161–91 (p. 189, 'Ez hat der tieuel einem list'). Cf. Wildhaber, *Das Sündenregister*, 18.

qwen hys roll was wretten full
 he droghe it out he gone to pull
 w^t hys tethe he gone to drawe
 & harde for to tuge & gnawe
 þⁱ hys rolle to braste & rafe
 hys hede to þ^e wall draffe
 so harde & so ferly sore
 ffor hys parchmente was na more
 qwen I saw þⁱ me thoghte so gude
 I braste one laghter þer I stode
 þⁱ he sa mekyll sorowe made
 and hys wyrtynge was all to fade.⁸⁴

Þe fend wrot wiþ a foul face
 Til his Parchemyn was al gon.
 Whon his parchemyn was al spende,
 He rauhte þe Rolle bi þe ende,
 Wiþ his teth a-non
 He logged, þat al in-synder gon lasch,
 And wiþ his hed he 3af a dasch
 A3eyn þe Marbel-ston.
 Lord, greue 3e not for þat dunt!
 He stoneyd me, and made me stunt
 Stille out of my steuene.

(341–51)

The account in *Der grosse Seelentrost*, to make a comparison at random, is much tamer. 'Do stunt syn dyaken vnde sach den ouelen geyst sitten in eyne vinstere vnde screff in eynen breff alle de lude, de dar runeden in der kerken. Do de bref vul was, do wolde he ene myt den tenen wider theen. De breff torete, vnde de ouele geist stotte synem kop wedder de want. Do beghan de dyaken to lachene.'⁸⁵ In a

⁸⁴ Yale MS Osborn a.2, fol. 193r: cf. Furnivall's text, *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS Vol II*, 291 (lines 9283–94), and lines 9288–99 in *Robert Mannyng of Brunne: Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Binghampton, NY, 1983), p. 232; see Raymond G. Biggar's review, *Speculum* 62 (1987): 969–73. The transcript here is my own.

⁸⁵ *Der grosse Seelentrost*, 95 (no. 31, 'Der Teufel im Kirchenfenster'). A slightly different text is quoted by Wildhaber, *Das Sündenregister*, 19.

livelier version from Oldenburg it is the congregation rather than the preacher who appreciate the comedy, for the blow to the head neither deters the devil nor amuses the preacher. Inattentive youngsters are disturbing the preacher with their mirth; when he asks why, they indicate 'der kleine gelbe Kerl da' in the choir. The preacher then sees for himself, questions the devil, and finds out what he is up to. No moral or rebuke follows. 'Dat lünke Been har he up't rechte Kneee leegt und was iwrg an't Schriewen. Dann namm he dat Bladd tüsken de Täänen und reed so dull, dat üm dat Bladd tüsken de Täänen weggleed, un he mit den Kopp achter an de Wand schnappde, un dann wedder gau an't Schriewen. Dat seeg würlklich putzig ut. De Pastor günk nu na üm hen en fröög: "Was machst du da?"'⁸⁶

The elaboration of the comedy follows a logical process of narrative association. Already in de Vitry the devil must stretch his parchment to make room for all he has to write, but he does not hurt himself. In *An Alphabet of Tales* he bumps his head, but there is no laughter. In the version from Oldenburg it is not the preacher who laughs, and so he cannot be rebuked; when Gregory laughs, his deacon Petrus can only register shock. Laughter at least requires explanation and sometimes earns rebuke: then the focus of the tale shifts from the devil to the priest who catches sight of him.

(3). The identity of the observer is capable of considerable variation. In the religious *exempla* he is inevitably a holy man. In folklore variants, where a Christian moral is less evident, a very odd assortment of people are likely to see the devil. On the Zellerfeld the observer is a Bergman who, born between eleven and twelve on a Sunday night, has the power of seeing spirits.⁸⁷ In Esthonia it is an elf-maid who has made her entrance into the world of mortals through a knothole in the wall. She materializes on a child's bed when his father stops up the hole; when they grow up, they marry. One day she laughs in church, but will only say why if her husband promises to explain how she came into his house. He promises, and she tells him she saw the devil writing the names of those who slept or chattered in church

⁸⁶ Ludwig Strackerjan (ed.), *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogtum Oldenburg*, 2nd edn (Oldenburg, 1909), pp. 309–10. The ending in the version in *Der grosse Seelentrost* is similarly curtailed.

⁸⁷ Heinrich Prohle (ed.), *Harzsagen: Sagen des Oberharzes* (Leipzig, 1859), pp. 77–79 (no. 6, 'Der Geisterseher').

on a great horse skin stretched on the wall; when he tried to pull it with his teeth to make room for more names he bumped his head. The husband removes the plug from the knothole, and his wife promptly disappears through it. She would return in secret to their children, but nevermore to him.⁸⁸ This is clearly a conflation of the anecdote with the story-type 'Married to the Nightmare'.⁸⁹ Another magical protagonist is a man who has the power to walk on water; when he laughs at the devil in church, he loses the power, his sin having made him heavier.⁹⁰ This is a severer form of the fate that befalls the farmer in Svensen's version: determined not to be tricked, the farmer keeps a close eye on the devil instead of on the parson, noting all the names that are being written down. When the devil bumps his head, the farmer grins, and the devil promptly writes his name down too.

In versions like these, the laughter is associated with retribution. After the service on the Zellerfeld, the pastor takes the Geisterseher into his house and reproves him for his unseemly behaviour; however, he accepts his explanation and the chattering women are made to confess and repent. The next time the devil can get nothing out of them, and destroys his quill and parchment and departs in high dudgeon. In the knight of La Tour-Landry's version, Martin asks Brice to explain why he laughed, 'and whan seint Martin herde hym, he knewe that seint Brice was an holy man.' The unnamed priest in *Handlyng Synne* is just as easily persuaded: he readily accepts the deacon's word, and concludes 'pat he was weyl with God almyȝt' (line 9306).

But in 'How to Hear Mass' the pope is not so easily convinced, and Augustine has to find evidence to corroborate his story. One can only admire the ingenuity with which he meets the crisis. When Augustine laughs, Pope Gregory is horrified:

He made his mone wiþ mylde mod:

⁸⁸ Harry Jannsen (ed.), *Marchen und Sagen des estnischen Volkes* (Dorpat, 1881), pp. 53–54 (no. 13). Cf. Hartland, *The Science of Fairytales*, 280–81. Victor von Andrejanoff, *Lettische Märchen* (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 75–79 ('Windkind-Findelkind'), is the same story in verse.

⁸⁹ R. T. Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends*, Folklore Fellows Communications 175 (Helsinki, 1958–59), pp. 60–1 (no. 4010). See J. A. MacCulloch, *Eddic, Mythology of All Races 2* (Boston, 1930), chapter 29, 'The Nightmare Spirit'. On materialization through a knothole see Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 461–62. The motif features in George Macdonald's fantasy *At the Back of the North Wind* (London, 1899/1900).

⁹⁰ Bolte, 'Der Teufel', 249–50; Wildhaber, *Das Sündenregister*, 5.

'Whi weore þou so wikked and wod
ffor to do þat dede?
A worse dede miht þou neuer done.'
(Vernon MS, lines 325–28)

Full of dread, Augustine gives his explanation and then takes Gregory to the window ledge, where, sure enough, they find a heap of filth. Devils don't bleed blood; in fact, they have neither flesh nor bone, and the visible evidence of the devil's mishap was therefore a miracle permitted by God for the admonition of chatterers in church.

After the rebuke then, explanation is not always enough. The person who laughs must be able to justify himself by furnishing proof of the vision. The next stage of the story concerns what happens when his evidence is rejected. If Gregory, instead of simply sending for a pail and mop, could accept a dirty window ledge as sufficient evidence, one would have thought the subdeacon of Toledo, in the *Scala celi*, who had got possession of the devil's scroll, would have proof enough. But not so. In his case it is an ape sitting on a stone who tries to stretch the scroll. The stone moves, the ape falls and drops the scroll, and the subdeacon leaves his place at the altar to go and pick it up. The bishop is so displeased by the levity of this behaviour that he defrocks the deacon. Vindication comes at last through the gracious intervention of the Virgin, who bids him go and read the sins on the scroll to the perpetrators of them; meanwhile she appears to the bishop and explains the deacon's action, thus securing his restoration.⁹¹

It was perhaps inevitable that so widespread a story as this would eventually come within the ambit of the Mary legends. As soon as the protagonist became a cleric in disgrace, as he would be if he laughed in church, there would be a place for her in her customary role of *deus ex machina*. She appears in several versions of the legend, all, it seems, relating to 'subdyaconus in ciuitate tholetana'. In BL Add. 15833 the subdeacon sees an ape-devil recording the chatter of two squabbling women, and laughs when the devil loses his balance; the Virgin gives him the devil's schedule to show to the bishop and so saves him from disgrace.⁹²

⁹¹ 'Legitur in mariali magno quod fuit quidam subdyaconus in ciuitate tholetana...', *Scala celi*, fol. 167^r.

⁹² BL Add. 15833, fol. 106^v–107^r, probably abridged from Vincent's version discussed

The source of these versions is evidently the *Mariale magnum*, now lost, copies of which were used by John of Garland when he wrote his *Stella maris* about 1248 at Ste.-Genevieve, and by Vincent of Beauvais at Clairvaux. John reduces the legends to a series of brief mnemonic versicles, probably for teaching purposes—though one may well feel that his *Parisian Poetry* represents a better choice of curriculum.⁹³ He summarizes the anecdote in three six-line stanzas, rather more neatly turned, I confess, than my translation:

Templo demon Tholetano Verba scripsit in vesano Quasi vultu simie. Ungue, dente dum trahebat Scripti cartam, hic ruebat A murali serie.	In Toledo, the cathedral, Scribbled words an ape-faced devil, Grimacing in his fury. With nails and teeth he tried to stretch His script: the overbalanced wretch Tumbled from the balcony.
Clerus ista videns risit, Set deflevit quod commisit, Culpatus a presule. Supra pectus dormientis Manus stelle miserentis Prorupsit scriptum cedula.	Seeing that, a clerk guffawed, But his laughter soon deplored When the bishop blamed him. The star of mercy, Mary, pressed Her hand upon his sleeping breast: The written schedule gave him.
Clericus evigilavit, Et prelato demonstravit Scriptum hostis invidi. Mulieres advocantur Quarum voces comprobantur Et sermones stolidi.	The clerk awoke and showed the priest The writing of the envious beast, And thus the blame removed. The women then whose foolish talk Had set the devil so to work Were summoned and reproved.

The indefatigable Vincent of Beauvais offers the most detailed expansion of this anecdote. It is headed 'De subdiacono toletano quem iniuste degradatum (Virgo) restituit'.⁹⁴ Vincent constantly emphasizes the piety of the subdeacon. He is devoted to the Virgin, and his

below. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 584 (no. 51).

⁹³ *The 'Stella Maris' of John of Garland*, ed. Evelyn Faye Wilson (Cambridge, MA, 1946), pp. 129–30, with notes at p. 193; *Parisiana poetria*, ed. Traugott Lawler (New Haven, CT, 1974).

⁹⁴ *Speculum historiale*, 265 (7.118).

vision of the recording devil is a mystic revelation, divinely granted in recognition of his piety. Caught away in spirit, he sees an ape-like demon, repulsive and misshapen, perched above a window in front of the cathedral. He has an inkhorn around his neck, a writing tablet in his left hand, and a reed pen in his right. With eyes darting about and ears pricked to show how carefully attentive he is to all that is going on, the demon keeps scribbling away, and nearby two women are swapping scandal. Then by revelation the subdeacon infers that the ape is the accuser of the brethren, seeking to make up a document of damnation from the tittle-tattle of the women. Tugging at his parchment, the pest overbalances and falls with a crash that shakes the church to its foundations. Hugely delighted, the subdeacon greets the debacle with pure but unrestrained applause ('cadentem persecutus est plauso casto, minus tamen castigato'). Everybody gapes in astonishment, unable to condone such frivolous levity in a man of God, especially when ministering at the altar. When he comes to himself and remembers where he is, he is covered with confusion, but his contrition is contemptuously rejected. Everybody goes away without greeting him, and the archbishop is not afraid to suspend from his earthly benefice one whom a little while before God had suspended in contemplation of spiritual things: 'nec veretur archiepiscopus suspendere a carnali beneficio quem paulo ante ad spiritualia contemplanda suspenderat Dei benignitas'.

So he goes away disgraced, but enters a church and prays long and earnestly to Mary. Vincent does not say he sleeps, as John does; rather, he has another mystical experience, in which Mary appears to him, majestic and beautiful. She places the devil's charter on his breast, a detail apparently borrowed from the legend of Theophilus, for it is in this way too that the Virgin rescues Theophilus, by returning the sealed record of his pact with the devil. Thus provided with proof of his sanctity, the subdeacon returns to the archbishop, who summons and convicts the women. Their denials swept aside by the handwritten evidence, they confess and are absolved.

A French translation of Vincent's version, in octosyllabics, is published by Arthur Långfors. It includes a long prayer addressed by the deacon to the Virgin before she appears (184–226); other additions are relatively minor. With it Långfors prints Vincent's Latin and the

related adaptation in the *Scala celi*.⁹⁵ An odd feature of the latter is that the author has forgotten the chattering women, and put the Virgin in there instead. The subdeacon sees not only the devil at the door but the Virgin seated behind the altar; before the devil gets down to business, he forces her to withdraw. It is also worth remarking that unlike Vincent's devil he is left-handed: 'rotulus maximus erat in eius dextera & calamus in sinistra'.

Of more importance, perhaps, is the identity of bishop and deacon. Their connection with Toledo may simply have something to do with the provenance of the *Mariale magnum*, for the anecdote is recounted of a variety of protagonists, named after local saints: Gregory in Italy, Cyrus in Spain, Augustine in England, Bridget in Sweden, Brice in France.⁹⁶ The capers of the demon may suffice for a folktale, but when the Virgin intervenes to save a disgraced cleric it is possible that, as in the case of Leo, some historical event may lie behind the legend.

Several versions are derived from a life of Brice, now lost. The summary entry in Welter's edition of the *Speculum laicorum* reads 'Legitur in vita S. Briccii. De diabolo cum pergamento in ecclesia sedente.'⁹⁷ The *Liber exemplorum* tells briefly the anecdote of Briccius:

⁹⁵ Arthur Långfors, 'Le sous-diaque, les deux femmes bavardes et le diable', *Mémoires de la Société Néo-Philologique de Helsingfors* 8 (Helsinki, 1929): 389–408.

⁹⁶ Bolte, 'Der Teufel', 254–55. But in a fifteenth-century collection of religious tales compiled by a Franciscan in northern Italy, BL Add. 27336 (Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 647–73), the deacon who sees the recording devil is assisting Augustine of Canterbury: 'Legitur quod beatus Augustinus Episcopus anglorum cum semel celebraret dyaconus qui ei ministrabat vidit diabolum sedentem in fenestra ecclesie scribentem in pagamento quidquid mulieres in ecclesia recitabant ...', of which account must be given in the Day of Judgment (fols. 65^v–66^r).

⁹⁷ *Speculum laicorum*, ed. J.-Th. Welter (Paris, 1914), no. 185. Since Welter does not give the text of the anecdote, I transcribe it from Bodleian Library MS 474, a fifteenth-century manuscript: 'Legitur in vita sancti Briccii, quod cum ipse quadam die ministraret sancto Martino in altari, vidit diabolum post altare sedentem, et peccata populi astantis scribentem. Et cum deficeret sibi membrana, apposuit dentes trahendo, ut ampliaret eam. Cum fracta in dentibus suis membrana, caput contra parietem fortiter percussit. Propter quod sanctus Briccius in risum prorupit. Vnde a sancto Martino de risu increpatus ei que viderat manifestavit. Vnde Augustinus "Presto erit diabolus recitans (fol. 53^r) verba professionis nostre, et obiciens nobis quicquid fecerimus, et in quo loco et in qua hora precauimus, et quid boni tunc fecisse debuimus." Iste est accusator fratrum nostrorum. Apocalypse 12' (from chapter 26, 'De diaboli fallacijs', fols. 52^v–53^r). This version does not indicate how Martin reacts

'testatur exemplum quoddam inter gesta sancti Bricci, condam discipuli et successoris beati Martini'. Herolt's version begins 'Cum beatus Martinus episcopus celebraret (missam), tunc beatus Briccius adhuc puer vidit diabolum scribentem . . .'. A French morality play on the life of Martin represents the incident in which the devil bumps his head.⁹⁸ Brice is a more likely candidate than any of the other protagonists for identification with the subdeacon of Toledo, the geographical location being unimportant, for he had a reputation for frivolity, was dispossessed of his benefice, and subsequently regained it.

Extant lives of Brice, which include accounts by Honorius of Autun, by Vincent of Beauvais himself, 'ex gestis eius', by Jacobus de Voragine, and by the translator of the North English Homily Cycle, do not mention that he ever laughed in church at a devil who fell or bumped his head.⁹⁹ The *Golden Legend* describes his 'sottises and follies', and his expulsion from his bishopric on a charge of lechery. It also describes the remarkable facility St Martin had for seeing devils. In between the stories of a devil on the back of a mad cow, and of a devil in the form of a king pretending to be Christ, Jacobus de Voragine observes, 'He was of much great subtlety for to know the devils, they could not be hid from him, for in what place they put themselves in, he saw them.'¹⁰⁰

The primary sources for the lives of Martin and Brice are the

to Brice's explanation, and lacks a moral or call to repentance. Welter's fourteenth-century base manuscript of the *Speculum laicorum*, BL Add. 11284, for which see Herbert's *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 370–405, here omits the head-banging, 'caput . . . percussit', evidently by an oversight, and concludes the anecdote with an incorrect reference to 'Apoc. vii' (fol. 25").

⁹⁸ *Le mystère de la vie et hystoire de monseigneur saint Martin*, ed. M. Doublet de Boisthibault (Paris, n.d.; rpt 1841); described by L. Petit de Julleville, *Les mystères*, 2 vols (Paris, 1880), II, 535–38. The relevant incident is quoted by Bolte, 'Der Teufel', 255–56.

⁹⁹ Honorius of Autun, *Speculum ecclesie*, PL 172, 1025–26; Vincent, *Speculum historiale*, 707 (18.41), 'De Sancto Briccio Turonensi'; *Legenda aurea*, ed. Graesse, 751–52, and Caxton, *Golden Legend*, VI, 158–60; K. Horstmann (ed.), *Altenglische Legenden: Die nordenglische Legendensammlung des MS Harl 4196 (und MS. Cott. Tiber. E VII)* (Heilbronn, 1881), pp. 152–59 (nos. 31–32).

¹⁰⁰ Caxton, *Golden Legend*, VI, 152–53. 'Multae subtilitatis ad eos cognoscendos; daemones enim sibi ita conspicabiles reddebantur, ut aperte ab ipso sub quacunque imagine viderentur' (*Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, 747).

writings of Sulpicius Severus (d. 425) and the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours (d. 594).¹⁰¹ Brice, reared in the monastery by the long-suffering Martin, a former soldier and then miracle worker *par excellence*, was Martin's most outspoken critic, sceptical of his miracles and suspicious of his reputation for piety. Delehaye observes, 'Les paroles que Sulpice met dans la bouche de Martin mourant révèlent cet antagonisme, qui a sans doute triomphé dans l'élection de Brice à la succession du saint.'¹⁰² No doubt the rivalry between them and factions supporting them is reflected in the subsequent career of Brice, elected, though not without opposition, to succeed Martin, later expelled, and eventually reinstated.

Chapter 15 of Sulpicius' third dialogue, omitted in some manuscripts possibly out of respect for Brice's reputation, shows Brice at his most intransigent. Sitting outside his cell, Martin with his special facility notices two demons perched on a high rock rising above the monastery. They have seen Brice approaching, violently angry, and with delighted cries are egging him on to attack the saint. The previous day Martin had reprimanded him for loose living; he seems to have been embezzling church funds to buy horses and slaves, not only barbarian boys but also girls with pretty faces. Martin tries to calm him with gentle words, but instigated by the demons Brice has lost control of his mind, weak at the best of times, and can hardly restrain himself from violence. He exhausts his anger, however, in a tirade of sinful words, claiming to be more saintly than Martin, since he was brought up in the monastery, whereas Martin had previously been a soldier, and accusing Martin of being in his dotage, the victim of superstitious fantasies and ridiculous visions. When he has run out of things to say, he departs, but later repents, admitting that he had been possessed by the demons Martin tells everyone he had seen inciting him. Apparently this is just one incident of many, for Sulpicius adds that though Brice was repeatedly charged with many serious crimes,

¹⁰¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues* 3.15, PL 20, 220. I quote the translation by Bernard M. Peebles, *Sulpicius Severus: Writings*, The Fathers of the Church 7 (New York, 1949), pp. 246–47. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, ed. W. Arndt and B. Krusch, 2 vols in 1, MGH rer. Merov. 1 (Hannover, 1884–85), pp. 59–60 (2.1). I quote the translation by Lewis Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 104–06; for a summary, see p. 595 and the index, p. 619.

¹⁰² H. Delehaye, 'Saint Martin et Sulpice Sévère', *Analecta Bollandiana* 38 (1920): 5–136 (quotation from p. 108).

Martin would never deprive him of his priestly office, saying that if Christ put up with Judas, why should he not put up with Brice: 'si Christus Judam passus est, cur ego non patiar Brictionem?'

His tolerance may of course have been influenced by the strength of the faction supporting Brice, whose dissatisfaction may be judged by the kind of accusation Sulpicius attributes to Brice; similarly, Brice's apologetic attempt to ingratiate himself with the master he had reviled may reflect the strength of Martin's support.

Gregory is more lenient than Sulpicius, portraying Brice as a high-spirited scoffer rather than as an unbalanced and jealously angry rebel. Martin used often to rebuke Brice for frivolity, and in return Brice played tricks on Martin and made sarcastic remarks about him. Once a sick peasant who had come to Martin to be healed asked Brice where he could find him. 'If you are looking for that crazy fellow,' he answered, 'just cast your eyes in that direction. In his usual half-witted way, he is staring at the sky.' To Brice's confusion, Martin overheard the remark and predicted that Brice would be the next bishop, but would have to suffer much ill-treatment during his tenure. At this Brice laughed, 'Wasn't it true what I alleged, that much of what you say is sheer lunacy?'

If this is sufficient warrant for the tradition that Brice laughed in church and then managed to convince Martin that he was nevertheless a holy man, Gregory's account of his prelacy may explain the tradition that his laughter led to his exile and reinstatement by the intervention of the Virgin. In spite of the trouble he had caused Martin, as a bishop Brice gave himself to prayer, Gregory says, and though arrogant and vain, was at least considered chaste. That is, until his washerwoman became pregnant. Then the people of Tours decided that his piety had been merely a cloak for depravity and wanted to stone him. 'God no longer permits us to defile ourselves by kissing your unworthy hands,' they cried. Perhaps he had been subjected to the same stimulation that proved Leo's downfall! At all events, he defended himself with two miracles that ought to have been more convincing even than Leo's restored hand. First, the thirty-day-old infant he was accused of fathering announced plainly, at his bidding, that he was not the father; but Brice was too generous to force the infant to reveal who was.¹⁰³ The

¹⁰³ According to Honorius, *PL* 172, 1025, the same thing had happened to Martin. When Martin embraced the infant, calling him 'Son', it protested, 'Non es tu meus

people then accused him of magic. He countered by carrying hot coals to Martin's tomb; when he arrived his cassock was not even singed. In the same way, he claimed, his body was untainted by incontinence. Nevertheless the people still expelled him and appointed Justinian their bishop.

It seems clear that Brice fell victim to an adverse faction, which used violent rather than legal means to get rid of him. The parallel with Leo is noteworthy. The life-style of both men was suspect, their forceful characters easily made enemies, and once in power they would hardly have suffered opposition gladly.

Brice went to the pope, attributing his downfall to his scorn of Martin, whom he had called a lunatic and whose miracles he had disbelieved. The people of Tours sent Justinian after him, but he died on the way. Evidently they feared the influence Brice might have exerted against them on the pope; it seems unlikely that he would have confessed his past sins quite as contritely as Gregory makes him do. Brice spent seven years in Rome, often celebrating mass there, and lamenting his treatment of Martin. Evidently the pope favoured him, but with sufficient reservations not to demand that the people of Tours reinstate him, for in the meantime Armentius became bishop of Tours in place of Justinian. At last Brice managed to get the pope's permission to return to a village outside Tours. Having learned in a vision that Armentius had died, Brice entered the city at one gate while Armentius was being carried out at another. His episcopacy lasted a further seven years.

3

Grant the dispossessed prelate the literal intervention of the Virgin instead of the weaker if more plausible favour of a Charlemagne or of a pope helpless or inactive for seven years, and the tales of Leo and Brice could easily form the groundwork of pious *exempla*, exhorting worshippers to be reverent, glorifying Mary, and enhancing the fame of the saints concerned. But the anecdotes in their varying forms diverge considerably from their proposed historical roots. Given the story-

pater, sed Johannes mercator.' Vindicated, Martin baptized the infant and named him Brice.

telling climate of the Middle Ages, in which edification is preferred to accuracy, and the marvellous to the mundane, the difference between the Leo and Brice of history and the Leo and Brice of pious *exemplum* is not surprising.

V.I. Propp in *The Morphology of the Folktale* discussed the effect of the numerous repetitions that are one of the essential features of the folktale.¹⁰⁴ Folktales grow as they are repeated. The anecdotes of Leo and Brice provide an object lesson of this phenomenon, of the way history and legend can mingle and be transformed, as a result of imagination, misremembering, and conflation—and as a result of the mediæval appetite for the miraculous.

We should not dismiss Pope Gregory as simply gullible when he takes filth left on a window ledge as proof of Augustine's (to us) preposterous story. In matters clerical, the supernatural is not only superior to but indeed more likely than the merely natural. Where the situation warrants it, the miraculous is always to be preferred to the natural explanation. Our priorities just happen to be reversed. And if a miracle is morally more instructive than a physical fact, that is all the more reason for believing in the miracle.

In the case of Leo and Brice, the change from truth into fiction is more than a gradual evolution, and would be even if we could document it fully. There is no small gulf between the historical events in which the saints were involved and the fictions that later became current about them. The missing bridge is the imagination of whoever first realigned the facts, or what he saw of them. We can discern the sort of thing that must have happened by studying the versions and reconstructing the history, but the moment of change and its precise nature elude us.

¹⁰⁴ V.I. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Bloomington, IN, 1958). Cf. Derek Brewer, "The Gospels and the Laws of Folktale," *Folklore* 90 (1979): 39–52.

Antichrist and Allegory in Langland's Last Passus

Several critics have found it necessary to defend the conclusion of *Piers Plowman* against a charge of anti-climax. 'What other ending can there be?' asks Skeat, 'or rather, the end is not yet. We may be defeated, yet not cast down; we may be dying, and behold we live.'¹ Even Roberta Frank, who sees Langland's desire to reform the friars as the key to the conclusion of *Piers Plowman*, comments, 'Although Langland ends his poem by urging the solution of a specific problem, the conclusion is not trivial.'² And S. T. Knight applauds as a deliberate and powerful contrast 'the almost sickening anti-climax as we move from the exultation at the end of passus xxi' (that is, B xviii, the Harrowing of Hell) 'to the revelation of the wretched state of human affairs.'³ Certainly after witnessing the triumph of Jesus the Joustier in B xviii, one might have expected the vision of Antichrist to contain an equally impressive treatment of Armageddon and the Last Judgement, instead of a scene of high comedy back in the field full of folk, which is essentially what one gets. Yet the subject matter is powerful enough: 'Dobest allegorically embodies the Life of Authority, and the need for it in a world beset by corruption from within the human heart, and menaced by the assault of Antichrist from without.'⁴ I shall proceed to argue that Langland's last passus fully meets the artistic requirements of the very great poem it concludes.

Allegory is a chief ingredient of Langland's poetry, and should

¹ William Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 2 vols (1886; rpt London, 1984), II, 285. Quotations from the poem are taken from this edition.

² R. W. Frank, 'The Conclusion of *Piers Plowman*', *JEGP* 49 (1950): 309–16 (quotation at p. 315).

³ S. T. Knight, 'Satire in *Piers Plowman*', in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. S. S. Hussey (London, 1969), p. 304.

⁴ Nevill Coghill, 'The Character of *Piers Plowman* Considered from the B Text', *Medium Aevum* 2 (1933): 108–35 (quotation at p. 114).

not be dismissed as a clumsy device that merely interferes with it.⁵ To John Lawlor an allegory is 'a work of imagination employing narrative elements which are coherent and interesting in their own right but from which transferred meanings naturally arise'.⁶ This essay will concentrate less on the transferred meanings than on the peculiar dramatic variety imparted to the scene by its phantasmagoric crowd of allegoric figures.⁷ The three chief characters, Conscience, Will and Antichrist, exemplify this variety. The first is an allegorised abstraction, the second a literal figure, the poet's 'persona', and the third the apocalyptic symbol of the end times. Together they represent the battle for the integrity of the individual and the Church.⁸ Each figure is to be examined in turn, but first it is necessary to consider the poetic structure of the passus in which they interact.

The structure of B xx resembles that of the Prologue. At the beginning of his poem Langland, or his persona, falls asleep on a May morning in the Malvern hills; at the beginning of the last passus he wanders in less pleasant circumstances and is upbraided by Need before falling asleep. Then the Prologue describes the field of folk active about their secular business; Antichrist presides over the field in the last passus, and the folk are suffering the attacks of disease and death. In the Prologue the Dreamer makes a brief appearance as the 'lunatic' who promises to obey the King; in the last passus the Dreamer is attacked by Elde and shows obedience to Holychurch by

⁵ As Christopher Dawson appears to do, in *Medieval Essays* (London, 1953): 'Langland is often content to leave his allegory on a plane of frigid abstraction ... Nevertheless, at any moment the flame of pure poetry may blaze out and silence the creaking machinery of didactic allegorism' (p. 249).

⁶ John Lawlor, *Piers Plowman: An Essay in Criticism* (London, 1962), p. 241.

⁷ David Mills, 'The Role of the Dreamer in *Piers Plowman*', claims: 'Often *Piers Plowman* seems to be regarded as something requiring explanation rather than response, a philosophical argument made more obscure by being written in the form of a verse allegory, with certain passages being singled out for their poetic value' (in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. Hussey, 182). But a literary approach to *Piers Plowman* is now fashionable: see especially Lawlor, *Piers Plowman: An Essay in Criticism*, and Elizabeth Suddaby, 'The Poem *Piers Plowman*', *JEGP* 54 (1955): 91–103.

⁸ 'The allegorical combat between the forces of Anti-Christ and Conscience in these concluding portions of the poem is the conflict for the soul of the Dreamer', writes John Adams, '*Piers Plowman* and the Three Ages of Man', *JEGP* 61 (1962): 23–41 (quotation at p. 39). It is more than that. The survival of the Christian Church in the Day of Grace is at stake.

making his way to the castle of Unity. Spiritual duty replaces social duty. The fable of belling the cat describes an abortive attempt to restrict the secular power of the king; Antichrist's siege of Unity is an apparently successful attempt to reduce the spiritual authority of the Church. The Prologue ends with a picture of the whole concourse of fourteenth-century life—everyone from barons to bakers—engaged in their multifarious daily activities; at the end of the last passus the defenders of Unity lie inactively dreaming, and Conscience sets out on a new pilgrimage.

But the last passus is much more complicated than the first. It has the weight of the poem behind it, and its treatment of themes developed in the poem is accordingly much richer. Its numerous allegoric figures are absent from the Prologue. The sergeants-at-law, for instance, are satirised without allegory there: it is easier to measure the mist than to get a word out of them unless they have first been offered money. But in B xx the same idea is dramatised in chivalric terms, with an allegoric figure in the saddle: Avarice overthrows all the counsels of law; in particular,

He Iugged til a Iustice and Iusted in his ere,
And ouertilte al his treuthe . . .

(B xx, 133–34)

Moreover, the scene in the Prologue is essentially static: the field of folk is bustling enough, but for the most part events do not happen in narrative sequence. But in the last passus the narrative develops from the coming of Antichrist to the siege and capitulation of Unity, while at the same time the allegoric characters are as active and bustling as the literal ones in the Prologue, or more so. The Prologue is predominantly concerned with secular life, the people 'Worchyng and wandryng as the worlde asketh' (B Prologue, 19), whereas spiritual themes are uppermost in the last passus: it portrays friars rather than burgesses, and the Church threatened rather than the King. At the same time there is a sense of urgency in the last passus, which the carefree if occasionally grumbling folk in the Prologue did not experience. They are fighting now, and for the most part losing. The drama of battle is made vivid by recurrent military metaphors.

A comparison between the Prologue and last passus shows how Langland has by the end of the poem enriched his original conception. Yet, as R. W. V. Elliott says: 'It all ends where it began. "Realistic"

fourteenth-century scenes melt into a spiritual terrain where ideas become figures and words are made flesh ... The "Langland country" is circular, like the world which it represents.⁹

Not only does Langland bring his poem full circle; he also skilfully orders the heterogeneous materials of his last passus. Yet the belief persists that *Piers Plowman* is poorly constructed.¹⁰ The last passus at least hardly deserves such criticism. A battle near the beginning is balanced against a siege near the end round an attack by Elde on the Dreamer in the middle. The failings of the folk in the former part are conceived generally in physical terms (we read of the lord who lived in lust of body, of diseases, and of Fisik's inadequate remedy), while those in the latter part are spiritual (the chief failing is hypocrisy, represented particularly by the friars). The Dreamer's central position is significant. He is being pulled two ways, faced with the alternative of following Antichrist's banner or of obeying the dictates of Conscience. The attack on him is a physical one to which he is led to expect he may find a spiritual remedy.¹¹ Kynde (physical nature) who caused the diseases in the first part of the passus, advises him to go to Unity and to learn to love. The central section of the passus is thus a bridge between the two parts, the first mainly physical and external, the second inward and spiritual.

This structural balance is reinforced by a recurrent metaphor: both Fisik and the friars have a 'salue' to offer. When folk begin to grow old and seem likely to die they turn to Fisik for help; but his 'salue' is nothing better than 'a glazen houe' (B xx 171), as Lyf perceives when the doctor dies.¹² In the spiritual section of the passus, the friars' 'salue' is equally ineffective. Their ministrations are depicted in

⁹ *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. Hussey, 243.

¹⁰ In 1953 Dawson reprinted his judgement of 1934 that 'it is as formless and as lacking in conscious literary artifice as any great work can be' (*Medieval Essays*, 242); and A. R. Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1963), speaks of 'its looseness of structure, its want of clarity' (p. 98).

¹¹ Moreover, according to Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, 1961), 'the attacks of Antichrist upon the Church are a kind of correlative to the progress of death within him' (p. 16).

¹² A glass hood would be little use in battle; neither is the doctor's furred hood when Elde strikes him. Skeat quotes a similar proverb from Chaucer's *Troilus*, II 867-68: if you've got a head of glass, beware of stones being thrown in war.

medical terms. They apply soothing medicine, 'a pryue payement and I shal praye for yow' (B xx 362), when the salue Shrifte offers, namely penance (304), proves too sharp for the morally weak defenders of Unity. The friars' medicines induce a spiritual lassitude, till Contricion 'lith adreynt'—drowned in drugs (C xxiii 377).

The lord who loved an easy life betrays a parallel physical lassitude when he seeks comfort from the diseases Kynde brings (B xx 89–90). In conceiving Conforte as a knight answering the call to arms, Langland is using an unexpected metaphor. Battle imagery is an unusual way of representing a desire for comfort, and it parallels the siege symbol that accompanies the soothing ministrations of the flattering friar.

These metaphors merge easily into allegory. Conforte is merely one knight, but the lassitude he represents soon becomes the generalised symbol Sloth itself. When Sloth attacks Unity with his sling 'dread of despair' we have another unexpectedly violent conception: Sloth after all personifies inactivity. Similarly the metaphor 'salue' merges ultimately into the allegoric figure of Contricion, 'the souereynest salue for alkyn synnes' (B xx 370). Just as Fisik's salue failed to ward off Age and Death, so the hypocritical reassurances of the friars fail to keep Sloth out. Their hypocrisy is worse than no salue at all, for it destroys the only effective salue, Contricion.

The ambitious theme of the last passus, faith and repentance in a world of collapsing moral values, requires a wealth of dramatic presentation. As many allegoric figures as possible seem to have been crowded on to the stage for Langland's final curtain call.¹³ Inevitably, some are less vividly realised than others. In life, or a novel, one expects to know less about some characters than others, but when in an allegory it happens that there is hardly room to show more of a figure than his name, the author is blamed, as W.P. Ker blames Langland, for using 'too often a mechanical form of allegory which is little better than verbiage'.¹⁴ It is true that some of Langland's figures scarcely emerge from the background, while others stand out in sharp

¹³ A fairly complete list is as follows; Fals, Gyle, Pryde, Kynde, Deth, Conforte, Eld, Fortune, Lecherye, Couetyse, Symonye, Gode-Feith, Lyf, Holynesse, Hendenesse, Leute, Lye, Sleuthe, Wanhope, Fysyke, Clergye, Nede, Envye, Unkyndenesse, Pees, Ypocrysie, Shrifte, Contricioun and Hende-speche. There are literal figures as well: e.g. the 'mansed preste of the marche of Yrlonde' (B xx 220).

¹⁴ W.P. Ker, *Medieval English Literature* (1912; rpt. London, 1969), p. 107.

focus as consistent characters involved in narrative action, but these all help to give the *passus* its populated impression.

The difference between an abstract noun and a personification is very slight in the case of Fals, barely personified at B xx 54, and a mere abstraction dignified by a place in court at B xx 130. Sometimes an allegoric figure is pictured in literal terms: Conforte is a knight (B xx 90), Avarice 'a kene baroun' (B xx 128). In contrast, literal figures may be generalised: the excommunicate Irish priest will stand for all such wicked clergy, and a friar is made to stand for flattery, as his name, *frere Flaterere*, shows (B xx 313). A figure like Contricion may be variously conceived, first mechanically, as one of the 'two caples' in Piers's cart (B xix 341), or as a topographical reference on the way to Unity (B xx 212), and later narratively, as a defender of Unity who falls victim to the friars. In this scene the shifting tenor of his personality provides a good example of the way allegoric delineations may fluctuate. When he persuades Conscience, against the latter's better judgement, to send for the friar (B xx 314), he is evidently speaking as the persona of Sire Lief-to-lyue-in-leccherye, himself a representative figure, who lies groaning and in need of surgery. But when the friar arrives it is Contricion himself who is sick (332), wounded like many others by Ypocrisie, and the friar proceeds to comfort him (361). Soon the wounded man is so thoroughly 'cured' that 'Contricioun he lafte' (369). Here Contricion would seem to have turned back into the knight whose persona he originally was.¹⁵ The friar has charmed away his contrite feelings, and the wounds of sin are felt no more (376–77).

Allegoric figures that might seem mechanically conceived come alive in the vivid, racy and grimly comic narrative of such passages as the following:

This lyked Lyf and his lemman Fortune,
And geten in hir glorie a gadelyng at laste,
One that moche wo wroughte, Sleuthe was his name.
Sleuthe wax wonder yerne and sone was of age,
And wedded one Wanhope, a wenche of the stuwes;

¹⁵ Priscilla Jenkins, 'Conscience; the Frustration of Allegory', takes the line at its face value: 'Contricion left Contricion.' Langland ironically denatures an allegoric figure, to indicate that 'Conscience can no longer rely on any of the traditional moral categories' (*Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. Hussey, 140).

Her syr was a sysour that neuer swore treuthe,
 One Thomme Two-tonge, ateynte at vch a queste.
 This Sleuthe was war of were and a slynge made,
 And threw drede of dyspayre a dozein myle aboute.
 (B xx 155–63)

This passage is a complex blend of traditional symbol (the Deadly Sin Sloth), metaphor (fear of despair imagined as a sling), allegoric abstraction (Wanhope), generalised literal figure (the juror named Thomme Two-tonge) and non-moral personification (Lyf and his 'lemman' Fortune), all interacting in a narrative sequence involving what may be the quickest coming of age in literature. Sloth is for Langland the worst of the Deadly Sins, since it leads to Wanhope, despair of salvation, because it makes repentance, a pre-condition of absolution, seem too onerous to undertake (cf. B v 449–55).¹⁶

Conscience is the most fully developed allegoric character in *Dobest*. In B xix he acts first of all as the Dreamer's guide, offering him a long theological explanation of the work of Christ, in the manner of the guides in the earlier part of the Vita, but he soon becomes the unpopular leader of the threatened castle of Unity. Grace¹⁷ bids the people crown Conscience king (B xix 251), but a host of literal figures rebel against his rule. The brewer tells him to hold his tongue (B xix 399), and the ignorant vicar has never met a parishioner 'that accounted Consience at a cokkes fether or an hennes!' (B xix 410) In B xx he is the besieged general resisting the attacks of Antichrist that have begun in earnest.

Since *Piers Plowman* is not a novel, it is safer to assume that man's moral sense is allegorised at different points in the poem according to the needs of the of the context than that Conscience ought to be the

¹⁶ Sloth implies not merely 'werynesse of goode deedes': *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS o.s. 217 (London, 1942), p. 26, but despair of salvation (B ii 98–100; B v 452). Hence, no doubt, he comes last in Langland's lists of the sins (B ii 79–100; B v 63–468; B xiv 201–72). Langland's order is unusual: for instance, he is fourth in *Vices and Virtues* (p. 26), and in Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. See Morton W. Bloomfield's magisterial study, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing, MI, 1952).

¹⁷ Grace stands for the Holy Ghost: cf. B xix 196 and 203. Perhaps *Piers Plowman* is ultimately identified with Grace also: see, e.g., B xix 329–30 and B xx 383–84.

same consistently dramatised character throughout. The figure that expounds theology to the Dreamer need not be the same that unwisely lets the friars into Unity; still less is he to be rigorously identified with the Conscience who refused to marry Meed (B iii 120). With allegoric characters narrative coherence is a secondary consideration, as their actions are determined by the transferred meanings rather than the other way about. The Conscience that is immortal at B xx 159 is also wryly human: 'Wolde Criste', he cries in desperation, 'that Coueityse were Cristene that is so kene a fighter!' (B xx 140)—an impossible wish, as the moral consciousness must know.

To appreciate his dramatic function as the opponent of Antichrist, it is necessary to understand his allegoric association with Kynde. Conscience's first action in the last vision is to summon Kynde

... that he come and defende vs,
Foles, fro this fendes lymes ...
(B xx 75–76)

Virtually his last action is to cry desperately 'Now Kynde me auenge!' (B xx 382) as he stumbles from the ruins of Unity. Kynde responds to the first call by bringing the plague, until the sufferers mend their ways and Conscience begs him to stop. His response to the last call is not indicated, but perhaps it was implied when Lyf was shown recklessly forgetting that Kynde

Shal come atte laste,
And culle alle erthely creatures saue Conscience one.
(B xx 149–50)

Doomsday inevitably follows the appearance of Antichrist, and no doubt ultimate retribution is envisaged in Conscience's last summons of Kynde.

Kynde does not only represent external nature. He is natural understanding when he bids the Dreamer learn to love (B xx 207), and as such is frequently associated with Conscience. Thus the King in the first passus is admonished by Kynde Wit and by Conscience (C I 147 and 151): Conscience knows the power of reason 'for kynde wittme it taughte' (B iii 282); and it is Kynde Wytte who shows Conscience how

to dig the moat round Unity (B xix 357–60).¹⁸

Kynde is also natural inclination, linked with Conscience in the line 'For Crist knoweth thi conscience and thi kynde wille' (B iii 67). When the soul makes a moral choice, the operative faculties are conscience and free will. Anima explains this point in a quotation from Isidore between B xv 39 and 40: 'Anima ... dum negat vel consentit, Consciencia est', rendered

'... whan I chalange or chalange noughte, chepe or refuse,
Thanne am I Conscience ycalde, goddis clerke and his notarie.'
(B xv 31–32)

The C version includes *Liberum-arbitrium* in Isidore's list, and makes Free Will, not Anima, the personification who is expounding his nature to the Dreamer, linking him with Conscience:

Thenne hadde Actyf a ledere that heyhte *Liberum-arbitrium*,
That knewe Conscience ful wel ...
(C xvii 158–59)

Conscience and Kynde, then, are complementary. They are two aspects of the humanity that is represented by the Dreamer. The Dreamer is Langland's persona, but in that the Dreamer is involved in the action he must be distinguished from the poet. The poet's voice interrupts the account of Envy's exhortation to the friars ('And yit he lyeth, as I leue, that to the lewed so precheth' &c. [B xx 275–91]), whereas the Dreamer's conversation with Elde or with Kynde is part of the dramatic course of the vision.

The function of the persona is to give literal verisimilitude to a scene that might seem too remote from reality if peopled only by a shifting phantasmagoria of allegoric figures. The reader is clearly

¹⁸ The C text gives the speeches of B's non-allegoric figures, the 'lunatik' (Will) and the 'angel', to Kynde Wit and to Conscience; an added indication, perhaps, that these two represent the Dreamer's moral consciousness. It is sometimes difficult to decide when an abstraction is personified: Skeat omits to capitalise the name as other editors do, but at B iii 67 'conscience' and 'kynde wille' seem clearly to be merely common nouns.

meant to identify himself with Will; for Will is Everyman.¹⁹ Will comes to the vision as a spectator, and suddenly, comically, finds himself involved in the action. In this way Langland impresses on the reader the gravity of his own situation. It is one thing to watch an allegoric Elde attacking an allegoric Lyf, quite another to find your own head going bald. Faced by his ineluctable destiny, Everyman can only laugh at his follies, and repent of them, if he is not to despair. Comedy is a natural mode of depicting the chaos, futility and misunderstandings, the careless *carpe diem* attitude typified by the antics of Lyf and the allegoric figures around him, and rendered funny in the persona of Will himself, which are characteristic of human kind. A climax of humorous self-denigration is reached when Will, to his aggrieved surprise, becomes so decrepit that his wife heartily wishes him in Heaven—out of pity for him! (B xx 193) But now that the threat he has once ignored (B xi 26 ff.) and that later had given him pause (B xiii 6), has come upon him, he takes counsel from Kynde and hurries to Unity. 'Although the Dreamer may often seem comic, there is a serious overtone to his absurdity.'²⁰

The serious overtone is present when Will meets Need just before the final vision. Need's argument is dismissed by Adams as 'sophistry'²¹ and by Frank as 'wrong',²² but Bloomfield points out that Need 'is to be taken not only in the sense of a recognition of the necessity for elementary sustenance but in the sense of the regulating principle of justice and harmony in society. Under Christ, temperance is the virtue the world needs most of all.'²³ Will discovers from his own experience that the world is in need. But without temperance, the effort to satisfy

¹⁹ Bloomfield refers to '... the self—as represented by Will, who is both Langland and Everyman' (*The Seven Deadly Sins*, 142).

²⁰ David Mills, 'The Role of the Dreamer in *Piers Plowman*', 185.

²¹ 'Need appears, advising the Dreamer to justify intemperance (the season is Lent) by mean of the same sophistry with which the others had by-passed the other three Cardinal Virtues' (Adams, '*Piers Plowman* and the Three Ages of Man', 38).

²² 'Need ... is wrong when he argues ... that temperance is the only virtue, and that need is next to God, Who governs all virtues' (Frank, 'The Conclusion of *Piers Plowman*', 310).

²³ Bloomfield, *Fourteenth-century Apocalypse*, 149. Bloomfield maintains that 'in line 35 ('Nede is next hym') Need is actually equated with temperance, as the whole structure of the argument shows' (p. 135).

such need will be disastrous, as Need himself indicates when he warns Conscience not to admit the friars (B xx 231–40).

The section on need at the beginning of passus xx both anticipates the desperate situation of the world in the last vision and suggests a remedy. 'The poet awakes again, heavy of cheer, knowing not where he will find a meal. Need meets him, and reminds him of the yet greater need which Christ suffered.'²⁴ Christ's need was not merely poverty, but the constraint of the Cross, which He suffered for our redemption.

There nede hath ynome me that I mote nede abyde,
And suffre sorwes ful sowre that shal to loye tourne.
(B xx 45–46)

On the Cross Christ endured the forces of evil, and overcame them. This reference to the Crucifixion is fittingly placed immediately before Antichrist appears. For, as Bloomfield points out, what follows 'is the anti-vision to the vision of the Harrowing of Hell', whose true end has been foreshadowed in B xviii.²⁵

Langland's portrayal of the apocalyptic figure of Antichrist is in keeping with his down-to-earth picture of the present world in which Will and the reader move. He does not portray a futuristic tyrant like that in the Chester play of Antichrist,²⁶ but speedily translates him into allegoric figures that attack Conscience and Unity. At the same time, however, he depends on the traditional beliefs that were current about Antichrist for the atmosphere of menace and apocalyptic disaster that pervades the concluding vision. To suggest, as Frank does,²⁷ that Langland uses Antichrist merely as a term of abuse for the schismatic pope is to reduce the scope and power of the vision, and to disregard the typical mediæval attitude to the tradition of Antichrist.

New Testament references to Antichrist are confined to the epistles of John,²⁸ but the 'man of sin' in II Thessalonians 2 and one

²⁴ R. W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London, 1939), p. 162.

²⁵ Bloomfield, *Fourteenth-century Apocalypse*, 125.

²⁶ *The Play of Antichrist from the Chester Cycle*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford, 1935). Greg accepts that the play could in substance have belonged to the original collection, traditionally dated 1328.

²⁷ Frank, 'The Conclusion of *Piers Plowman*', 314.

²⁸ I John 2: 18 and 22; 4: 3; II John 7.

at least of the beasts in Revelation were early identified with him.²⁹ Augustine in *The City of God* interprets the beast as 'the society of the wicked opposed against the company of God's servants, and against His holy city', while the beast's 'false prophet is either Antichrist or his image'.³⁰ The 'many Antichrists' of I John 2: 18 are heretics who 'seduce' the faithful and 'who shall increase unto a number which shall make Antichrist a great people'. On the basis of II Thessalonians 2, Augustine concludes that the Day of Judgement is to be preceded by the coming of Antichrist (Bk 20 ch. 19), which will inaugurate the last persecution, to be extinguished by Christ's personal presence (Bk 18 ch. 52–53). Langland, who portrays 'this fendes lymes' (B xx 76) rather than the fiend himself, has good precedent for turning Antichrist into the host of his followers.

The mediæval textbooks on the subject of Antichrist were the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius³¹ and especially the *Libellus de Antichristo* of Abbot Adso.³² According to Pseudo-Methodius, Antichrist is to be born 'ex uiri semine filius mulieris de tribu Dan', stressing his humble origin;³³ but this was too tame for the mediæval imagination, which preferred him to spring from the union between

²⁹ Revelation 13: 1 ff. and 13: 11 ff. Cf. 16: 13, 19: 20 and 20: 10. *The Book of Vices and Virtues* describes the beast issuing from the sea as the Devil from hell, whose seven horns are the Seven Deadly Sins (p. 10); on p. 186 this beast is identified with Antichrist.

³⁰ Quotations are from Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. John Healey (1610), ed. R. V. G. Tasker, 2 vols (London, 1945), II, Book 20 chapter 9, and II, Bk 20 chapter 14.

³¹ Charlotte D'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version of the Revelations of Methodius; With a Study of the Influence of Methodius in Middle-English Writings', *PMLA* 33 (1918): 192–203. Greg (introd.), *The Play of Antichrist*, x, gives the portion dealing with Antichrist from a different MS.

³² *Epistola Adsonis ad Gerbergam Reginam de Ortu et Tempore Antichristi*, a mid-tenth century treatise printed by Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1933), II, 496–500.

³³ 'From human seed the son of a woman of the tribe of Dan' (Dan was the son of Jacob's less favoured wife's handmaiden, and his tribe settled farthest North in what became the apostate Northern kingdom of Israel)—because he pretended to be divine. Cf. II Thessalonians 2: 4, and the Chester *Antichrist*: 'ar not my wordys at youre assente / That I am criste omnypotente' (lines 58–59), and Langland: 'as he a god were' (B xx 56).

a bishop and a nun, or worse!³⁴ His coming is not dated: Tertullian had expected him when the Roman empire ended (that was the only reason, he said, that Christians prayed for the Emperor!),³⁵ and Adso explains that it cannot be said to have ended while French kings continue to maintain it;³⁶ *Cursor Mundi* describes the last French king going to Jerusalem to hand over his authority before Antichrist comes. In the mysterious mumbo-jumbo at the end of B vi, Langland seems to satirize contemporary prophecies dating the appearance of Antichrist,³⁷ but B xx leaves no doubt that he thought his own time ripe for it.

Adso enumerates three features of the reign of Antichrist: 'Eriget itaque se contra fideles tribus modis, id est terrore, muneribus et miraculis'; which *Cursor Mundi* renders

... in thrin wise,
That es to sai, with gifte, with awe,
And with grete signes for to schau.
(22174–76)

³⁴ *Cursor Mundi* vol. IV ll. 19301–23826, ed. R. Morris, EETS o.s. 66 (London, 1877), p. 1260:

... He sal be born
Als other men es him biforn ...
Noght tuix a biscop and a nun,
Bot of bismer brem and bald,
And geten of a glotun scald,
That thar mai be na fuler tuin. (Cotton MS, 22023–31)

Subsequent references are to the Edinburgh MS, *Cursor Mundi* vol. V ll. 23826–end, ed. R. Morris, EETS o.s. 68 (London, 1878). Cohabiting between a bishop and a nun would constitute, according to *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 45–46, the twelfth or thirteenth branch of lechery, less heinous only than sodomy.

³⁵ See F. J. Foakes Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church from the Earliest Times to A.D. 461*, 6th edn (Cambridge, 1916), pp. 75–76.

³⁶ 'Hic autem tempus nondum venit, quia, licet videamus Romanorum regnum ex maxima parte destructum, tamen, quamdiu reges Francorum duraverint, qui Romanum imperium tenere debent, Romani regni dignitas ex toto non peribit, quia in regibus suis stabit' (Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, II, 499).

³⁷ This is Skeat's suggestion (*Piers the Plowman*, II, 118); however Bloomfield, *Fourteenth-century Apocalypse*, 212 n. 44, and Rosemary Woolf, in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. Hussey, 64, think Langland means the prophecy to be taken seriously. It sounds an ominous note of warning.

This is followed by the killing of the witnesses Enoch and Elijah, and the ultimate overthrow and death of Antichrist himself. In Langland, the threat that 'Antecryst and his al the worlde shal greue' (B xix 214) is realised not by overt acts of tyranny or miracles, but more subtly by the sophistry and hypocrisy of sinners apparently indifferent to Grace and Piers Plowman.

Langland has nothing to say of the two witnesses, and does not show the downfall of Antichrist, whose only 'miracle' is to overturn truth everywhere:

... in mannes forme
Antecryst cam thanne, and all the crope of treuthe
Torned it vp so doune and ouertilte the rote ...
(B xx 51–53)

'Crophe' is usually understood here in the sense of 'corn harvest',³⁸ but there are interesting parallels that suggest 'treetop' might be a better rendering. Antichrist traditionally manifests his power over the physical world by showing what he can do to trees. 'Faciet ... arbores subito florescere et arescere' [he will make trees suddenly bloom and wither], Adso prophesies. In the Chester play of Antichrist, he demonstrates his miraculous powers first by inverting trees, then by raising the dead, and finally by dying and rising again himself. He says

Now wyll I turne all thrughe my myght
Trees downe the rote vp right ...
(lines 82–83)

In *Cursor Mundi* he makes trees blossom, as in Adso (22144), but trees are overturned 'Doun the crop, vpward the rote' (22549) as the seventh of the fifteen signs that are to precede Doomsday and the coming of the Judge. Possibly therefore Langland wishes us to envisage Antichrist turning a tree upside down—not as an act of magic, but metaphorically, to illustrate the moral and spiritual confusion he causes. Truth is

³⁸ So J.F. Goodridge's translation, *Piers the Ploughman*, rev. edn (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 246; also Lawlor, *Piers Plowman: An Essay in Criticism*, p. 180. Bloomfield explains: 'Antichrist comes and overturns the crop Piers planted ...' (*Fourteenth-century Apocalypse*, 143)—that is, in B xix 306 and 330.

'ouertilte': by Antichrist generally, and later on specifically by Avarice in the law-courts (B xx 134).

Langland proceeds to represent the inner corruption of the individual by translating Antichrist into the Seven Deadly Sins, and the external corruption of the Christian community by translating him into the hypocritical clergy, the friars who destroy Holychurch by letting the Deadly Sins overrun it. In B xx the Sins are referred to as 'gyauntz' (214) and dramatised as fierce warriors fighting vigorously against Conscience. Pride bears Antichrist's banner in the van of his attack (69); Lechery, laughing and lying, uses a bow and many bloody arrows, feathered with many a 'false truthe' (117); Avarice jousts in the law-courts (133); Envy preaches communism to the friars (274); and last and worst, Sloth leads the assault on Unity, breaching it with his sling 'dread of despair', and appearing within it metamorphosed into the somnolent figures of the defenders, whom the friars' reassurances have drugged.

Yet, ironically, this debacle could have been prevented by the very poverty (Need) which the friars responsible for it have abused. 'Temperance in its manifold meanings is the only answer to Antichrist, for it is the soil of all virtues and above all of humility, which is the specific antidote to pride, the first of the sins.'³⁹ The life of voluntary poverty, lived in the spirit of temperance, is, as Pacience explains to Haukyn, the best way to defeat the Seven Deadly Sins (B xiv 201–72). What it entails is the voluntary casting of the self upon Christ, in that active-contemplative life of self-renunciation which is Do-best.

The Sins are giants, but Antichrist's most dangerous ally is Hypocrisy. Deceit is the character of the False Prophet, and of those imposters who if possible would 'deceive the very elect',⁴⁰ hence the perversion of values in which Conscience of all faculties is unable to distinguish between right and wrong (B xix 344–45).⁴¹ So, when Hypocrisy attacks the gate of Unity (B xx 299), Conscience fails to recognize clearly that the friars are his literal representatives, and should be kept out at all costs. The admission of the friars constitutes Antichrist's greatest triumph, and completes the dramatisation of his

³⁹ Bloomfield, *Fourteenth-century Apocalypse*, 141.

⁴⁰ Matthew 24: 24. Cf. Revelation 19: 20.

⁴¹ See further, Jenkins, 'Conscience; the Frustration of Allegory', 136.

work in overturning truth. Thus the friars at the end of the poem, so far from being anticlimactic, are Langland's most telling reduction of Antichrist to concrete, contemporary terms.

As Langland must expect his readers to be aware that Antichrist's reign traditionally ends with his downfall and the ensuing reign of Christ, the poem can hardly be said to end 'on a note of defeat and despair'.⁴² Christ's ultimate victory has already been foreshadowed: in B x 323–29 Langland anticipates the reform of the friars in connection with the coming of a King who is evidently the Judge at the end of the age, for 'ar that kynge come Cayme [i.e. Antichrist] shal awake'. In the C text the reference to Antichrist is replaced by 'clerkus and holychurche shall be clothed newe' (C vi 180), which seems to look forward to a state of perfection that can hardly be realised before the downfall of Antichrist.

Moreover the last passus makes clear that Christ on the Cross has met the sinner's need. The sorrows portrayed in the last vision, which shows the sinner *in extremis*, succumbing helplessly to the insupportable attacks of evil, 'shal to Ioye tourne' (B xx 46) because Christ, in the fullest sense, was 'wilfullich nedy' (48). In the last three lines of the poem, 'after scenes of ruin that make one think of the Twilight of the Gods',⁴³ the Christian consummation is implied. There the three chief characters of the poem, Conscience, Will and Piers Plowman, are brought together. When Conscience, who is Will who is Everyman, finds Piers Plowman, who is Grace who is the Holy Spirit, the twilight will prove to be the dawn of Christ's new day.

⁴² Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, 244.

⁴³ Ker, *Medieval English Literature*, 108.

Christian Adornment in *The Man of Law's Tale*

The Man of Law's profession brings him fees and robes, and he rides on the pilgrimage in a parti-coloured coat with a barred girdle. Laura Hodges explains this as 'a belt probably made of tablet weaving with imported silk threads and, therefore, a luxury item'.¹ So it may be; but he has left his ceremonial clothes at home and rides 'but hoomly'. No doubt long robes would be an impediment on a pilgrimage, but Chaucer deliberately discourages too much attention being paid to his clothing, saying at the end of his portrait, 'Of his array telle I no lenger tale' (*Canterbury Tales*, I.330).² In a similarly suggestive hint at the potential importance of attire, *The Man of Law's Tale* begins with merchants who deal, among other things, in 'satyns riche of hewe' (II.137), fabrics appropriate to the East, as wool would have been if they were trading in England. But, in spite of this opening imagery, in the entire tale the narrator will in fact identify only two items of clothing: Custance's headdress and a messenger's girdle. The Man of Law obviously could, if only he would, say plenty about attire, and we might reasonably have expected clothing to play a significant part in his tale. The expected descriptions are lacking, however, and I would argue that their omission is itself symbolically significant.

The audience might well expect descriptions of clothing in a tale that exhibits so many features of the romance genre.³ At least one analogue,

¹ Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume, the Secular Pilgrims in the 'General Prologue'* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 111. The costly silk would indicate the Sergeant's gentle or affluent status (p. 122), but his 'costume lacks three signs of his professional or social status': he has no coif, knife or purse (p. 112).

² Quotations are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987).

³ One thinks of the descriptions of armour in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*. On the genre of *The Man of Law's Tale*, which Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London, 1985), p. 260, says 'is not easily defined', see Paul M. Clogan, 'The Narrative Style of *The Man of Law's Tale*', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 8 (1977): 217–33, who discusses it as hagiographic romance, and Helen Cooper, *The*

the romance of *Emaré*, features the heroine's lavishly described robe as a leading motif. In a secular romance like *Sir Launfal*, rich and poor clothing is described in some detail,⁴ but this aspect of romance is largely absent from the Man of Law's pious legend. His cloth-merchants discuss not their wares but Custance's beauty and goodness. They have not dealt with her personally, as their counterparts do with Gower's Constance,⁵ but their second-hand account of her spiritual qualities enflames the Sultan's desire for a Christian wife. When she is married, sight unseen, the Man of Law deliberately declines to say what the guests did or what the bride wore: 'What sholde I tellen of the roialtee / At marriage?' (lines 703–04).

The expectation would also be reasonable if we believe that Chaucer wishes to suit his tale to the teller. But this is by no means a necessary assumption. Several critics have blamed the Man of Law for alleged inconsistencies in his tale;⁶ my own view is that Chaucer sometimes presents, as typical, a reaction to a situation which the narrative goes on to show is mistaken. When this happens, neither

Canterbury Tales, Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford, 1989), p. 126, who calls it a pious legend. For Susan Schibanoff, in 'Worlds Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*', *Exemplaria* 8 (1996): 59–96, however, it is 'orientalist polemic' (see p. 77). Helen Cooney, 'Wonder and Immanent Justice in the "Man of Law's Tale"', *Chaucer Review* 33 (1999): 264–87, points out that it is based on Trevelyan's chronicle history, and characterizes it as an 'exposition and attempted justification of the medieval Christian providential view of history' (266–67).

⁴ See *Sir Launfal*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York, 1995). When Launfal is poor his followers wear threadbare robes (139–44, 154–56), but Tryamour soon enriches him (376 ff.). For her and her damsels' attire see 889–91 and 940 ff. For another example see *Sir Degrevant*, stanzas 41–42, ed. L. F. Casson, EETS o.s. 221 (London, 1949), pp. 42–43, where Melidor sports an ermine-furred velvet dress adorned with azure-enamelled buttons too numerous to count.

⁵ In fact she not only bought from the Barbarian merchants, but also converted them to Christianity. See John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, II.599–611, in selections edited by Russell A. Peck (Toronto, 1980), p. 108.

⁶ See, for example, Malcolm Andrew (ed.), *The Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue, Part One B*, Variorum Chaucer 2, pt 2 (Norman, OK and London, 1993), p. 288: 'MLT has been taken to reflect a considerable range of the Sergeant's supposed characteristics, including his apparent wisdom and busyness, his acquisitiveness, and his unusual memory (Sullivan ...); his materialistic world view (Wood ...); his concern with appearances (David...); and his prudence and precision (Elliott)'. For a demurral, see Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales*, 259: 'the tale is blighted by such interpretation'.

he nor his narrator is to be blamed as endorsing the inadequate viewpoint. For example, Chauncey Wood suggests that the Man of Law is a materialist who wants Custance's marriage with the Sultan to succeed since it is a wealthy one, and who fails to appreciate that for her it would be a bondage preventing her from realizing her full Christian potential (lines 192–244). Significantly, the rich royal attire which would doubtless be of great interest to such a materialist is not described, either when Custance marries the Sultan or when, more advantageously, Christ through Alla makes her a Queen (line 693). Once again, it seems to be in keeping with Chaucer's thematic portrayal of Custance's unostentatious goodness that such external trappings should not be over-emphasized.

Indeed, it is perhaps not fortuitous that the words 'dresse' and 'array' in *The Man of Law's Tale* mean 'get ready, go', rather than 'dress up'. When Alla and his wife Custance go to dinner with the Emperor in Rome, no doubt they do put on their best, but Alla 'arrayed' for the feast the previous night (the Riverside edition suggests he 'planned' for it); and when next morning 'Alla gan him dresse, / And eek his wyf, this Emperour to meete' (lines 1100–01) they have more on their minds than what to wear. As a noun, 'array' means 'condition'; it refers to the splendid equipment (implied, not described) and organization of Custance's Roman escort and their Syrian hosts (lines 393–94), but also to the pitiful state Custance is in when the senator finds her drifting on the sea (line 972).

The reason for the lack of detailed descriptions of the rich attire which Custance as an Emperor's daughter and a Sultan's and later a King's wife may be assumed to be wearing is doubtless that in the tale she is portrayed as an icon of passive suffering miraculously rewarded, and her moral perfections are more important than her outward appearance. The merchants give the Tale's only description of her, an impressive moral blazon:

In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
 Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye;
 To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
 Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.
 She is mirour of alle curteisye;
 Hir herte is verray chamber of hoolynesse,
 Hir hand, minister of fredam for almesse.
 (lines 162–68)

Clearly, the inner clothing of the heart suits Custance's Christian character better than outward adornment. In contrast, Emaré, her counterpart in the romance of that name, is given a robe embroidered by a Sultan's daughter with love-motifs; it helps to enflame the Emperor her father to desire an incestuous marriage with her, and when she refuses he sets her adrift like Custance. The robe, which seems to Emaré's father a *fayry* or a *vanyté* (an enchanted garment or else an illusion), functions, initially, as a love-charm from the Orient threatening the Christian purity of the romance heroine.⁷ Custance is afflicted by no such symbolic garment forcing her to disobey her father; rather she goes meekly though reluctantly to marry the Sultan at his bidding, clothed, metaphorically, in the virtues that have ensured the Saracens' conversion.⁸

Enchantment is often associated, in romance, with items that may be worn, like Arthur's scabbard in Malory's tale of *Merlin*, which prevents his wounds from bleeding as long as he keeps it upon him, or Canacee's ring in Chaucer's own *Squire's Tale*, which enables her to understand the language of birds. Accordingly, one should consider the possibility that the Man of Law may wear his barred girdle as a talisman, like the girdle Sir Bertilak's lady gave Gawain. Muriel Bowden, citing what seems to be a guess by J. M. Manly, calls the bars 'narrow metal strips', and by the time of Fisher's edition they have

⁷ Emaré, lines 80–108, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London, 1973). Amanda Hopkins, 'Veiling the Text: The True Role of the Cloth in Emaré', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 71–82, argues that there is nothing magical or particularly symbolic about the robe, which merely fans the Emperor's already ignited lust. But in failing to make the robe causal instead of merely coincidental the author seems to have missed a trick. Mills notes that the robe must have a sexual significance, but Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1967), p. 139, believes that it symbolizes Emaré's inner (moral) perfections.

⁸ Virtues as metaphorical garments appear in Wyclif's sermons XII and XV; in the former he lists twenty, in the latter thirteen necessary garments for the Christian to wear; these include 'love to each other not only in act but in habit', 'unslothfulness', 'bowels of mercy', and 'the exultant peace of God'. English side-notes by F.D. Matthew for Iohannis Wyclif, *Sermones*, ed. Johann Loserth, 4 vols (London, 1887–1890; New York, 1966), III. 91–97 and 114–22. The *locus classicus* is St Paul's injunction to 'put on the whole armour of God' (Eph. 6: 11–17).

become 'metal ornaments'.⁹ Ornaments might be devotional or else prophylactic. In 1388 a Man of Law, a Chief Justice named Tresilian, was condemned to death for treachery (such condemnations being an occupational hazard for high-profile officials in the Middle Ages), and in a desperate attempt to save his life told his executioners that he couldn't die because of certain objects he wore about him (probably not limited to pendants at his belt). Instead of abandoning their purpose, however, they searched him, removed his charms, and everything else, and 'he was hanged naked, and to be more sure of his death they cut his throat'.¹⁰

But even if the bars on a Man of Law's girdle might be metallic, there is no evidence that Chaucer's Man of Law protected himself in his potentially hazardous occupation with a girdle hung with amulets, rather as the fifteenth-century French monarch Louis XI wore a hat studded with images of the saints. In *Quentin Durward*, Sir Walter Scott is 'astonished that an intellect as acute as that of Louis XI certainly was, could so delude itself by a sort of superstition, of which one would think the stupidest savages incapable' (note IX). In chapter 28 Louis is reluctant to approach a stone crucifix 'without having secured the private intercession of some supposed favourite. He therefore turned from the crucifix as unworthy to look upon it, and selected from the images with which, as often mentioned, his hat was completely garnished, a representation of the lady of Clery, knelt down before it, and made the following extraordinary prayer ...' Such behaviour would, of course, not have seemed so stupid to Chaucer's contemporaries as it did to the 'enlightened' Protestant Scott. It would be consistent with Chaucer's humour for the Man of Law to wear talismans while telling a tale in which magic is only mentioned to show how absurd the barbarians were to accuse Custance, of all people, of it—but if this had been Chaucer's intention, he would surely have been more explicit.

⁹ Muriel Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (1948; rpt London, 1967), p. 171; John H. Fisher (ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York, 1977), p. 16. *MED* defines *barre* (6a), as 'an ornamental (gold or silver) strip or bar, as on a girdle', but some editors gloss as 'stripes'; see, for example, Malcolm Andrew (ed.), *The General Prologue*, Variorum ed., 301. Françoise Piponnier in *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1317–18, reviewing Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume*, notes archaeological evidence for girdles decorated with metallic designs.

¹⁰ Edith Rickert, *Chaucer's World* (New York, 1948), p. 162.

While the Saracens attribute their Sultan's infatuation to 'magyk and abusoun' (line 214) and pagan Donegild claims that Custance is a fiend materialized with the help of sorcery and charms (line 755), Chaucer's narrator relies, instead, on Christian astrology and the power of the Cross, the one talismanic 'ornament' that Custance may possibly be wearing or carrying. Early Christians observed that the intersection of the ecliptic and the equinoctial formed a cross, and Chauncey Wood notes that the sign *Libra* was often identified with the Crucifixion.¹¹ When set adrift, at the mercy not so much of the stars or the waves as of God, Custance addresses the Cross in two stanzas that Chaucer added to the story he read in *Trivet*¹² and Gower. Chaucer would, of course, have known lyrics addressing the Cross, and it was conventional enough for his Christian heroine to pray in such terms: 'She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous voys / Unto the croys of Crist thus seyde she' (lines 449–50). She may have noticed the five stars in *Cygnus* that form the shape of the Cross, but Chaucer does not specify any visual object that prompts her prayer. Maybe she only makes the sign of the cross. Perhaps she is looking at the cross on the reverse of one of the gold coins that make up the treasure in her boat, or perhaps, as Fisher in his edition suggests, she is wearing a crucifix.¹³ If so, hers may even be embossed with a likeness of Christ on it, for a crucifix has the power to expel fiends when laid upon those possessed by them, and hence she calls it 'Flemere of feendes out of hym and here / On which thy lymes faithfully extenden' (460–61). Whether she wears it or not, the Cross functions for her in lieu of a magic talisman as a sign of her devotion to Christ.

¹¹ Chauncey Wood, *Chaucer and the Country of the Stars* (Princeton, 1970), p. 286.

¹² For Chaucer's main source, *Trivet's* version of the legend, see Margaret Schlauch, in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago, 1941), pp. 154–206. Gower's and *Trivet's* versions are compared to Chaucer's by Roger Ellis, *Patterns of Religious Narrative in the Canterbury Tales* (London, 1986), pp. 116–68.

¹³ Fisher (ed.), *Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 90, explains lines 460–61 as referring to 'men and women who wear the Cross as talisman'. Crucifixes, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v., were worn as pectorals from as early as the fourth century, usually containing relics of the saints or slivers of the true Cross. But Chaucer's description suggests he has in mind a more elaborate effigy such as one might see in a church. A cross might figure as a pendant on a rosary, but it is stretching speculation too far to suggest that Custance uses a rosary either here or when she prays to Mary (841–54), since none is mentioned in the text.

The fifteenth-century Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino attributes talismanic powers to the astrological image of the cross:

For stars exert their greatest influence when they are in the four corners, or rather pivotal points, of the sky, that is, of the east or west, or of the midpoints on either side. So positioned, they cast their rays across each other so as to form a cross. Accordingly the ancients called the cross a figure that was both made by stellar influence and capable of being imbued with such influence. Hence of all images it has the most considerable talismanic power, and it takes up the virtues and spirits of the Planets ...¹⁴

It was perfectly logical in a pre-scientific age to assume that God's foreknowledge would be written for those philosophers perceptive enough to interpret it in God's ever-reliable stars. Curry argues that Chaucer wrote the *Man of Law's Tale* to show that divine mercy can override astrological determinism,¹⁵ but it is the Sultan's death that the stars predict, not Custance's, and the troubles that beset her marriages, through the malign influence of Mars. What the stars predict is pre-determined, but determined by the same protective God whose Cross is itself written in the heavens, and which Custance possibly wears, round her neck or in her belt, in the shape of a crucifix.

One object which Custance of course doesn't 'wear' is the knife which Hermengyld's murderer tries to foist upon her. Chaucer's treatment of it is curious, as a comparison with Gower's tale of Constance brings out. In Gower the murderer himself finds the knife next to the sleeping Constance, where of course he knew he had put it, and is consequently loud in his denunciations of her. In Chaucer it is the King, Alla, who finds the knife, but what he *sees* is the 'benignity' of the innocent Custance, which so affects him that he ignores the physical evidence against her. Instead, Alla makes her fate hang on the oath of the slanderer, since he is her only accuser, though ostensibly no more a witness to the deed than anybody else. In the legal wrangling in

¹⁴ *Works* (Basle, 1576), p. 556. Ficino's Latin is quoted by Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1964), pp. 72–73.

¹⁵ Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, 2nd edn (London, 1960), esp. p. 189. Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales*, 262–63 and 341, n. 12, on the basis of lines 477–78 capping 295–301, and Patricia Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, 2 vols (London, 1972), II, 114–22, support Curry.

the post-Chaucerian *Merchant's Tale of Beryn*, possession of a knife is regarded as proof of guilt, and the owner of a knife is held responsible for any crime committed with it.¹⁶ In *The Man of Law's Tale*, however, Chaucer directs attention away from the physical to matters spiritual. Knife or no knife, Custance is simply too good to be guilty; but it takes divine intervention to prove it.¹⁷

Beset by evil, Custance survives entirely by divine grace. This the Man of Law emphasizes by citing biblical analogies, and also by one unlikely circumstance. The bloodthirsty Sultanness, having massacred her son and his fellow Saracen converts, not only lets her Christian daughter-in-law go, although, from her point of view, Custance has caused all the trouble, but sees to it that Custance's boat is loaded up with food *and clothing* when she sets her adrift. She might well be only too happy to get rid of Custance's 'tresor' (line 442), those gold nobles inscribed with the Cross, but this added generosity is unexpected. Thus God provides the basic necessities for Custance's lonely two-year voyage, and enables the Northumbrian constable to recognize her as a person of consequence (line 515).

But her clothing is not described, and hence is less obviously an identifying device than, for example, Emaré's magical robe, which so astounds the merchant Jurdan when he finds Emaré in her boat:

The cloth on her shon so bryth
He was aferde of that syght,
For glysteryng of that wede;
And yn hys herte he thowghth right
That she was non erdyly wyght.

(Emaré, lines 697–701)

Custance is clothed more splendidly than this, metaphorically

¹⁶ See 'The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn', 2294–2305, 3281–3310, 3786–3832, in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*, ed. John M. Bowers (Kalamazoo, MI, 1992).

¹⁷ This would be an example of the populist desire for miraculous 'immanent justice' which Helen Cooney, 'Wonder and Immanent Justice in the "Man of Law's Tale"', sees *The Man of Law's Tale* endorsing. In the case of the drunken messenger, however, 'wit and sotil enquiryng' (line 888), which line 885 shows to mean torture, is required to ascertain the truth: see James Landman, 'Proving Constant: Torture and *The Man of Law's Tale*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998): 1–39.

speaking, in that Christian faith which the Sultanness has not only rejected but ironically exported for Northumbrian pagans to accept. Custance's 'treasure' is not her gold or her attire, but her Christianity, in accordance with St. Paul's metaphor, 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us' (2 Cor. 4: 7).

Appreciating the Tale's lack of regard for finery helps one to make sense of its prologue about the hardships of poverty. This prologue is something of a puzzle (which Peter Beidler would solve by excising it altogether),¹⁸ since the deprivations Custance obviously does suffer plunge her into danger rather than destitution. When all is said and done, Custance lives well when she is in Rome, Syria or Northumberland, and Chaucer makes a point of saying that the boats in which she is set adrift contain food, and necessary gear. What the prologue does, if, *pace* Beidler, it belongs where it is, is to introduce the tone of *contemptus mundi* which Chaucer casts over Trivet's story by his extensive borrowing from Lotario di Segni's *De Miseria Humane Conditionis*.¹⁹ Chaucer turns a story of repeated hardship into a demonstration of Christian preservation, emphasizing the fact that there is no earthly salvation available for a humanity doomed to wretchedness by the Fall. We are not to have wealth and luxury, or any splendid array, flaunted at us in this tale, although at several points we might have expected it. Even though Custance was 'fostred up so soft' (line 275), and her wanderings end in feasting and reunion, the tale concludes in death: 'But litel while it lasteth ... / Joye of this world' (lines 1132–33).²⁰

This otherworldly ideal is reinforced by the contrast between Christ's mother, whose goodness at last puts an end to Custance's weary wanderings (lines 950–52), and her non-Christian enemies whose

¹⁸ Peter Beidler, 'Chaucer's Request for Money in the Man of Law's Prologue', *Chaucer Yearbook* 2 (1995): 1–15, argues that Chaucer originally addressed the problematic prologue to a group of merchants in the hope of earning a fee to reduce his debts, and that its present location is merely a compiler's mistake.

¹⁹ As a result, says Alfred David in 'The Man of Law vs. Chaucer: A Case in Poetics', in *The Strumpet Muse* (Bloomington, IN, 1976), 'in spite of the Christian context, the gloomy impression of mutability is even stronger [than in the *Knight's Tale*]' (p. 128).

²⁰ See Morton W. Bloomfield, 'The Man of Law's Tale: A Tragedy of Victimization and a Christian Comedy', *PMLA* 87 (1972): 384–90. The tragedy is this world's woe, the comedy the joy which is to follow for the Christian victimized by the world.

wickedness caused them. Part I of the Tale is set in Syria, outside the pale of Christendom, where the Saracens cannot even read their fate in the stars, where the Sultan's infatuation is put down to magic, and where a conversion undertaken to secure a marriage is punished by treachery leading to massacre. The scorpion responsible is the Sultan's mother, 'riche and gay' (line 395), who comes to meet Custance suspiciously well turned out. She is in fact hiding like the traditional scorpion her poisonous intentions under a fair aspect. 'Riche was th'array / Of Surryens and Romyans met yfeere' (lines 393–94), but of Custance's dress and appearance we hear nothing. The Sultan himself has not even seen her face in a picture, but has only heard the merchants' account of her virtues, these being all the adornments he needs to beautify the impression he has conceived of her. She could hardly be presented more differently than, say, the provocative Alison in *The Miller's Tale*, who is dressed to attract lords and yeomen, and the huge-hatted and scarlet-enfolded Alison of Bath, who having had five husbands and being in search of her sixth, is dressed, one might say, to kill.

Such ostentation is a distinguishing feature of the virago, 'a standard monitory topos of later medieval antifeminist satire and discourse'.²¹ The Sultaness and Donegild are typical of women who 'desire the accoutrements of power—crowns, girdles, ermines, and costly clothes—as ill-disguised weapons' in their battle to seize mastery from their menfolk. They forfeit their femininity without of course achieving true masculinity: the Sultaness is 'Virago' and 'serpent under femynynytee' (lines 359–60), Donegild 'mannish' or, worse, 'feendlych spirit' (lines 782–83). That Custance is the polar opposite of these her characteristically modest lack of ostentation makes clear.

The use of clothing to bewitch has perhaps never been better described than in the Miller's portrayal of Alison (I.3233–70). The rhetorical device of the blazon typically starts at the top of the head and works downwards, as in the Harley lyric 'Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale'.²² But the gaze at Alison directs itself first at her girdle, then roves over the apron on her loins, and then for eight more lines moves up to her collar and headdress. Derek Traversi comments on the naturalness of

²¹ Schibanoff, 'Worlds Apart', 68.

²² *The Harley Lyrics*, ed. G. L. Brook (Manchester, 1948), pp. 37–39.

the associations she evokes rather than on what she wears.²³ But after delighted exclamations the voyeur's gaze drops suddenly to the purse at her girdle. Her colouring, her singing, her graceful movements intervene and then, after lingering at her mouth, the gaze rivets itself upon the brooch at her breast. It is a technique of representing delight by the device of the enthusiastic double-take. Finally come her shoes, and yet not quite finally, for we follow their lacings high up the leg, and the focal point of attention is back, almost, where it started. Yet Alison is not innocent of the attraction she is causing: at the end of ten lines meticulously enumerating the garments she wears, the gazer suddenly encounters her 'likerous ye' under artfully plucked brows staring enticingly back at him. There is a rapacity about her artful assumption of artlessness that corresponds to the predatory nature of the weasel to which she is compared. Custance in contrast does not stare back, but radiates: 'She is mirour of alle curteisye' (line 166); and she is giving rather than grasping, for the merchants' portrait of her concludes with the hand that liberally ministers to the poor. The Man of Law's corrective to the Miller's description of Alison is to eschew outward display by concentrating not on what Custance wears but on the 'hoolynesse' of her heart.²⁴

Custance's special status as an example of Christian purity is further emphasized by the nature of both her suffering and her subsequent escapes. The hazards Custance has to survive are of two kinds, natural and wilful, and her preservation from all of them is accounted for with the help of comparable biblical anecdotes. Poverty, the prologue begins by reminding us, inflicts thirst, cold and hunger on those who suffer from it (line 100). Add to these the chance of drowning, and it is clear that Custance's risks are of the most elemental kind. Twice set afloat, Custance spends first three and then later five years drifting about the Mediterranean and Atlantic oceans. But Christ fed the five thousand and stilled the storm. So too Custance's food lasts out, and her clothing presumably does also, as the Israelites' shoes and raiment

²³ Derek Traversi, *The Canterbury Tales: A Reading* (London, 1983), pp. 67–69.

²⁴ For comment on Custance's 'mature moral seriousness' revealed in these lines (162–68, the stanza quoted above), helping us to believe in the 'extraordinary endurance' she will show in surviving her misadventures, see George R. Keiser, 'The Spiritual Heroism of Chaucer's Custance', in *Chaucer's Religious Tales*, ed. C. David Benson and Elizabeth Robertson, Chaucer Studies 15 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 121–36.

did in the wilderness (Chaucer unfortunately misses that allusion).²⁵ Like Jonah, who was even worse off, preserved in the depths of the sea in 'the fisshes mawe / Til he was spouted up at Nynyvee' (lines 486–87), she is washed up safe on shore.²⁶ On or approaching land she has another triple hazard to survive, this time from human enemies, but once again God miraculously preserves her. She escapes a general massacre, false witness, and attempted rape.

Although the biblical allusions illustrating these escapes do not feature clothing, in the anecdotes of David and Judith the omission again seems significant. Chaucer points out that David fought Goliath without armour, and in the same way Custance was devoid of physical protection when the lecherous steward in his struggles with her tumbled overboard and was drowned. Armour of course would only have impeded the agile David, who had no intention of fighting at close quarters. Similarly, Custance's clothing ought to have been an inadequate defence, since in the normal course of events she would scarcely have been strong enough to resist her attacker. In Gower's version she tricks the steward into looking out of the ship to make sure they are alone, and then pushes him overboard;²⁷ but such self-reliance would be out of place in Chaucer's tale, where she is typically a victim entirely dependent on God's mercy, and there it is the steward's own lustful violence that sends him to his doom.

In the case of Judith, who saved her people by cutting off the head of the besieging general Holofernes, Chaucer makes no mention of clothing, either here or in *The Monk's Tale* where he tells her story again. But people who knew the biblical story well would recall that clothes play an important part in Judith's strategy. Judith was a widow who for three years and four months after her husband's death 'put on sackcloth and always wore mourning' (Jth 8: 4–5, NEB). When she conceived her plan she first 'put ashes on her head, and uncovered

²⁵ Deut. 8:4 (AV): 'Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.'

²⁶ In the Middle English *Patience*, ed. J.J. Anderson (Manchester, 1969), Jonah is advised to wash his clothes! 'Penne he swepe to þe sonde in sluchched cloþes; / Hit may wel be þat mester were his mantyle to wasche' (lines 341–42).

²⁷ *Confessio Amantis*, II.1112–25. Gower locates the castle in Spain, and names the steward Thelous; Chaucer deliberately leaves both location and villain unnamed, as if a 'renegat' who has 'reneyed oure creance' (an apostate who has renounced our [Christian] faith) deserves to have his name blotted out.

the sackcloth she was wearing,' and then prayed, referring to the terrible account of Simeon's vengeance on the Shechemites in Genesis 34: 'Thou didst put in his hand a sword to take vengeance on those foreigners who had stripped off a virgin's veil to defile her, uncovered her thighs to shame her, and polluted her womb to dishonour her ... [G]ive to me, widow as I am, the strength to achieve my end. Use the deceit upon my lips to strike [the Assyrians] dead' (Jth 9: 1-2; 9-10). She then removed the sackcloth and widow's weeds she was wearing, 'put on a head-band, and dressed herself in her gayest clothes, which she used to wear when her husband Manasses was alive. She put on sandals and anklets, bracelets and rings, her earrings and all her ornaments, and made herself very attractive, so as to catch the eye of any man who might see her' (Jth 10: 3-5). By the fourth day of her pretended defection to the conquerors of her supposedly doomed people, Holofernes is beside himself with desire for her. He throws a banquet, gets drunk, and becomes a paradigm for every man who has ever lost his head over a woman. Both the similarity and the distinction between the stories is apparent: like Judith Custance avoids rape, but she needs no seductive or deceitful tricks to do so. Here and elsewhere, God himself protects her without any outward show on her part. In Northumberland it is her inner virtue that persuades all except the envious to love and revere her (lines 530-32; 621-25).

That head-band of Judith's does, however, remind us that Custance wore something similar. Apart from the girdle which the drunken messenger 'wel ... underpighte' with drink (line 789), and which is a mere metonymy for his bloated stomach, Custance's head covering is the only item of clothing that is specifically mentioned in the Tale. It was customary for a woman to wear a head covering to show that she was married. The gesture of removing hers could, in this instance, signify Custance's meek acceptance of the fact that Alla has, as she believes, repudiated her. But Chaucer complicates. Custance is not thinking of herself, but primarily of her son. She takes the will of Christ 'in good entente' (line 824) and only wonders at Alla's hard treatment of his son, not of her (line 857). And whereas Judith puts her headscarf on to make herself attractive to her enemies, Custance takes hers off to protect little Maurice from harmful sunshine. In a pathetic passage not derived from Trivet, Chaucer writes:

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde,

'Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm.'
 With that hir coverchief of hir heed she breyde,
 And over his litel eyen she it leyde ...

(lines 834–38)

Commentators explain that it was believed that an infant's tender eyesight should be protected from the sunlight. They also mention that Abraham in the Mystery play covers his son's eyes as he is about to sacrifice him.²⁸ So Custance is protecting her son Maurice as far as she is able. But since Donegild, ostensibly in the King's name, has ordered the constable to put them in a boat 'and croude hire fro the lond' (line 801: crowd, thrust), they will need a miracle, as Isaac did, if they are to survive. Miraculously, God has graciously ensured that Custance's ship should be provided with food and 'othere necessities' (line 871), for Donegild, presumably wishing no trace of her sojourn in the country to remain, orders 'al hir geere' (line 800) to be thrust away with her. Eventually, of course, the constable's despairing question—

how may it be
 That thou wolt suffren innocentz to spille,
 And wikked folk regne in prosperitee?

(lines 814–16)

—is answered when Donegild is put to death and Custance and Alla are reunited. Their reunion is a result of his journeying to Rome to do penance for his deed, which, just though it was, is still matricide and requires expiation. But meanwhile Custance shows more humility than the constable does: not merely accepting what seems to be God's will but actually welcoming it, she points out that the Blessed Virgin Mary's torment was incomparably worse than hers, since she saw her Son slain, whereas Custance's yet lives.

Besides the comparison, or what she calls 'no comparison' (line 846) with Mary, in her tender care for her suffering child, the passage brings the legend of Veronica and the *sudarium* to mind. Veronica, it will be remembered, was the woman who supposedly gave her head cloth to Christ to wipe the sweat and blood from His face as He carried the Cross towards Golgotha; when He returned it there was a *vera eikon* or true likeness of His face imprinted upon it.²⁹ By

²⁸ See note to lines 837–8 in the *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 862.

²⁹ This is Giraldus Cambrensis's false etymology of the name (*Speculum Ecclesiae*,

the fourteenth century it had become an especially famous reason for pilgrims to make the journey to Rome where it was preserved. Custance's removal of her head cloth to protect her child is an act of compassion like Veronica's.

The other 'garment' that Custance is advised to lay aside is, strangely enough, her 'hoolynesse' (line 713)—or the narrator's unduly literal interpretation of it. Holiness is included among the virtues with which, in effect, the merchants' account of her to the Sultan clothes her: 'Hir herte', they told him, 'is verray chambre of hoolynesse' (line 167). But when she marries Alla, 'hoolynesse', in the restricted sense of holy virginity, is no longer an option for her. Chaucer adds a comment which Derek Pearsall considers 'more than the narrative requires':³⁰

For though that wyves be ful hooly thynges,
They moste take in pacience at nyght
Swich manere necessities as been plesynges
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,
And leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside.

(lines 709–13)

Thus pruriently the Man of Law implies that what she really has to lay aside is her clothing. But a joke at the expense of Custance's iconographic holiness seems out of place in a tale that lauds her immaculate goodness. Admittedly, the mediæval Church did rank virginity highest of the three states of womanhood; Chaucer's Parson, following Augustine and Jerome, calls it 'the hundred fruyt' (X, 868–69) after the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. But to demean Custance by so rigid an interpretation of the *topos* seems at odds with the tenor of the Tale as a whole. In the Bible, submission to a husband is a metaphor for the Church's devotion to Christ,³¹ and in any case her

chapter. 6), which in fact is the same as Berenice.

³⁰ Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales*, 264. Roger Ellis, *Chaucer's Religious Tales*, more harshly blames the narrator, saying, 'Crucially missing from this shabby exercise in logic-chopping is any meaningful sense of the sacramental character of marriage' (p. 154). David Raybin, who sees Custance's historical function as primarily maternal, is more sympathetic in 'Custance and History: Woman as Outsider in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 12 (1990): 65–84, especially pp. 76–77.

³¹ Eph. 5: 23 (AV): 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.'

marriage to Alla is expressly given divine approval:

Jhesus, of his mercy,
 Made Alla wedden ful solempnely
 This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene;
 And thus hath Crist ymaad Custance a queene.
 (lines 690–93)

Since it was customary to marry ‘with rynges’ (line 712), Custance should have been wearing one, but if so it plays no part in the recognition scene when the senator introduces her to Alla. Typically self-effacing, she conceals her identity from the senator when he rescues her from the sea (lines 971–73); then and thereafter, the ring is either overlooked by the narrator or hidden by Custance—as Chaucer says, ‘I may nat tellen every circumstance’ (line 1011). It is Maurice’s likeness to Custance that attracts Alla’s attention; when Alla asks whose the child is, the senator says he knows nothing of Maurice’s father, but cannot believe that the child is illegitimate since he has never come across maid or wife so virtuous as Maurice’s mother (lines 1020–29). Either he has not observed her ring, which seems unlikely since she has lived in his house for a long time, or she is not in the habit of wearing any distinguishing mark of wifehood. Certainly Alla does not need to see a ring to know who she is: one look is enough for him (lines 1053–54). Though her father is apparently slower to recognize her, he accepts her word that she is his daughter and Alla her lord, and eventually Alla goes home to England with ‘his hooly wyf so sweete’ (line 1129).

Whether as maiden, wife, or mother of the future Christian Emperor, Custance never lays her holiness aside. Far from joking that sexual contact is an embarrassment Custance must pretend not to like, the Man of Law is praising her gracious willingness to lay aside any moral vesture, or false morality, that might stand in the way of her perfect obedience to the will of Christ. If, as Paul Clogan says, *The Man of Law’s Tale* seems to lack ‘realistic characterization and apparent descriptive detail’,³² that lack is consistent with the meaningful absence of physical adornment that marks the entire exemplary narrative, in which Chaucer illustrates divine providence and portrays an idealized heroine arrayed in such virtues that the merchants can justly describe her as humble, prudent, courteous, holy and generous.

³² Clogan, ‘The Narrative Style of *The Man of Law’s Tale*’, 217, n. 4.

The Question of Closure in Fragment V of *The Canterbury Tales*

If we were able to 'call up him that left half told / The story of Cambuscan bold', and ask him for the rest of it, I suspect Chaucer would simply direct us to *The Franklin's Tale*. Fragment V is so manifestly a unity that we do violence to it if, as too often, we read either *The Squire's Tale* or *The Franklin's Tale* in isolation. Having praised the Squire for his eloquence and his 'gentillesse', 'thow hast thee wel yquit / And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit',¹ the Franklin proceeds to demonstrate those two qualities in a narrative as satisfyingly whole as the Squire's was inconclusive. His tale is a rhetorical rather than a narrative completion of the Squire's.

The Squire's Tale is incomplete only because the Squire promises to recount a series of events which do not happen. Without the summary of potential plots at the end, the tale would consist of a description of Cambyuskan's birthday feast and the complaint of the deserted falcon, linked by a spring morning *aubade*: examples of three distinct genres, each example complete in itself. *The Squire's Tale* is hardly a narrative at all, because hardly anything happens in it.

Romance without adventure may seem a contradiction in terms; but attempts to decide to which romance genre *The Squire's Tale* belongs have been only partly successful. Various critics, following Haldeen Braddy, have regarded it as imitating an Oriental romance; so that they think they know how Algarsyf won Theodora to wife, and how Cambalo managed to wed his own sister, a conclusion which Braddy thought reason enough for Chaucer's not proceeding with the tale.² More recently Jennifer Goodman has found a model for Chaucer in the long mixed romances, compilations from eclectic sources of

¹ *The Canterbury Tales*, V.673–74. All quotations are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry Benson, 3rd edn (Boston, 1987).

² Haldeen Braddy, 'The Genre of Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*', *JEGP* 41 (1942): 279–90; see p. 289.

unlikely adventures involving, wherever possible, magical artefacts.³ However, Chaucer's models, I rather think, were rhetorical and lyrical: the courtly *descriptio*, the *aubade*, the complaint. *The Squire's Tale* provides no more than the groundwork for a romance.

In this it differs from Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*, which burlesques the popular, as opposed to courtly, tail-rhyme romance of adventure. Less and less happens the further *Sir Thopas* proceeds, because it is an exercise in diminution, as John Burrow has shown.⁴ Still, its mode is narrative, and its incompleteness illustrates the fact that adventures in the popular romance, as in modern television soap operas, are potentially endless: they do not conclude: they have to be stopped. The Squire is not telling a courtly parallel to *Sir Thopas*: Chaucer does not repeat himself.

Once one has done away with the expectation of narrative in *The Squire's Tale*, it is not necessary to blame him for not being able to tell a good story.⁵ Rather than seeing his tale as another Chaucerian burlesque, I wish to regard it as a rhetorical exercise the key to which is circularity, or recommencement. Chaucer knows when he has finished, and usually marks his endings clearly. The Canon's Yeoman brings his tale literally to a full stop: 'And there a poynt, for ended is my tale' (VIII.1480). *The Squire's Tale* manifestly lacks a concluding punctuation 'poynt'. In contrast, the Franklin is careful to indicate, in words used also by the Man of Law, among others, that 'my tale is at an ende'. The Squire's paradigm, on the other hand, is not an end but a recommencement: 'And ther I lefte I wol ayeyn bigynne' (line 670).

The Aristotelian formula for a work of art, that it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, applies to *The Franklin's Tale* because it is fundamentally a literary work; whereas *The Squire's Tale* is conceived in the oral mode, which being coterminous with experience stops only when the speaker falls silent, for reasons not necessarily

³ Jennifer R. Goodman, 'Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* and the Rise of Chivalry', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 5 (1983): 127–36.

⁴ John Burrow, "'Sir Thopas': An Agony in Three Fits", *Review of English Studies* 22 (1971): 54–58.

⁵ In despair of making narrative sense of it, Shirley Sharon-Zisser, 'The Squire's Tale and the Limits of Non-Mimetic Fiction', *Chaucer Review* 26 (1992): 377–94, proposes that we regard it as Chaucer's experimental investigation of the interplay between the fantastic and the metafictional!

prompted by the tale he is telling.

To say this is not to advocate the theory of Joyce Peterson and others that the Franklin interrupts the Squire.⁶ That form of closure implies a verisimilitude in the frame narrative which the theory of rhetorical orality I am advocating does not require. If we could be sure that the events on the pilgrimage were meant to be as lifelike as possible, the case for interruption would be a strong one.⁷ But John Clark rightly objects that the Franklin's praise does not sound like an interruption.⁸ It is too easy to assume that Chaucer was as interested in subtle psychological implications as our novel-reading mentality often tempts us to believe he was. The trouble with the interruption theory is that by implying that at least some pilgrims were worried about the length of the tale, it suggests that Chaucer wished to expose the Squire's narrative incompetence, and regarded his entire lack of any sense of proportion as a flaw that should amuse the discerning reader.

Perhaps he did indeed intend that it should; but the operative word here is 'reader'. A listener, used to the circumlocutions and repetitions that facilitate understanding in oral compositions, might react differently. Chaucer, it seems, had both kinds of audience in mind. That their expectations differ follows from an essential distinction between the spoken and the written word, usefully made by Walter J. Ong, SJ:

⁶ Joyce E. Peterson, 'The Finished Fragment: A Reassessment of the "Squire's Tale"', *Chaucer Review* 5 (1970-71): 62-74; Charles F. Duncan, "'Straw for Your Gentilesse": the gentle Franklin's Interruption of the Squire', *Chaucer Review* 5 (1970-71): 161-64.

⁷ It would complement the Knight's and Host's interruptions of the tales they wanted no more of; it would explain why the tale ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence after two lines of the third part, and would imply that Chaucer *included* the summary of plot themes because he wished to show that the Squire could never have finished all he planned to say. If Chaucer needed a way of putting an end to an interminable narrative, no one could interrupt as tactfully as the Franklin: the Knight is too full of admiration for his son to stop him, and the Host too wise to offend the Knight; by applauding too soon the Franklin convinces everyone, including perhaps the Squire, that his tale is over. This argument satisfyingly enhances our sense of verisimilitude on the pilgrimage, but unfortunately seems to lack textual evidence.

⁸ J. W. Clark, 'Does the Franklin Interrupt the Squire?', *Chaucer Review* 7 (1972): 160-61. Marie Neville, 'The Function of the "Squire's Tale" in the Canterbury Scheme', *JEGP* 50 (1951): 167-79, says that the Franklin's words imply that the *Squire's Tale* is complete, and so are not an interruption (p. 168 n. 4).

A spoken word, even when it refers to a statically modeled “thing”, is itself never a thing or even a “sign” (“sign” refers primarily to something seen and thus, however subtly, reduces the oral to the visual and the static). No real word can be present all at once as the letters in a written “word” are. The real word, the spoken word, is always an event, whatever its codified associations with concepts, thought of as immobile objectifications. In this sense, the spoken word is an action, an ongoing part of ongoing existence.

Oral utterance thus encourages a sense of continuity with life, a sense of participation, because it is itself participatory. Writing and print, despite their intrinsic value, have obscured the nature of the word and of thought itself, for they have sequestered the essentially participatory word—fruitfully enough, beyond a doubt—from its natural habitat, sound, and assimilated it to a mark on a surface, where a real word cannot exist at all.⁹

It is hard to read the Squire’s eight-line apology for prolixity without amusement, or to applaud his inability to reach ‘the knotte why that every tale is toold’ (line 401). As readers we do not participate: we objectify and criticize. Robert Haller grants him scant praise even as a rhetorician, and reads the promises with which his tale ends as recapitulation of the faults it contains.¹⁰ *The Franklin’s Tale*, on the other hand, is both more extensively and efficiently rhetorical (Benjamin Harrison counts seventy ‘colours’ of rhetoric in it),¹¹ and a much tauter literary work, in that it has what John Leyerle calls a ‘nucleus image’ (the rocks) which unifies the narrative.¹²

Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that although it is customary nowadays to emphasize the Squire’s incompetence,¹³ two of our

⁹ Walter J. Ong, SJ, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 1977), pp. 20–21.

¹⁰ Robert S. Haller, ‘Chaucer’s “Squire’s Tale” and the Uses of Rhetoric’, *Modern Philology* 62 (1964–65): 285–95.

¹¹ Benjamin S. Harrison, ‘The Rhetorical Inconsistency of Chaucer’s Franklin’, *Studies in Philology* 32 (1935): 55–61.

¹² John Leyerle, ‘The Game and Play of Hero’, in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. N. Burns and C. Reagan (London, 1976), pp. 49–62.

¹³ Gardiner Stillwell, ‘Chaucer in Tartary’, *Review of English Studies* 24 (1948): 177–88; Derek Pearsall, ‘The Squire as Story Teller’, *University of Toronto Quarterly* 36 (1964): 82–92; John P. McCall, ‘The Squire in Wonderland’, *Chaucer Review* 1 (1966): 103–09.

greatest poets, Spenser and Milton, read his tale as the beginning of a long series of knightly adventures, and wished it longer. As variations on a theme of 'gentilesse', the Squire's performance well deserves the Franklin's commendation (*pace* John Fisher, who thinks the Franklin's bourgeois inability to understand true courtliness thereby exposed);¹⁴ I don't doubt that as storyteller the Squire would fail. The only story he tells, in which birds fall on their knees, is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the affectations of courtly love, a falcon's complaint that manifestly lacks the 'measure' which is a hallmark of true gentilesse,¹⁵ for as the Franklin says, 'After the tyme moste be temperaunce' (line 785). The Squire justly admits 'Myn Englishh eek is insufficient' (line 37). He disqualifies himself as a narrator by being so aware of the insufficiency of his literary powers that he fails either to locate his characters or make his events plausible. Canacee is so beautiful that she beggars all description. As a result even Emelye is more visible than she. Moreover, the Squire invites us to think better of the ambassadorial knight than the knight's performance warrants, for he confesses, with a pun intended to belie his words, that he can't climb the knight's high style of courtly diction (lines 105–06).

Closure in these circumstances must concern not the characters and events described (for they have not been) but the Squire's manner of presenting his material. That manner is the rhetoric of oral exposition. When he has finished saying what he has not said, his presentation will be complete.

The speeches in *The Squire's Tale* are the speeches of those who would conclude if they could, but who end up saying more than they intend and less than they wish. The knight who brings the magic gifts to Cambyuskan's court achieves courtliness by a rhetorical diffuseness which accumulates otiose phrases and tautologies. His initial statement, 'My lige lord ... saleweth yow ... and sendeth yow ... by me ... this steede of bras', consists of five phrases which each begin a whole new line; the rest of the space they occupy is padding. He seems inordinately fond of tags consisting of synonymous or contrasting

¹⁴ John Fisher (ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn (New York, 1989), p. 187; a position forcefully argued by Haller, 'Chaucer's "Squire's Tale" and the Uses of Rhetoric', 293–94.

¹⁵ Moderation is one of the several attributes of 'gentilesse' discussed by Lindsay A. Mann, "'Gentilesse" and the Franklin's Tale', *Studies in Philology* 63 (1966): 10–29.

words: 'as he best can and may', 'esily and weel', 'in droghte or elles shoures', 'thurgh foul or fair', 'Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste'. He finds two ways of saying what everybody knows, how long a day is. 'Withouten wem of yow' recurs four lines later as 'withouten harm'.

The little matter that accompanies this excessive display of art concerns an entirely inconsequential account of the capabilities of the brazen horse. It will take you wherever you wish in twenty-four hours: apparently neither more nor less. Alternatively, it can fly. One would have thought this was a necessary condition of covering any conceivable distance in a single day, not an extra option. Twiddling a pin will bring it back again: no mention is made of how to start it going in the first place; if, as appears later, this was a secret for Cambyuskan's ears only, the pin would be better not mentioned at all. Finally the courteous knight stifles questions by referring to the supreme skill of the engineer who wrought it, and passes on to the next gift.

The skilful incompetence of this must be deliberate. It is after all, a style that Chaucer's arch-disciple, Lydgate, made peculiarly his own. The virtue he found in it must have been, essentially, its roundabout inconclusiveness. I take, almost at random, a stanza from the debate of the Four Daughters of God in Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*. Replying to Right,

Certys quod mercy, so it nat displease
Vnto youre noble, and wise providence
His dethe to you, may be full lytyll ease
For holy wryt, Rehersyth in sentence
Iff ye considre, in youre advertens
That dethe of synners, the high god to queme
Is werste of dethes, if ye of Right luste deme
 (II, 232–38)¹⁶

In the phrases emphasized, Mercy argues that Right's insisting on the death of the sinner is the worst possible way of pleasing God. The inflated style that blows this idea up into a rhyme royal stanza suits the dignity and courtesy of the debate in Heaven. Mercy begins with a deferential disclaimer of superiority, states her counter-argument with an undogmatic 'may', appeals to the authority of holy writ, and

¹⁶ *A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady*, ed. Joseph A. Lauritis *et al.* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1961), p. 327.

delicately invites attention to it in two non-imperative conditional 'iff ye' clauses. Logically, the last two lines involve either a startling paradox or a carelessly inappropriate line-filler. Right can only judge 'of Right', being who she is; but Mercy suggests that her allegorical identity depends on her denying the demand she has just made, that the sinner should die. In the Christian context of Lydgate's debate, the paradox is indeed a higher and appropriate logic.

When the context is mechanical engineering, however, one might expect a less abstruse and circuitous exposition. The Squire's ambassadorial knight has a second speech, in which he tells the King how to work the magic horse. He gives perhaps the most muddled driving instructions in the history of transport. The diffuse courtesy of his public address could surely be discarded when conveying purely technical details in private conversation. He might, in the interests of clarity, restrict himself to the use of polite plurals and the formal 'sir'. But he still has his tags, his circumlocutions, and his repetitions. Twice he insists that what he has to divulge is only 'betwix us two': one assumes that the courtiers marvelling at the horse move discreetly away. Even so, he carries his secrecy so far that he only promises to tell the King 'ful soone' how to recover the horse when he has made it vanish, and never does tell him: the secret, it seems, is to be kept from the pilgrims, and us, as well.

Worse still, he appears woefully unaware how much explanation the situation requires. Having mentioned, perhaps ill-advisedly, the 'wrythyng of a pyn' during his first speech, he now explains that all you have to do to make the horse go is to 'trille a pyn': which, or where situated, he omits to state. Two lines later, however, he remembers that it is advisable to let the horse know where you want him to take you. It would perhaps be an anachronism to blame the knight for confusing the mechanical and the animate, but we can hardly overlook the absurdity that on arrival it is necessary to bid the horse descend. Will he have forgotten his directions, or might he deliberately overshoot the mark? But that is not enough: you must trille another pin or the machine will not work. All this, however, pales into insignificance in the light of his inexplicable omission of the bridle, on which (lines 312–13 and 340) the whole motive power of the horse somehow depends.¹⁷

¹⁷ Kathryn Lynch, 'East meets West in Chaucer's *Squire's and Franklin's Tales*', *Speculum* 70 (1995): 530–51, criticizes this reading on the grounds that in Eastern analogues a rider is tricked into mounting the horse without knowing how to make it

Nevertheless, given time, he would, no doubt, make all things clear. There is no hurry. The Squire can always begin again where he left off. Only if we expect a narrative should we get impatient. But neither Cambyuskan nor his sons are about to ride the horse anywhere yet: sooner or later, perhaps, but not in the time scheme of the tale as it is extant now. And where nothing is going to happen there is no urgency to explain how it might happen. Chaucer's, and Lydgate's, style is suited to social relations in an oral or residually oral community where time is not money and a rapid end to the subject in hand is neither envisaged nor desired.

Richard Lock draws a useful distinction between the way oral and literate societies conceptualize time.

The past of a society which has written records extends linearly from the present moment back to the time when the first event was recorded. Time can be envisaged as a sequence beginning at a fixed point in the past and continuing through the present into the future. For an oral culture in which the social attributes are unconsciously but always changing, the secular past can only be seen in terms of present circumstances. The mythic past, on the other hand, is used as a kind of mirror in which present and future are reflected. Time, therefore, is seen in terms of recurring or repetitive situations, closely linked to the cosmic or human cycles which are experienced by the group and with which their regular activities are synchronized.¹⁸

Richard II's courtiers, if they were listening to Chaucer read his works,¹⁹ need not have known how long his book was: he might go on

descend, so that the Squire's knight is *too* explicit, thus depriving the story of its main plot (pp. 539-41). But there is no plot, for the Squire has no story to tell.

¹⁸ Richard Lock, *Aspects of Time in Medieval Literature* (New York, 1985), p. 19. On the effect of the change from a largely oral to an effectively literate society in the centuries before Chaucer, see M. T. Clancy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London, 1979), and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

¹⁹ As suggested by the miniature in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 61, reproduced in colour as frontispiece to both volumes of P. M. Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry* (London, 1972).

interminably for all they could guess, and perhaps for all they cared. But the reader who handles his manuscript can soon tell how far he is from an ending. The oral world that *The Squire's Tale* envisages does not presuppose an ending; but *The Franklin's Tale*, which implies the readership of a literate audience, does.

In his book *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode exploits a distinction between *chronos*, merely sequential time, and *kairos*, critical or significant time, a season or point in time that is 'charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end'.²⁰ This is poets' or novelists' time, tangential to real time in ways that upset neo-Classical critics who advocated observance of the unities in drama. It is a time that can incorporate the whole of Romeo and Juliet's love affair (but not the largely irrelevant whole of their lives) in 'the two hours' traffic of our stage'; and can do so meaningfully because of the predetermined form of closure on which the events dramatized retrospectively depend.

Browning's poem 'Memorabilia'²¹ admirably illustrates this application of the term 'kairos'. Browning meets a man who once saw Shelley, and his awe and admiration provoke the man's laughter. What occurred in mere chronicle time for him would have been *kairos* for Browning, the disciple of Shelley. The second half of the poem describes how, on a blank moor with 'a certain use in the world no doubt', Browning picked up a moulted eagle's feather. The 'hand's-breadth' of moor where he found the feather, emblematic of the encounter with Shelley, was all that mattered to him: 'Well, I forget the rest.' Most of life, which oral circularity often uncritically reproduces, is eminently forgettable; literature, especially written literature, concentrates on the moment made memorable by its severance from the undistinguished continuum of experience in which it occurs. *The Squire's Tale* is (exaggerating a little) like someone ranging purposelessly over such a moor as Browning's, whereas *The Franklin's Tale* concentrates on the hand's-breadth of significant moorland which contains the feather.

The Squire's Tale is of course not all purposeless, though the Squire's narrative method may be. The deserted bird's complaint is a self-contained narrative of wooing, winning, desertion, and betrayal,

²⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London, 1966), pp. 46–48 (quotation at p. 47).

²¹ *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 2 vols (London, 1896), I, 297.

neatly concluding at a 'poynt' when 'lorn withouten remedie' (line 629), she swoons in Canacee's lap. But the Squire plans to resume the story to show how she 'gat hire love ageyn / Repentant' (lines 654–55). The story is complete, but endless: the reader doesn't need a sequel, but the Squire is quite prepared to supply one, for life after all goes on. It is illuminating to see how, in contrast, Chaucer combats Dorigen's resistance to closure in her comparably excessive complaint in *The Franklin's Tale*.

James Sledd justifies Dorigen's complaint, drawn out, as he considers it, by the inclusion of so many inappropriate *exempla*, as a mirror of Dorigen's disordered state of mind; his psychological reading supports his view of *The Franklin's Tale* as a tragicomedy whose characters 'engage our sympathies ... but excite no painful emotions'. Rather than stressing the pathos of Dorigen's situation, Chaucer maintains a balance between potential tragedy and comedy which encourages the right mood of detachment required by the happy ending.²² However, the comedy depends less on Dorigen's emotional disturbance than on Chaucer's rhetorical strategies in his selection and arrangement of Jerome's examples.

Dorigen's complaint is a comic exercise in diminution, a series of precedents for committing suicide which is constantly threatening to reach closure as she runs out of things to say, while she strives desperately to keep it going until Arveragus returns and can solve, she hopes, her dilemma with better advice than she seems able to give herself.

She begins by citing a case which far exceeds the exigencies of her own situation. Phidon's daughters drowned themselves in a well after the thirty tyrants had made them dance naked in their father's blood. Twelve lines are required to describe this anecdote, which 'oughte ynogh suffice' if she needed proof that suicide was preferable to loss of chastity. But at once she subjoins the fifty Spartan maidens who died rather than submit to Mycenaean lust: only seven lines this time, plus the conclusive coda 'Why sholde I thanne to dye been in drede?' (V.1386). This is overkill with a vengeance, if the phrase may be permitted, but another eight-line anecdote, of a girl murdered while desperately clutching an image of Diana, introduces another conclusion, four

²² James Sledd, 'Dorigen's Complaint', *Modern Philology* 45 (1947–48): 36–45 (quotation at p. 44).

lines long this time, making the dubious point that if maidens were willing to die for their honour, so all the more should wives be. It is peculiar logic for a woman supposedly free of all obligations to her husband. But it enables her to cite Hasdrubal's wife, and Lucretia, and then seven maidens, somewhat out of turn, and another faithful wife.

So she goes on gathering Jerome's examples, surely not just because they are there, but because her sense of an ending is so acute that she knows that when the precedents run out she must expect to act. 'What sholde I mo ensamples heerof sayn?' (line 1419): the attempted *occupatio* merely postpones the inevitable end, for no accumulation of examples can do more than emphasize the implications of any one of them. And when the anecdotes have been attenuated into no more than the names of the last three protagonists, Arveragus returns.

Sledd's reading has the familiar disadvantage of explaining Dorigen's behaviour in real-life rather than in literary terms. If her emotion seems excessive, that is what literary convention, not feminine hysteria, demands. Comparable literary figures complain; so must she. Gerald Morgan contends that 'each *exemplum* has been chosen because of its relevance to a certain pattern of moral exposition'.²³ Chaucer is more concerned to exhibit the virtues of chastity, fidelity, and honour, virtues advocated in the tale as a whole, than Dorigen's troubled state of mind. The pagan logic of suicide is unacceptable in a Christian context, and the complaint projects the same morality that leads Arveragus, in his concern for 'trouthe', to protect at any cost his wife's integrity. Morgan's reading, which takes account of the principles of classical rhetoric, is an important corrective to Sledd's; but even if Chaucer's primary purpose in the complaint is to underline the moral themes of the tale as a whole, the fact that the complaint is spoken by Dorigen in a mood of considerable anxiety cannot simply be ignored.

Her complaint is the most noteworthy instance of Chaucer's skill in bringing to closure a speech which the character uttering it wishes to make interminable. But the contrasted invocations in which Dorigen and Aurelius pray for the rocks to be removed display a similar tendency. Dorigen questions God's providential justice, suggesting that no clerkly arguments can reconcile God's omnipotent goodness with the grisly rocks that mar the perfection of his wise

²³ Gerald Morgan, 'A Defence of Dorigen's Complaint', *Medium Ævum* 46 (1977): 77-97 (quotation at p. 77).

creation. She wishes the rocks were sunk into hell, but does not expect God to do it, for promptly she hands Aurelius the task, and when he apparently succeeds, complains that their disappearance is contrary to nature. Her invocation does not so much end as get cut short: 'God ... kepe my lord! This my conclusion.' It is Chaucer's rather than her conclusion, for 'Thus wolde she seyn' (line 894): she is nothing if not repetitive.

Aurelius is much more practical, and prays to the sungod, as lord of the moon who causes the tides, with an explanation of how he should go about granting his prayer. There is no guarantee that Phoebus will hear or understand, and so Aurelius repeats his instructions: lines 1065–76 are a rewording of lines 1055–64. And even then he has little hope of success, for his brother has to put him to bed for two years, until that slow-thinking brother remembers the astrologer whose magic may relieve his distress.

Aurelius' two speeches to Dorigen are superficially circuitous like the ambassadorial knight's, but in fact and in contrast they build steadily up to their devastating conclusions. Aurelius is a creature of the same timeless world of endless circularity, until plunged by the chance of achieving his desires into the literate world of sudden endings. After two years and more of inconsequential poetizing, singing love-sick songs to himself, he summons up courage to speak to her, 'when he saw his time', and passes briefly into the world of the here and the now. His declaration of love is, paradoxically, a model of pellucid indirectness. At no time does he say 'I love you', or suggest he expects his suit to succeed. Yet he leaves her in no doubt whatever of his meaning. His tortuous opening sentence, linking himself in voluntary exile with her absent lord, screws its way past many qualifications to a declaration of hopeless service. His address is discreetly devoid of familiar forms: 'Madame, reweth', 'ye', 'yours'; except in the last line, where the intimate 'sweete' enhances his despairing plea for mercy. The whole speech is a *circumlocutio*, but Aurelius is too sensible of Dorigen's kindness in listening to him at all to damage his case by prolixity: hence the penultimate line 'I ne have as now no leyser moore to seye' (line 977).

The ambassador's speeches entirely lack Aurelius' intensity. There is no emotive pressure to restrain his rambling courtesies: no fear of rejection, or even of losing his audience's interest. He stops not because he has finished, for he never does finish, but because attention wanders

to some other topic. Aurelius ends laconically with the most piteously final threat he can muster, 'ye wol do me deye!' No doubt he means it, but of course he soon relapses into endless languishing, ludicrously timed again by the precise Franklin at 'two yer and moore' (line 1102; cf. line 940), which he spends in bed.

Very different is Dorigen's reply. She rejects his declaration with uncompromising directness; consisting mostly of emphatic monosyllables, her language is at the farthest possible remove from Aurelius' tortuous circumlocutions: 'I wol been his to whom that I am knyht. / Taak this for fynal answere as of me' (lines 986–87). Unfortunately her answer is not final: like the Squire, she cannot resist beginning again, and by her rash refusal to admit closure lays herself open to the implied reproaches of his second speech.

This second speech is as triumphant as the first was despairing, but has the same courteously indirect form and climactic structure. It consists of a syntactically elaborate introductory apostrophe, an avoidance of direct statement until the very end, plural markers of politeness, expressions of humility and of want of confidence and acquiescent submission to whatever Dorigen will decide, and a swift conclusion. Both know that she is trapped, for a noble lady cannot break 'trouthe'. That obligation, therefore, is what he harps on. The repetitions have the force of accumulating emphasis, aided by imperatives, 'avyseth yow', 'repenteth yow', 'Dooth as yow list; have your biheste in mynde', and curt reminders, 'well ye woot', 'ye woot right wel', 'ye seyde so'. We sense her mounting consternation as hint follows hint till no doubt is left. He offers proof: 'ye may go see', and the speech reaches its devastating, hope-destroying climax, 'But well I woot the rokkes been awaye' (line 1338), and stops.

Browning in 'Old Pictures in Florence', a serio-comic meditation on the merits of unfinished and second-rate art, recalls Milton's allusion to *The Squire's Tale*. He imagines activists talking art and politics: 'our half-told tale of Cambuscan', like Giotto's unfinished bell-tower, can be completed when Florence is freed from Austrian tyranny. But then, presumably, a new beginning will be required, because the point Browning has been making is that perfected art is static, while man is growing all his life long.²⁴ Even the least famous of Florentine

²⁴ A favourite theme of Browning's: see especially 'Andrea del Sarto'. 'Andrea has chosen "perfection of the life", only to find that his life is deeply unhappy while it is

artists represent an advance on the perfection of ancient Greek art, because they tried to begin again to paint a new view of man. Their works, now decaying, and not only those of their greater successors, deserve preservation; and Browning is miffed because a lost tablet of Giotto's has been recovered by someone other than he. Closure is, in the last analysis, inimical to life, perhaps also to the greatest art. True perfection, as Troilus in the eighth circle and Chaucer in the Retraction realized, belongs not on earth but in Heaven. Giotto's most perfect work was a mere circle drawn with a single sweep of the brush to impress the Pope, but he left his greatest work unfinished.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
 The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
 Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) 'O!
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

(stanza XVII)²⁵

So, in spite of Spenser and John Lane, is *The Squire's Tale*. So are *The Canterbury Tales* themselves, a work that stands excitingly at the interface between oral and written modes of fiction. *The Squire's Tale* gives rise to words between the Franklin and the Host, but no debate follows *The Franklin's Tale*. That, as we have seen, is a tale conceived in the literate, not the oral, tradition: the oral goes on, like life, while the literate concludes. And so the answer to the Franklin's concluding question about which character was the most generous is taken out of the fictional world of the pilgrimage to Canterbury, and into the readers' world: we, not the pilgrims, must engage in any debate that is to follow.

his work that is "perfect"—too perfect, cripplingly perfect, "perfect" in a sense which implies (for a man so richly endowed) downright failure': Ian Jack, *Browning's Major Poetry* (Oxford, 1973), p. 227.

²⁵ *Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, I, 267–72.

Justice in *The Physician's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale*: A Dialogic Contrast

Each of the binary groups in the middle of *The Canterbury Tales*, Fragments IV, V, and VI, consists of two connected and contrasting tales designed to be read in conjunction and not, as is too frequently the case, in isolation.¹ Yet we privilege, and teach, *The Merchant's Tale* rather than *The Clerk's Tale*, *The Franklin's Tale* rather than *The Squire's Tale*, and *The Pardoner's Tale* rather than *The Physician's Tale*. The reason probably is that the preferred tales, placed second in each fragment, evince ironies and an open-endedness that we recognize as modern, whereas their companion pieces are closed systems which demand assumptions that we tend to regard as outdated. Indeed, the envoy to *The Clerk's Tale* invites readers to reject it, for times have changed; reject, however, does not mean ignore. In Jauss's terms, we could say that, on the whole, the preferred tales show the modernity, and the others the alterity, of the Middle Ages.²

Fragment VI contains a retelling of Livy's tragedy of Virginia and the Pardoner's tragedy of the three revellers. Chaucer presents these tales as authored, respectively, by Titus Livius, so that it is 'no fable, / But knowen for historial thyng notable' (*The Physician's Tale*, lines 155–56), and by the hypocritical Pardoner, whose 'entente is nat but for to wynne, / And nothyng for correccioun of synne' (*The Pardoner's Tale*, lines 403–04).³ Though Donald Howard claims that the 'Physician's Tale reflects his mentality',⁴ it seems best not to blame the Physician for supposed weaknesses in the tale assigned to him, for he appears

¹ Jerome Mandel, *Geoffrey Chaucer: Building the Fragments of the Canterbury Tales* (Rutherford, NJ, 1992). For *The Physician's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale*, see chapter 2.

² Hans Robert Jauss, 'The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature', *New Literary History* 10 (1979): 181–229.

³ All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston, 1987).

⁴ Donald Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley, CA, 1976), p. 334.

only after Livy's tale has been recounted, in the Host's response to it, whereas *The Pardoner's Tale* is framed by its teller's interaction with his audience.⁵ *The Physician's Tale* relates a received tradition, an unalterable slice of true history, whereas *The Pardoner's Tale* is a contemporary drama capable of affecting and reforming its hearers in ways beyond its teller's control.

In terms of Bakhtin's theory of the novel set forth in *The Dialogic Imagination*, I wish to propose that *The Physician's Tale* tends toward monologue, *The Pardoner's Tale* toward dialogue. This, I believe, is the essential contrast between them, and the reason for most modern readers' preference for *The Pardoner's Tale*.

Writing of classical epic, Bakhtin says

Both the singer and the listener, immanent in the epic as a genre, are located in the same time and on the same evaluative (hierarchical) plane, but the represented world of the heroes stands on an utterly different and inaccessible time-and-value plane, separated by epic distance. The space between them is filled with national tradition. To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one's contemporaries (and an event that is therefore based on personal experience and thought) is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of the epic into the world of the novel.⁶

Of course *The Physician's Tale* is not an epic, nor *The Pardoner's Tale* a novel, but the distinctions Bakhtin makes between the two genres apply fruitfully to these two contrasted texts. *The Physician's Tale* is conceived in what Bakhtin calls the highly distanced and temporally valorized mode of epic, whose subject is the absolute past, whose source is a sacrosanct tradition and whose text presents a 'distanced image, beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing,

⁵ Critics have sometimes tried to assess the tale in terms of the character of its teller; for example, Emerson Brown, Jr, 'What is Chaucer Doing with the Physician and his Tale?', *Philological Quarterly* 60 (1981): 129–49. But this is to confuse moral and aesthetic considerations: some of Chaucer's least admirable characters (like the Miller and the Pardoner) tell some of his most artistically skilful tales.

⁶ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981), p. 14.

incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating present.⁷ Readers of *The Physician's Tale* are simply confronted with an evaluative system according to which chastity is more important than life, and then invited to contemplate with mingled horror and admiration a situation where Virginius' beheading his daughter is to be regarded as actually a noble and heroic deed. Those who are not prepared to do so must turn over the leaf and choose another tale, as many modern readers of course have done. There is no getting beyond the force of the tradition. That is what happened; Livy says so. 'The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute' (line 157).

In following the traditional narrative, Chaucer emphasizes its remoteness from contemporary experience by allegorizing rather than historicizing his characters. Apius is no reasonable governor and lawgiver, but virtually a personification of lust, rushing insanely to his ruin in blatant contempt of the laws he has himself established. The innocent Virginia is transformed into an *exemplum* of moral perfection.

In the *Anticlaudianus*, Nature constructs a perfect man able to overcome the onslaught of the vices that have so often corrupted mankind. Chaucer may well have had Alan of Lille's rhetorical *tour de force* in mind when his Physician describes how Nature makes Virginia replete with beauty, wisdom, and all the maidenly virtues.⁸ In the *Anticlaudianus*, Nature's prodigal hand pours all the riches of beauty upon her new-made man.⁹ Mental and spiritual Virtues are equally munificent, and finally Nobility approaches her mother Fortune for the less reliable gifts which Fortune alternately offers and retracts.¹⁰ The Host's conclusion about the *Physician's Tale*—

⁷ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 17.

⁸ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, PL 210, 487–576. For other analogues, see *The Physician's Tale*, ed. Helen Storm Corsa, Variorum Chaucer, 2, pt 17 (Norman, OK, 1987), p. 97.

⁹ 'Omnes divitias formae diffundit in illo I Naturae praelarga manus' (*Anticlaudianus*, 7. I, PL 210, 550B).

¹⁰ 'Una manus donat, retrahit manus altera donum' (*Anticlaudianus*, 8.1, PL 210, 561 D).

That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
 Been cause of deeth to many a creature
 (lines 295–96)

—though conventional, is far from inept; however, the Parson provides another commentary on the limitations of these gifts.¹¹ And as Alan's poem ends with a *psychomachia* in which Nature's virtuous man defeats the vices, so Chaucer's tale may be read allegorically, as a confrontation between virtue and vice. Virginia triumphs not in battle but through martyrdom, her father beheading her to save her from becoming the victim of Governor Apius' wicked lust. By introducing the theme of salvation (spiritual not physical), Chaucer goes beyond Alan's Pelagianism: in spite of Theology and the visit of the Virtues to the throne of God, the *Anticlaudianus* is a humanistic rather than religious poem.

The effect of Chaucer's historical and allegorical distancing is a tendency toward monologue. There is no arguing with unalterable facts, and no possibility that such thematically constricted characters could have behaved otherwise. Implausible or not, the events in the tale abide no question. Potential objectors are simply silenced. The goddess Nature may boast about her masterwork, Virginia, but can say nothing to protect her; the governesses are invoked only to be rebuked and then dismissed; and the mother who takes her child regularly and reverently to the temple disappears without explanation and is conspicuously absent when needed most. If Virginia is 'strong of freendes' (line 135), they are remarkably quiet supporters; not till she is dead and Apius is about to hang her father do a thousand people rush in to save him (lines 259–61)—perhaps the tardy friends are among them. Following the *Roman de la Rose*,¹² his immediate source, Chaucer simply eliminates Icilius, Virginia's betrothed. Those who speak in the course of the tale pronounce rather than discuss. There is no dialogue. Virginia herself colludes with the patriarchal death-sentence, asking only a brief reprieve, then silences herself by

¹¹ *The Parson's Tale*, 450–74; see Gerhard Joseph, 'The Gifts of Nature, Fortune and Grace in the *Physician's*, *Pardoner's* and *Parson's Tales*', *Chaucer Review* 9 (1974): 237–45.

¹² Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois, 5 vols (Paris, 1914–24), 5559–5628. See also *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York, 1962), pp. 118–20.

swooning, and at last is silenced for good by her father's 'piteous' but law-enforcing hand.

This tendency to monologue is nowhere more insistent than in the way Apius prohibits the dialogue of defence. He requires Virginius to be present before he can give 'diffynytyf sentence' (line 172), but when he arrives, it is not for trial but for verdict:

But hastily, er he his tale tolde,
 And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,
 And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,
 That al was fals that seyde his adversarie,
 This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,
 Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,
 But yaf his juggement, and seyde thus ...

(lines 192–98)

Chaucer reinterprets Apius' judgment in terms of English legal procedure, arguing an interest in the question of justice in the tale that has not usually received the attention it deserves. D. W. Robertson suggests that the way Apius bribes Claudius to help him obtain possession of Virginia reflects a fourteenth-century legal abuse known as 'champarty', in which a plaintiff claiming land would bring feed supporters into court with him.¹³ But in addition Chaucer portrays Virginius as the victim of a trick to which defendants in cases tried by the process of English common law were liable. Whereas Roman or civil law depended on a judicial examination of evidence through interrogation of the opposing parties under oath, the English common law involved accusation and denial resolved by a judge or jury who sought to establish which party had the right to prove his case.¹⁴ An English mediæval judge was an umpire rather than an inquisitor;¹⁵ once Virginius has accepted the charge by denying it, Apius can pass straight to judgment. Had Virginius withheld his denial, Chaucer suggests he had two courses open to him: to prove his case in a

¹³ D. W. Robertson, Jr, 'The Physician's Comic Tale', *Chaucer Review* 23 (1988): 129–39 (especially pp. 134–35).

¹⁴ F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (1898; rpt Cambridge, 1923), II, 560ff.

¹⁵ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II, 671.

manner befitting a knight, or to call upon the testimony of many witnesses. Claudius' proof was to be produced only through finding 'good wisesse' (line 169). These are the perjurers who are eventually put to death (lines 275–76). Their presence is sufficient to encourage Apius to pass sentence, without allowing Virginius the option either of trial by combat (as might befit a knight) or of producing supporters ready to swear he was entitled to claim paternity.

It was in Apius' evil interests to proceed as fast as possible to judgment, and the legal loophole he found seems to be the denial implicit in 'al was fals that seyde his adversarie' (line 195). His refusal to 'heere a word moore of Virginius' (line 197) suggests that Virginius has begun, naturally enough, by denying the charge—indeed, it was requisite for a defendant to begin with a downright 'No,' which he would then be asked to make good either by battle or compurgation (an oath supported by helpers).¹⁶ But thereby Virginius falls into the trap of clarifying the point at issue before his proof is brought forward, so that it only remains for the judge to pass definitive sentence on the case. Had Virginius been wily, he would have avoided a negation, and pleaded an 'exception'—in effect demanding an inquest on a counter-accusation such as that Claudius was guilty of a merely malicious prosecution.¹⁷ Now, however, there being no higher court to which he might appeal,¹⁸ Virginius has no recourse but to go home and acquaint his daughter that he must 'by force'—that is, by force of law—give her up to a life of lechery with the judge or else cut off her head.

The novelty of Chaucer's presentation is apparent when one compares it with the classical accounts. Pomponius' legal analysis, which Charles Appleton regards as independent testimony to the historicity of the incident, seems to support Livy's assertion that Virginius was not present to hear Appius' original sentence:

¹⁶ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II, 608–10. For Bromyard's denunciation of false compurgators, the 'twelve Apostles of falsity and Anti-Christ,' who 'should go to London, or some other place, to witness for the truth,' see G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 347.

¹⁷ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II, 587–88. See Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, 339–49, for legal abuses including bribery, lying, and taking advantage of the common person's lack of technical expertise.

¹⁸ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II, 667.

A certain Virginius is said to have begun the secession. He was outraged when he learned that Appius Claudius, contrary to the law which he himself had taken from the ancient law and inserted in the twelve tables, had deprived him of custody of his own daughter and had given sentence in favour of the fellow suborned by him to claim her as his slave—infatuated with love of the girl, the judge had made a mish-mash of right and wrong. Since the oldest provisions of the law had been violated in the case of his daughter (in that Brutus, the first consul in Rome, had laid down the legal claim to liberty in the case of Vindex, the slave of the Vitellii, whose information had uncovered a treasonable conspiracy), and since he thought his daughter's chastity was more important than her life, he killed her with a knife which he snatched from a butcher's shop, his object being to forestall the affront of rape by the girl's death. While his daughter's blood was still wet he rushed straight from the slaughter and took refuge with his fellow-soldiers.¹⁹

Brutus' manumission of a slave to allow the slave to give evidence established the precedent of 'vindiciae', which had become a sort of *habeas corpus* for any of the common people who might find themselves appropriated by a slave-owner.²⁰ It was this law of liberty that Appius disregarded when he gave his client Claudius possession

¹⁹ My translation of: 'Initium fuisse secessionis [Appleton reads 'seditionis'] dicitur Verginius quidam qui, cum animadvertisset Appium Claudium contra jus quod ipse ex vetere jure in duodecim tabulas transtulerat, vindicias filiae suae a se abdixisse, et secundum eum qui in servitutem ab eo suppositus petierat, dixisse, captumque amore virginis omne fas ac nefas miscuisse, indignatus, quod vetustissima juris observantia, in persona filiae suae defecisset (utpote cum Brutus, qui primus Romae consul fuit, vindicias secundum libertatem dixisset in persona Vindicis, Vitelliorum servi, qui proditionis conjurationem indicio suo detexerat) et castitatem filiae vitae quoque ejus praeferendam putaret, arrepto cultro de taberna lanionis filiam interfecit in hoc scilicet ut morte virginis contumeliam stupri arceret, ac protinus recens a caede madentique adhuc filiae cruore ad commilitones confugit'. See Charles Appleton, 'Trois Episodes de l'histoire ancienne de Rome: chapitre IV: Le procès de Virginie', *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* (1924): 592–670; see p. 598. See also the *Digest of Justinian*, trans. Charles Henry Monro, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1904–1909), I, 11–12.

²⁰ See Appleton, 'Trois Episodes', 600. Brutus executed his own sons for conspiring to bring back the Tarquins, and freed and enfranchised the slave who had overheard and revealed the plot (Livy, *History of Rome*, Book 2, 4–5).

of Virginius' daughter so that she would be available when he wished to satisfy his own lust.

Livy, unlike the earlier and less-distinguished historian Diodorus Siculus of Agryium,²¹ describes two trials at which Appius presided. Appleton rejects the view that Diodorus of Sicily, who mentions only one, preserves the original version of the legend more accurately than Livy, on the grounds that Diodorus omits some essential details of Appius' conduct. According to Livy, Appius failed to secure the girl at the first trial because her betrothed, Icilius, insisted that her father should be present to answer the accusation; at the second, he gave judgment before Virginius could protest, pretending that he and Icilius were determined to cause sedition. Livy's account, as Appleton shows, is the more plausible. Reducing Appius' two decisions to one, as Diodorus does, would imply that Appius disregarded his own law of 'vindiciae pro libertate' so blatantly as to commit a theft in the very presence of the legal possessor by making over the possessor's daughter to a claimant without examining the evidence. Only in the absence of the father could Virginia be placed temporarily in the custody of the claimant; therefore, there had to be two occasions on which Appius pretended to act within the law, the second necessitated by his failure to secure her even temporarily the first time.

Chaucer, relying on the *Roman de la Rose* rather than Livy, has nothing to say about two trials. Rather, he insists that there will in effect be not even one. The false churl Claudius, bribed with gifts 'precious and deere' and warned that he will lose his head if he reveals the 'conspiracie' (lines 145–49), applies to Apius to hear his accusation against Virginius:

As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,
In which I pleyne upon Virginius;
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witenesse.
(lines 166–69)

²¹ *Diodorus of Sicily*, ed. and trans. C. H. Oldfather, 12 vols (Cambridge, 1976–93), IV, 420–23.

The last two lines translate Jean de Meun's

et se Virginius le nie,
 tout ce sui je prez de prover,
 car bons tesmoigns en puis trover,
 (*Le Roman de la Rose*, 5582–84)

but Apius' response is not in the French: he requires Virginius to be present before he can give 'diffynityf sentence' (line 172). This is the first citation in the *OED* of this common phrase, referring of course to the final judgment that will close the case. In a legal procedure based on accusation and denial, Virginius must be there to admit or deny the charge before there can be an issue for the judge to proceed upon.²² Only when he presents himself are the details of the 'cursed bille' (line 176) set forth. It is apparent that Chaucer is not attempting to reproduce the conditions of Livy's second trial, which Jean de Meun does not mention, for in Livy Appius does all he can to prevent Virginius from appearing, whereas here he summons him.

Crucial to Chaucer's conception is the comparison between two forms of justice, that of Apius and that of Virginius. Certainly when Virginius goes home, sits down in his hall, and summons his daughter in order to tell her he must kill her, the parallel with Apius, sitting 'in his consistorie' and giving 'his doomes upon sondry cas' (lines 162–63), is not to be missed. In neither Livy nor Jean de Meun is Virginius' action so delayed or so deliberate. But it would be a mistake to conclude that he constitutes himself a judge as unjust as Apius, passing a sentence of death instead of slavery upon his daughter and usurping the divine prerogative of deciding questions of life or death.²³ Rather, the parallel scenes emphasize the difference between the two authorities, the lustful judge and the loving father.

²² Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II, 594.

²³ As, for example, Anne Middleton does: 'The *Physician's Tale* and Love's Martyrs: "Ensamples Mo Than Ten" as a Method in the *Canterbury Tales*', *Chaucer Review* 8 (1973): 9–32 (see p. 20).

As Bakhtin implies,²⁴ however, even a monologue must be uttered in a context and thus is in potential dialogue with other discourses whose existence it ignores; it thereby defines itself as a monologue. It may be argued (though I would not) that *The Physician's Tale* is in dialogue with itself because the injustices it recounts are not self-evidently necessary. Virginia's potential guardians (mother, friends, father as protector) have to be suppressed textually to prevent them, as it were, from showing cause why they should not come to her aid; Apicius escapes legal punishment by committing suicide; Claudius' witnesses are executed, though he himself is reprieved out of compassion by the father who could not relieve his own innocent daughter. These objections are, however, external to the text, introduced by readers outside the closed monologic circle of the tale who wish to take issue with the way it presents history (on grounds of likelihood and verisimilitude)—which would be appropriate only if the characters belonged to the real world rather than to a monologic text. *The Physician's Tale* does not interrogate itself, as I shall argue *The Pardoner's Tale* does. It is in dialogue not with itself but with its critics. Within the narrative fragment of which it forms a part, however, it may be regarded as being in dialogue with *The Pardoner's Tale*, in which justice is both done and seen to be done.

The Pardoner's Tale is dramatic because its characters are constantly in dialogue. When they see a corpse, they ask for information and receive it from the taverner and a boy. Then they decide what to do, agree together, accost and vituperate an old man who replies to their questions, and plot and counterplot against one another. Beyond this, the tale is in dialogue with itself because the Pardoner's denunciation of vices which the revellers proceed to exhibit establishes a norm against which their conduct can be judged. For example, their discourteous bullying of the Old Man is rebuked by the scriptural injunction (Lev. 19: 32) that young people should show respect to the aged (lines 739–44).

It seems unjust that their young companion should die when the

²⁴ Language ('every socially significant verbal performance') is 'heteroglot', representing 'the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between [e.g.] the present and the past'; and since 'all languages of heteroglossia ... are specific points of view on the world ... they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically' (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 290–92).

Old Man who would like to die goes on living, but their attempt to kill Death would, if successful, only confer on them an equally unnatural and therefore unjust immortality. Ungoverned and incorrigible, not meek and obedient like Virginia, they culpably fail to recognize the Old Man's directions as a warning to avoid the peril they are in and find Death because their moral conduct has been propelling them toward him all the time.

At the same time the Old Man is the Pardoner's unwitting self-portrait.²⁵ There is a grim dialogue between the Old Man, alive when he should be dead, and the Pardoner, spiritually dead when he should be alive: the Pardoner's avaricious lifestyle is an expression of the death-wish that the Old Man voices. The Old Man who urges Faustus to repent in Marlowe's play is a much simpler concept than Chaucer's, but in voicing Faustus' despairing consciousness of his abandonment to evil he clarifies one aspect of the function of his counterpart in *The Pardoner's Tale*: to suggest the Pardoner's 'terrible weariness of carrying his burden of sin'.²⁶

Moreover, in presenting his tale in persuasive conjunction with his spurious relics, the Pardoner is in dialogue with the pilgrims, and through them with Chaucer's audience. Dialogue gives the Pardoner and his characters a novelistic indeterminacy that distinguishes them from characters in the kind of literature that *The Physician's Tale* represents, characters which have no conceivable inner life other than what they publicly display. An epic hero 'has already become everything that he could become', Bakhtin says:²⁷ like unchanging allegorical figures, Apollonius and Virginia are restricted to the thematic ideas of lechery and chastity by which they are characterized throughout the tale. Not so the Pardoner's three revellers. 'The worst of hem' (line 776) initiates the plan to steal the gold, but by the time the youngest becomes 'the false empoysnere' it is a moot point whether he has not exceeded 'this homycides two' (lines 893–94) in wickedness. If they can change for the worse, they could conceivably have changed for the better.

²⁵ As argued by Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (1985; rpt London, 1993), pp. 102–04.

²⁶ Alfred David, *The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry* (Bloomington, IN, 1976), p. 201.

²⁷ Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 34.

Yet above all *The Pardoner's Tale* alludes to the Christian dialogue of salvation, to which the Pardoner seems already to have responded with an unequivocal 'No'. It is no good sentimentalizing 'the Pardoner's subconscious appeal for compassion' which Alfred David discerns in the Pardoner's portrayal of the terrifying loneliness of the Old Man.²⁸ The Pardoner is damned as well as Faustus. But Marlowe's audience and Chaucer's pilgrims (and beyond them his readers) might learn from the terrifying consequences of an inability to repent, to compassionate themselves.

The most important injustice in the tale is that done to Christ, the only truly guiltless victim of injustice, through whose death therefore not only is divine justice satisfied where it is due but divine mercy is made available where it is not due. The Pardoner denounces swearing, gluttony, and gambling—all attacks on Christ. 'Oure blissed Lordes body they totere' (line 474): swearing dismembers Christ's body, as if reenacting the crucifixion. Gluttony, it might be said, brought about the crucifixion, for it caused the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (lines 500–07), while those whose belly is their god 'been enemyes of Cristes croys' (line 532). Gambling is the cause of 'Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughtere' (line 593), and other vices.

Injustice to Christ entailed mercy to humankind. As Theseus remarks in *The Knight's Tale*, echoing a favourite verse of the Middle Ages, Psalm 144: 9, 'gentil mercy oghte to passen right' (line 3089).²⁹ The Pardoner himself knows little of mercy:

I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,
 Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
 Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,
 Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
 (lines 448–51)

Nevertheless his 'moral tale' (line 460), by virtue of its morality, implies the availability of the Christian mercy which the Pardoner himself

²⁸ David, *Strumpet Muse*, 201.

²⁹ A favourite *topos*: see the debate poem *Mercy passib rijtwnes* in Auvo Kurvinen, 'Mercy and Righteousness', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 181–91. The source text is Ps. 144: 9: 'miserationes eius super omnia opera eius'. Compare: 'Quia iustitiae vincit miseratio normam' (*Anticlaudianus*, 6.7, PL 210, 547D), William Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, ed. W.W. Skeat (1886; rpt. London, 1984), B.11.134a and 17.312a, and Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, III 1282.

seems to have repudiated.

The mercy to which the dialogue of *The Pardoner's Tale* tends, in spite of its hypocritical teller, even informs the pagan monologue which precedes it but which cannot escape being taken up in dialogue with it. In saving his daughter from lechery, symbol of the corruption of sin that God's righteousness must punish, Virginus performs an act of mercy. 'Mercy' and 'grace' (lines 231, 236), after all, are what she requests. Death rather than shame is mercy, if shame is equated with damnation. It is in keeping with this theme, rather than with the tragic story of the pure Virginia, that *The Physician's Tale* ends with a warning to forsake sin, and a reminder that God punishes when least expected, justly inflicting damnation in Hell where the worm of conscience gnaws perpetually.³⁰ In this context, Virginia's readiness to submit to her father's will, in God's name, is not simply an indication of the power of patriarchy, but symbolic of the creature's obligation to submit himself to his Creator's—or rather to his Heavenly Father's—will.

In the dialogue that constitutes Fragment VI, pagan injustice culminates in the mercy of Christian reconciliation. When the Four Daughters of God met and kissed, according to a familiar mediaeval allegory based upon Psalm 84: 11, divine Mercy satisfied Truth and Justice and established Peace.³¹ The Pardoner's dialogue with the pilgrims erupts in conflict when he offers his spurious relics to the Host, but concludes in harmony when the Knight intervenes and they are reconciled by the kiss of peace. Perhaps there is hope for the Pardoner after all.

The transfer from high tragedy to crude comedy recalls the Pardoner to life. *The Physician's Tale* is too remote in its prestigious

³⁰ Marta Powell Harley, 'Last Things First in Chaucer's Physician's Tale: Final Judgment and the Worm of Conscience', *JEGP* 91 (1992): 1–16, finds the moral conclusion appropriate to a tale in which the inequalities of human justice are contrasted with Divine judgment.

³¹ The Four Daughters of God appear in Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B. 18.113ff., in John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, and in the morality play *The Castle of Perseverance*, 3129ff. See Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God: A Study of the Versions of this Allegory*, PhD thesis, Bryn Mawr College (Philadelphia, PA, 1907), and eadem, 'The Four Daughters of God: A Mirror of Changing Doctrine', *PMLA* 40 (1925): 44–92, and *A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady*, ed. Joseph A. Lauritis (Pittsburgh, PA, 1961), pp. 84–90.

historicity to have room for comedy; it dismays the Host, who finds its pathos more affecting than he can long endure and hastily seeks to counteract it with 'myrthe or japes right anon' (line 319). Instead he gets an even grimmer tale of sudden death, relating not to the remote past but to the spiritual condition of any or all of the contemporary pilgrims. His response is comically crude, an obscene comment on the generative organs of the unregenerate Pardoner. The comedy restores the chastened pilgrims to laughter and their journey continues in intimacy and fun: 'And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye' (line 967). Dialogue is restored.

It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. As a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical it must be brought close . . . Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically . . . Familiarization of the world through laughter and popular speech is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in European civilization.³²

The high seriousness of the initial tales in each of the binary Fragments IV, V, and VI gives way to different kinds of comedy. After even the sobering tales of sudden death in Fragment VI Chaucer restores harmony—through comedy—in the localized, fourteenth-century world of the pilgrimage. In the transition from *The Physician's Tale* to *The Pardoner's Tale* and epilogue we pass from hierarchical distancing to free and realistic creativity, from monumental monologue to polyglossic diachronic dialogue.

³² Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 23.

Seen and Sometimes Heard: Piteous and Pert Children in Mediaeval English Literature

Philippe Ariès's influential notion that mediaeval people, having no concept of childhood, took little if any interest in their children has been frequently criticized, notably by Linda Pollock and Barbara Hanawalt. In opposition to Ariès, Jerome Kroll 'offered evidence from monastic writings, legal attitudes, and medical treatises that children were viewed and treated differently than adults, and that this reflected a conceptual difference, an awareness of a specialness of childhood'.¹ But the value of Ariès's largely discredited thesis is that he established the importance of historical difference in concepts of childhood, and, as James Kincaid points out, 'is ... aiming at de-naturing "the child", exposing our own constructing apparatus', which is apparently so radically different from mediaeval constructions that it fails to recognize those constructions as relating to childhood at all.² This is because the prevailing modern concept of childhood, as summed up (and criticized) by Chris Jenks in his recent book *Childhood*, takes it for granted that the child is not adult, that the child is not guilty, and that the child is not capable.³

¹ Jerome L. Kroll, 'The Concept of Childhood in the Middle Ages', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 13 (1977): 384–93 (p. 391).

² James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York and London, 1992), p. 62.

³ Chris Jenks, *Childhood* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 123, 131. In the Middle Ages, however, according to Ariès and his followers, children were not thought of as essentially different from adults, but simply as smaller members of the community. They were regarded not as morally irresponsible, but, in accordance with mediaeval religious doctrine, as simultaneously innocent and sinful: hence 'polar positions emerged in the Church's ambivalence towards childhood' (Kroll, 'The Concept of Childhood in the Middle Ages', 391). Playtime was not a "right" for mediaeval children, who were usually expected to start their careers as soon as biologically possible: 'by four and five work appears in children's accidental-death patterns': Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bind: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York, 1986), pp. 157–58. Kincaid

The modern concept of childhood is supposed to have developed after what Edward Shorter calls 'a surge of sentiment' and Lawrence Stone 'a rise of affective individualism' encouraged parents to take a much more intense interest than formerly in their children's moral and social development.⁴ Before the later eighteenth century, says Peter Coveney, the child did not exist 'as an important and continuous theme in English literature'.⁵ However, I will argue, on the basis of evidence drawn mainly from late-mediaeval poems and plays, that children are a significant and continuing presence in English literature from as early as the Middle Ages, and that they function not merely as "piteous" victims, but often as "pert" participants in the narratives concerning them.

Children in mediaeval English literature are noticed often enough to bear out the conclusions of historians such as Hanawalt that they were the objects of considerable care and interest in the Middle Ages. If they are usually victims, like Shakespeare's Arthur or Mamillius, that is because the pathos they evoke is frequently portrayed in literature.⁶ The feelings of parents who found their children drowned in a well, pond or ditch, necessary hazards for children in and around a mediaeval village, are tellingly implied in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*, where a mother finds her murdered son's body in a cesspit:

With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed,
She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,
To every place where she hath supposed

claims that children have little tolerance for free or inventive play, in spite of modern sentimental notions of what they ought to like, preferring 'routine, steadiness, security even unto tedium' (Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 79).

⁴ Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1977), p. 15; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (London, 1977), pp. 222 ff. From the late seventeenth century on, growth, maturation or development becomes 'the single most compelling metaphor of contemporary culture' (Jenks, *Childhood*, 7).

⁵ Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature*, rev. edn (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 29. Originally published as *Poor Monkey* (London, 1957).

⁶ Hanawalt's study of accident victims indicates that 'about a third of children's bodies were found by members of their family', whose love and concern is thereby suggested, although the coroners' inquests 'unfortunately stop short of the parent's lament' (Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, 184).

By liklihede hir litel child to fynde;
 And evere on Cristes mooder meeke and kynde
 She cride ...

(VII.593–98)

Children are sufficiently rare in Chaucer's poetry to be worth remarking when they do appear.⁷ In *The Legend of Good Women* the suppression of the well-known ending of the tale of Jason's perfidy makes the allusion to Medea's two young children in a single line (1657) that says nothing of what informed readers will know she is about to do to them startling in its brevity. The version in *The Monk's Tale* of Dante's horrifying story of Ugolino is similarly restrained; in the interests of pathos, the children touchingly express their willingness to be eaten by their starving father, and die quietly in his lap, but Chaucer does not wreck the pathos by any disgusting addition of cannibalism (VII.2447–54).

The best-known of Biblical child victims is doubtless Isaac, who is saved by a divinely provided substitute just as his father is about to sacrifice him. The author of the Brome mystery play of *Abraham and Isaac* makes as much capital as possible out of the child's meek obedience and mounting fear, in order to appeal to the emotions of mothers, especially those who may have lost young children, in his audience.⁸

Isaac and the Prioress's 'litel clergeoun' (VII.503) are adult idealizations of childhood innocence quite in the fashion of what Jenks calls late-modern re-adoptions of the child 'envisioned as a form of "nostalgia"' and 'seen not so much as "promise" but as primary and unequivocal sources of love'.⁹ Then as now, childhood innocence might imply an excusable irresponsibility equivalent to that of idiots.¹⁰

⁷ On children in Chaucer see D. S. Brewer, 'Children in Chaucer', *A Review of English Literature* 5 (1964): 52–60 and Jill Mann, 'Parents and Children in *The Canterbury Tales*', in *Literature in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Tübingen, 1983), pp. 165–83.

⁸ *Abraham and Isaac*, in *Early English Drama: An Anthology*, ed. John Coldewey (New York, 1993), pp. 136–150 (lines 449–55).

⁹ Jenks, *Childhood*, 107.

¹⁰ The actor delivering the *Cambridge Prologue* (a fragment surviving from a Middle English play that is no longer extant) warns the audience that the wicked Emperor will hang anyone who can't keep quiet—troublesome children and witless adults will merely be bound and beaten! The infant, the lunatic and the leper were all judged

Chaucer, however, at least raises a question as to whether the Prioress's 'sely child' (line 512) is really so 'innocent' (lines 538, 566) that he deserves no blame for his provocative Christian singing in the Jewish ghetto. Sentimental and bigoted though the Prioress is, it is absurd to suggest, as Robert Pattison does in *The Child Figure in English Literature*, that Chaucer 'denigrat[es] her by putting into her mouth a subject thought unfit for artistic representation—the story of a child'.¹¹

Jenks distinguishes two attitudes or strategies of control in regard to childhood. The Dionysian child is recalcitrant and needs to be bullied into compliance with prevailing social requirements; this attitude characterized the Middle Ages and indeed, Jenks suggests, obtained until recently. The Apollonian child, on the other hand, is regarded as essentially innocent, and is nurtured into society through constant psychological surveillance. 'The Apollonian child is truly visible; it is most certainly seen and not heard.'¹² Current wisdom prefers to treat children as Apollonian. Though Jenks's dating is no doubt right in the main, both types are exemplified in early English literature. But they are more easily distinguished as good or gentle children, and rebels or delinquents.¹³

Good children are exemplary, as in the fifteenth-century York Baxters' play of *The Last Supper*, where Christ sets a child before the disciples 'for insaumpills seere' (for various examples), because the child is 'both meeke and mylde of harte'.¹⁴ Such children are also useful, like the one the blind Chelidonian calls upon in the fifteenth-century Chester *Glovers' Play* to 'Leade me, good child, right hastily / unto the water of Siloe',¹⁵ or the boy in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* (VI.666–84) who answers the revellers' questions about their deceased fellow.

legally incompetent, that is, 'beyond the law' in that their special status was conferred by God; 'both children and lunatics were believed to be devoid of reason': see Kroll, 'The Concept of Childhood in the Middle Ages', 388–89, and 392 n.28.

¹¹ Robert Pattison, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (Athens, GA, 1978), p. 21.

¹² Jenks, *Childhood*, 78.

¹³ As Kincaid points out (*Child-Loving*, chapters 6 and 7), both the good child and the delinquent are essentially the same child, but viewed differently, and inadequately, by adults.

¹⁴ *The Last Supper*, in *York Mystery Plays*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford, 1885), pp. 233–39 (lines 85–87).

¹⁵ *The Glovers Play: De Chelidonio*, in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS s.s. 3 (London, 1974), pp. 230–42 (lines 71–72).

These children are diametrically opposed to Cain's unhelpful servant-boy Pikeharnes in *Mactacio Abel*, the Wakefield play of *The Murder of Abel*; the cheeky Pikeharnes is a worthy forerunner of Shakespeare's impish Moth.¹⁶

The distinction between good child and delinquent is best exemplified by comparing the *The Childe of Bristowe* and *The Lyfe of Roberte the Devyll*, fifteenth-century narrative poems of an exemplary or ethical nature, by unknown authors.¹⁷ In the former, a twelve-year-old Bristol boy, unwilling to become a lawyer and risk losing his soul, is apprenticed to a merchant instead. His father, a usurer, when dying wishes to make his son his heir, but the boy pleads that he is too young to have discretion to manage the money. His father insists, and the boy proceeds to impoverish himself through a series of remarkable acts of altruism in order to relieve his father's spirit from the pains of purgatory. The effect of the boy's charity is, ironically, to turn his avaricious father back into an innocent child: 'In that light so faire lemand [gleaming] / A naked child in angelis hand / Before hym dud appere / And seid, "Sone, blessid thu be ..."' (lines 463–66). So changed, his father is enabled to proceed to heavenly bliss. The change is no doubt dictated by the mediæval convention of depicting the soul as a naked infant.¹⁸

While deformed or retarded children might be explained as changelings,¹⁹ demonic ancestry was the best way to account for children who today might be called socially maladjusted. Such is the case of Robert the Devil, conceived after his mother asks the Devil for a son, since God has not answered her prayers. As an infant, Robert kills nine wet nurses by sucking them dry,²⁰ and is rapidly weaned after

¹⁶ *Mactacio Abel*, in *The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle*, ed. A. C. Cawley (Manchester, 1958), pp. 1–13, 91–95.

¹⁷ *The Childe of Bristowe*, in *Altenglische Legenden*, ed. Carl Horstmann (Heilbronn, 1881), pp. 315–21; *The Lyfe of Roberte the Devyll*, in *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt, 4 vols (London, 1864–66), I, 218–63.

¹⁸ See manuscript reproductions by Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), p. 328, and V. A. Kolve, "Man in the Middle": Art and Religion in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 12 (1990): 4–46 (p. 31).

¹⁹ See Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, 181; 305 n. 7.

²⁰ According to Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 9 and 25, wetnursing in mediæval Europe was

biting his mother's nipples off. When older, he embarks on a course of unrestrained bullying, indeed maiming, of his peers, a conduct sycophantically admired by retainers of his father the Duke:

If he amonge any chyl dren came,
 He woulde them hurte, both scratche and byte,
 Caste stones at theyr heades, and fyght,
 Breake their shynnes, and put some eyes oute.
 Lordes and ladyes of hym had greate delyght,
 And wende [thought] yt had ben but wantonnes with out doute.
 Mennes chyl dren there he dyd myche harme,
 Of them he hurte shrewdelye [cruelly] many a one,
 Break[yng]e bothe legge, heade and arme.

(lines 163–71)

At the age of seven his father sends him to school to learn virtue, but he stabs his master to death when the misguided man tries to chastise him for idleness. After an adult life of unbridled terrorism, he is converted by a hermit, and sent to a castle to do penance in the humiliating role of a fool, who may eat only food offered to dogs.²¹ Some of his pranks, like throwing a live cat into the stewpot, may strike modern readers as more childish than endearing, and hardly an engaging indication of reform, but they hugely amuse the court in which he plays them. At this point in the story Robert is a grown man who is required, by affecting idiocy, to revert to childhood (see note 10), and even beyond to caninehood, in order to atone for his wickedness.

The children in the texts so far considered have little of moment to say: they do not articulate their experiences as good or bad children. In making a distinction between “piteous” and “pert” children I have in mind their use in literature to evoke pathos or express some degree of self-determination. Being articulate is an important but not necessarily defining aspect of the distinction. The Prioress's little clergeon, whose

encouraged because of the fear that children were parasites who would drain the mother.

²¹ *Sir Gowther*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London, 1973), pp. 148–68, is a somewhat shorter and superior version of the Robert the Devil story; see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ‘Gowther among the Dogs: Becoming Inhuman c.1400’, in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. J. Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York, 1997). But neither *Sir Gowther* nor Cohen deals significantly with the protagonist's childhood, as *The Lyfe of Roberte the Devyll* does.

corpse continues singing after his throat is cut, defiantly maintains his faith at the expense of the murderers who tried to silence him, but remains an extreme case of a pitying adult's sentimentalizing. Much the same might be said of Lydgate's Thoua, a miraculously articulate infant whose spectacular career must be one of the briefest on record. At three days old he prophesies the illustrious future of St Fremund, whose imminent birth will be marked by a nine-days' rainbow, cries lustily for baptism, and on receiving it promptly expires.²² Such fictions in an age of high infant mortality might be sentimentally attractive as spiritual idealizations, but clearly have little to say about the child's own response to his entrapment within the circle of societal power. Thoua is not a pert child. He is a vocal symbol of spiritual faith, and only piteous in so far as he reminds one of the numerous infants in those days who were doomed to cry for so pitifully brief a time.²³ In the rest of this article I wish to consider, as "pert", children who may be regarded as a subgroup of Jenks's Dionysian children, or as a more articulate if less dangerous parallel to Robert the Devil.

Pert children are those self-conscious enough to be able to articulate their opposition to adult constraints. Cain's impudent servant boy Pikeharnes (in the fifteenth-century Wakefield Master's play *Mactacio Abel*) would certainly qualify. What I have in mind is not simply a child like those in modern society who might be punished for "answering back", but a response, within the domain of power, involving, ultimately, the transfer of authority. Kincaid argues that 'the child [in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries] has been conceived of by power in such a way as to make it both centrally and irresistibly Other, and thus erotic'.²⁴ The pert child in mediæval literature is not only conceived of, whether erotically or not, by power, but claims power for himself.

Or herself. Most determined of pert victims are the virgin martyrs

²² John Lydgate, *St Edmund and St Fremund*, III.183–231, in *Altenglische Legenden*, ed. Carl Horstmann (Heilbronn, 1881), pp. 417–18.

²³ Kathy L. Pearson, 'Nutrition and the Early-Medieval Diet', *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1–32, gives a horrifying picture of malnourished children (before c.1000) failing to thrive (pp. 28–32). See also Hanawalt's discussion of small family size in the later Middle Ages (*The Ties that Bound*, 95 and 100–04).

²⁴ Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 360.

of the perennially popular saints' lives. These heroic biographies are the bodice-rippers of the Middle Ages, combining salacious descriptions of sadism with moral edification. Though the girls' virginity rather than their age is central to these erotic narratives, their status as children enhances the courage of their defiance. The intransigent contempt with which the impertinent youngsters address their pagan elders is matched only by the frustrated fury of their torturers, whose best efforts are usually nullified by divine intervention. In the end the young virgins are dispatched relatively painlessly, often beheaded, according to the precedent of Revelation 20: 4. This is no sign of defeat, but rather crowns their triumph.

In Hrotsvitha's tenth-century Latin play *Dulcitius*, for example, three Christian girls are divinely protected from the lust of the governor Dulcitius who goes mad and embraces the filthy pots and pans in the kitchen instead of his intended victims. Having remained heroically defiant, they are eventually martyred. The youngest, Irene, proves the toughest, and is eventually shot to death with arrows. No pagan official can browbeat her, in spite of her youth and their fierce threats to defile her in a brothel. She seems to know Augustine's argument that it is consent, not force, that defiles. Presumably the young nuns of Gandersheim for whom Hrotsvitha is writing her play will identify most readily with this young heroine, just as in children's stories it is generally the achievements of the youngest, smallest or weakest of the characters that are celebrated.²⁵

The indomitable St Juliana is even more outspoken. In the thirteenth-century prose *Life and Passion of St Juliana* startling phrases like "Hear me, heathen hound," quoth the blessed maiden' indicate that fortitude rather than meekness distinguishes her. She is stripped naked and beaten virtually to pulp, has boiling oil poured over her head, and is broken on a wheel till the marrow is squeezed out of her bones, but she emerges from all these tortures sound as a roach ('fisch-hal').²⁶ She denounces her captors and physically hurls a devil who tries to persuade her to give in to them into a manure heap, terrifying him with a look when he returns to mock her as she is led off to be beheaded.

²⁵ Hrotsvitha, 'Dulcitius, sive passio sanctarum virginum Agapis Chioniae et Hirenae', in *Medieval Latin*, ed. Karl Pomeroy Harrington (Chicago, 1925), pp. 209–20.

²⁶ *Pe Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Juliene*, ed. S.T.R.O. d'Ardenne, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, fasc. LXIV (Liège, 1936), p. 47, line 521 and p. 53, line 570.

According to Jenks's understanding of childhood not as a natural state but as a socializing process of integration into adult society, the child's potentially dangerous and disruptive influence has to be restructured: 'the development of the child seems variously articulated as a process of entrapment. The newness and difference of childhood faces standardization and normalization'.²⁷ But he makes it clear that the child is not a passive object who can take no hand in this process, so that socialization is both the exercising and the conferring of power in the wider society.²⁸ Education is the obvious means both of equipping the child for adult life, and for ensuring that he conforms to prevailing notions of that adult society.

In the day-to-day world of the later Middle Ages, children were more likely to suffer at the hands of guardians or schoolteachers than from devils. Pert children did not endure the constraints of being educated easily. For example, their recognition of themselves as victims is comically and informatively articulated in a lyric, probably dating from the fourteenth century, that might be entitled 'The Complaint of the Battered Schoolboys'.

Wenest þu, huscher, with þi coyntyse,
 Iche day beten us on þis wyse,
 As þu wer lord of toun?
 We had leuuer scole for-sake,
 & ilche of us an-oþur crafte take,
 þen long to be in þi bandoun

 but wolde god þat we myth ones
 cache þe at þe mulne stones,
 or at þe crabbe tre—
 We schuld leue in þe such a probeyt
 ffor þat þu hast us don & seyd,
 þat alle þi kyn suld rwe þe.

 & þow sire robert, with his cloke,
 Wold þe helpe & be þi ppoke,
 þe werre þu schust fare;
 & for his prayer þe rapur we wold
 3yuen hym stripes al un-colde,
 not for hym þe spar.

²⁷ Jenks, *Childhood*, 46.

²⁸ Jenks, *Childhood*, 69–70.

ffor ofte sore we abyē
 þe twynkelinges of his hye,
 þe maystur us to bete;
 ffor he & þu are at asent,
 Al day 3yuen agagement
 to 3yuen us strokes grete.

[Do you think, schoolmaster, with your cunning, that you can beat us every day like this, as if you were the Lord of the Manor? We would rather stop going to school, and each of us take up another trade, than stay any length of time in your power.

But if only God would once let us catch you at the mill stones, or at the crabapple tree, we would leave such a lawyer's mark on you for what you have done and said to us that all your relations would pity you.

And though the Devil with his cloak was willing to help you and be your familiar spirit, you would only suffer worse; we would rather respond to his pleas with painful blows, and not spare you because of him.

For often we nervously endure the winkings of his eye inciting the master to beat us, for he and you are in cahoots, all day reaching an agreement to give us violent blows.]

It is not easy to decide whether the poem is intended to convey an ugly picture of injustice, tyranny and abuse, or whether it should be read as the comically exaggerated complaint of an aggrieved child who thinks education a painful alternative to learning some more congenial craft. Mediæval devils were often comical figures, and blaming the Devil for the master's behaviour does not so much demonize as mock him. There is plenty of other evidence for corporal punishment in mediæval schools,²⁹ but the main message of the poem seems to be that if the schoolboy cannot retaliate he can at least retort.

Retort is precisely what authority must suppress if it is to imprint its ideals successfully on the succeeding generation; eventually, however, it is forced to permit retort as its pupils become authority figures in their turn. The frame narrative of Johannes de Alta Silva's twelfth-century collection of tales *Dolopathos* is paradigmatic in this regard.³⁰ The prodigious talents of Prince Dolopathos make him an

²⁹ Arthur Francis Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England* (New York, 1915), p. 307, and Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), pp. 127–29.

³⁰ Jean de Haute Seille [Johannes de Alta Silva], *Johannes de Alta Silva: Dolopathos or The King and the Seven Wise Men*, trans. Brady B. Gilleland (Binghamton, NY, 1981).

educator's dream, until his wicked stepmother falsely accuses him, as Potiphar's wife did Joseph, and his father is forced to condemn him to be burnt. He is permitted no defence, and in fact his master, Virgil, instructs him that his only hope is to remain dumb, even when bound among the faggots, while several wise men tell the interserted narratives of the collection, narrowly saving his life each time. In the end, however, he is given an opportunity to speak, and then he turns the tables on the wicked stepmother. *Dolopathos* is, in effect, a secular counterpart of the virgin martyrs' lives, both being wish-fulfilment fantasies involving the transfer of authority.

Mediæval literature concerning children may be described as a literature of retort suppressed or paraded. To further exemplify this claim, I wish to contrast pert children in the context of moral edification, specifically in morality plays, and in the wish-fulfilling context of *fabliau*. Both contexts demonstrate, in the end, a greater concern for the well-being of children and a deeper interest in the psychology of maturation than mediæval authors are often given credit for.

In *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, a fifteenth-century verse sermon which deals with eleven ages of mankind from birth to a hundred years, the child is encouraged by his Bad Angel to call his parents shrews, 'bleere' at people with his tongue, and beat his playfellows.³¹ This poem is a major source of the morality play *The World and the Child* (*Mundus et Infans*),³² in which the Child appears, playing with his top and describing, in appropriately childlike language, behaviour that is likely to get him into trouble. Called Wanton between the ages of seven and fourteen, he squabbles with friends and siblings, cheeks and makes faces at his parents, mocks adults, tells lies, gelds snails and catches cows' tails, robs orchards, and plays truant from school for fear of a beating. His forty-line speech (76–114) contains one of the liveliest descriptions of childish naughtiness in the morality plays. There is a refreshing freedom about this child, but none of the Wordsworthian sense that he symbolizes any ideal state of being; if he trails anything, it is not clouds of glory but a fog of sin. Though hardly

³¹ *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, ed. Frederick James Furnivall, EETS o.s. 24 (London, 1867), pp. 58–78 (lines 71–80).

³² *Mundus & Infans*, in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, ed. John M. Manly, 2 vols (1897; rpt New York, 1967), I, 353–85.

[Oh, I say, every happiness to you! Why don't you welcome me now? I swear there are many of you I know perfectly well. This fine fellow (*singling out a boy in the audience*), to let you into a secret, has been friendly with me for a long time, for in truth he and I spent all the money we both had carousing at the wine shop.]

Of course the actor does know his fellow pupils well; but it soon becomes a moral question whether they know him equally well, for he represents a Vice, Sloth, to which some of them may be only too liable.

Occupation employs him, but instead of spending his master's money on livestock or building materials, Idleness returns drunk ('verry kuppe shote', line 236), and penniless from the tavern.

Occupation charitably offers to rehabilitate rather than to incarcerate the cunning trickster ('wyli pye', line 280) who has robbed him; this is a boy, not (or not yet) a habitual criminal, who needs to be taught virtues he has never learned. He proposes that Idleness submit himself to the tutelage of Doctrine. The proposal is ironic, since the child, like the schoolboy audience at Winchester College, has no choice. Probably like many in that audience, Idleness would rather play than work.

Doctrine commences with that favourite topic of mediæval moralists, the Seven Deadly Sins, and maintains, to the boy's dismay, that Idleness is the worst of them. Idleness appeals for help to the audience: 'Out, whider may y fle? / Bis angry man wyl bete me / & [if] y lenger abyde' (lines 397–99). However much the schoolboys may want to assist or prevent Idleness's escape, the play does not allow him to get away. Articulating the tension between escape and entrapment, Idleness makes what in a play is as good as a promise: he fears he will be beaten, and no doubt the schoolboy audience will gleefully anticipate the physical climax of the drama. Thereby acknowledging that pertness is punishable, they unwittingly inscribe themselves firmly within the circle of power. If at this point Idleness tries to leave, he is somehow prevented, perhaps by the conniving audience crowded about the acting area.

Doctrine, now in full career, proceeds to advise not only the boys, but their parents as well, reminding them of their responsibility to ensure that their children get a good education. Doctrine wants the boys not only to acquire the fundamentals of the Christian religion, but also to receive occupational training so that they can provide for

themselves: 'For he þat hath neither londe ne rente, / koyne ne catel hym to fynde [coin nor goods to provide for him], / of large spense [expense] but [unless] he repente / sone [soon] shal he begge be kynde [as is natural]' (lines 415–18).

With some difficulty Doctrine forces the troublesome Idleness to stand still, and the boy wishes both him and Occupation in the ditch, an expression he hastily attempts to unsay.

Doctrine: Y sey, boy, scorne þou me now?
 Occupacion: he dothe as euel [evil] as he kan.
 Ydelnes: He lieth, y make God a vow
 in recorde of this worthy man.
 Syr, saw 3e me mokke hym to scorne?
 Nay, he lieth in his face.

(lines 452–57)

There is a clever ambiguity here which the actor can play according to circumstances. If the 'worthy man' in the audience gleefully tells Doctrine he did see Idleness mock him, then he is the one lying in his face; if the 'worthy man' takes the pupil's part, then it is Occupation who is lying in his face.

A mischievous child making faces behind the master's back and then denying having done what the audience has enjoyed watching suggests a lively awareness on the author's part of perennially typical classroom antics; one might say, of closely observed child psychology. Doctrine then demands that his easily distracted pupil (Idleness) study his book, while he discourses wisely on improving topics with Occupation for the instruction of the audience.

But now the audience is presented with a dilemma. Should they continue to side with Idleness, who asks: 'Heer 3e, siris, al þis breth? / A draȝt of ale y had leuer [I'd rather have a swig of beer]' (lines 592–93), or should they side with Occupation, who piously resolves: 'Wyl y neuer worke begynne / but [unless] y thynke on þe ende' (lines 711–12)? Doctrine's teaching, interspersed with Latin, and including the high point of the play, a poetical description of God's mercy in granting salvation, is intended to be impressive, but will the audience, like Apollonian children, be cajoled into accepting it? In case not, Idleness, as an example to be avoided, is shaping up for some painfully Dionysian treatment. Disgusted with the book he was supposed to have been studying, he decides to delete the instruction written in it.

He finds someone with a jug, probably, and asks, 'Good, geue [give] me a litel water / þat y may wesshe [wash] my book' (lines 721–22). This rejection of adult lore in favour of childish distractions like chasing butterflies invites rapid punishment, and brings the play to its anticipated dramatic climax.

- Ocupacion: Doctrine sir, take hede
hou 3our clerk shent [is spoiling] his book.
- Ydelnes: A syr, þe deuel be þi spede,
Who badde þe hider look?
- Doctrine: A, lewde losell [ignorant rascal], what iapes [tricks]
ben thes?
þu takest þe to fantasies.
Fast sit down, þu shalt nat chese [choose].
- Ydelnes: A, sire, here be many botter flyes [butterflies]
bothe white & broun,
for cokkis [God's] blood take me þyn hode
& y wyl smyte hem down.
- Doctrine: A, a, þu dost wel & fyne!
Y wil þe tame, be seynt Austyne,
be þu neuer so wylde.
Ocupacion, ley hond on hym, haue do [done],
and myself wyl helpe þerto.
Come forth, my feir childe.
- Ydelnes: Come no nere [nearer], y charge þe now,
for & þu do [if you do], y make a vow
y wyl stryke þe to þe hert.
Wolde God my dagger were grounde!
- Doctrine: Sette honde on hym anon þis stounde [time],
lete him nat sterte [escape].
- Ocupacion: Come forthe þu shalt, magre thy teeth [willy-nilly].
- Ydelnes: Out vpon þe, stronge thief,
wylt þu me spille [kill]?
- Doctrine: [*beating him*] Haue here one, two, & thre!
Ydelnes, now thynke on me
& holde þi tunge stille.

(lines 730–58)

The beaten child angrily threatens vengeance, but is soon cowed by the prospect of further punishment into passing the blame on to some innocent in the audience, and then into complete repentance:

Ydelnes: & y lyue y wil be awreke [if I survive I will be avenged],
 some of 3our hedis [heads] wyl y breke
 for 3e haue made me wrothe.

Doctrine: Hou seist þu þat? Lete me se.

Ydelnes: Nay, for [before] God it is he,
 in recorde of al þis compané
 he dede beshrewe [he cursed] 3ou bothe.

Doctrine: ffy on þe, harlot [scoundrel], with thi glosynge [deceit]!
 þu shalt haue more, be heuen kynge,
 to teche þe wexe [become] trewe [truthful].

Ydelnes: A mercy, maister, y cry mercy,
 for3eue me this, & redely
 3our lore wyl y shewe.

(lines 759–71)

Occupation improves the occasion with an address to parents and those who have the guidance of children; it is after all a didactic play, and the tamed scapegrace is an object-lesson in the wisdom of good teaching and discipline well enforced.

Ocupacion: Lo, how litel maistry it is
 to brynge in a childe in 3owthe [youth].
 Frendis, take hede to this
 & euer draw 3ou fro slowthe [withdraw from sloth].
 & þus had he had no techynge
 he wold haue cursed his frendis al,
 & now he may in tyme comynge
 be a good man, & so he shall.

(lines 789–96)

Idleness shows the sincerity of his conversion by meekly asking for information about the virtues of the Virgin Mary. His name is changed to Cleanness, because after repenting he is no longer sullied by sin, and his attitude to Doctrine is reversed: 'Y thanke my Lorde in Tryneté / þat euer y mette with 3ou here' (lines 863–64).

For most of this play the child is depicted as irresponsible, a prey to

sloth, the most dangerous of the Deadly Sins, for it lets in all the rest. Without proper moral guidance, the child will be unable either to get himself a living, or to find the way of spiritual salvation. The theological teaching behind this point of view is based on Psalm 50: 7 (Douay): 'For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.' Original sin ensures that the Vices take first place, and that maturing must therefore be a matter of moral persuasion leading to a change of heart. To read the child's capitulation as the suppression of individuality by authoritarian brainwashing would be anachronistic. Not only, in mediaeval terms, are spiritual teachers simply right, but by accepting that he is powerless to oppose them, the pert child is paradoxically empowered. The meek shall inherit the earth.

Diametrically opposed to this portrayal of childhood, and perhaps more congenial to modern taste, is a success-fantasy of the Jack-the-Giant-Killer type, in which the point of view is that of the child rather than that of adults observing the child. In the fifteenth-century comic poem known as *Jack and his Stepdame* the child's enemy is the conventionally hostile step-mother.³⁴ She poisons his father's mind against him, and has him sent out into the fields to look after the cattle. The story enacts the typical childhood fantasy of revenge and acceptance: the powerless child nullifies the power of the stepmother—indeed, defeats her and those she suborns against him—and he wins the desired approval of his father. Being weak and immature, he can only achieve this through magical help, which he earns through kindness (as does the youngest brother in Ruskin's fantasy *The King of the Golden River*),³⁵ by sharing his lunch with an old man who offers him three gifts. The boy requests a bow and a pipe, and is given a bow whose bolts will never miss, and a pipe whose tunes cannot fail to make those hearing it leap and dance. With these the child is content; however, the old man insists he must choose a third gift, and the boy remembers his shrewish stepdame.

³⁴ *The Tale of Jack and his Stepdame*, in *Ten Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems*, ed. Melissa Furrow, Garland Medieval Texts 13 (London, 1985), pp. 67–153. On stepmothers, numerous in a period of high mortality, and often a threat to a father's first family's inheritance, see Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, 250, and 316, note 14.

³⁵ John Ruskin, *The King of the Golden River*; or, *The Black Brothers: A Legend of Stiria* (London, 1850).

'When my fadir gewyth me mete [gives me food]
 She wold þe devill wold me cheke [choke],
 She stareth so in my face.
 When she looketh on me so
 I wold she myght lette a rappe [fart] goo
 That myght rynge all þe place.'

(lines 115–20)

His childish practical joke easily satisfies the victimized child, and appealed also to the poem's original audiences, if one may judge by the number of versions and copies extant. The mildly scatological tale (a minor analogue, perhaps, to the ending of Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*) seems to have become a favourite for the best part of the next three centuries. Theodore Andersson distinguishes two kinds of mediæval humour, the earlier crude, physical and caricatural, the later systematic, in that it parodies thought systems.³⁶ *Jack and his Stepdame* exemplifies the cruder, caricatural type.

The magic pipe ensures the boy has no trouble leading his father's cattle home. He shuts them in the enclosure, and his father rewards him with a capon's leg at supper. This so displeases his stepmother that she stares in his face,

And anon she let go a blaste
 That she made hem all agaste
 That wer within þat place.
 All they lowgh [laughed] and had good game.
 The wyffe wex red for shame;
 She wolde ffayne be agon [gone].
 Jak seide, 'I wol 3e wytte
 This gonne was wele smytte
 As it had be a stone.'

(lines 160–68)

[Jack said, 'I want you to know this gun was well discharged, as though a cannonball had been shot off.']³⁷

³⁶ Theodore M. Andersson, 'Jacques Le Goff on Medieval Humor', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* 5.2 (1997): 7–16.

³⁷ This seems the most likely interpretation of these lines, in the light of the variant reading quoted in *OED*, s.v. *smite*, 20. b. This is *OED*'s only example of *smite* in the sense of 'to discharge (a cannon)'.

The boy's mockery takes advantage of the stepmother's shame. Obviously this kind of coarse humour depends on the incongruity of the woman's embarrassing slip; an adult with the power to frighten and control suffers a humiliating loss of control herself, to the delight of the usually powerless child. The magic gifts empower him physically, but it is his own innate ability to articulate that enables him to make the most of his empowerment.

After another humiliation so loud that 'Her ars was ny torente' (line 171), the stepdame decides the boy must be some kind of witch, and calls in the help of an itinerant friar whom she regards as a saint. Here is another unsympathetic authority figure who is also destined, we may be sure, for disaster. She bids the friar catch and beat the child in the field. She wants no half measures: 'And make þe boye lame' (line 195), she insists.³⁸ The friar promises, 'But [unless] I belasshe wele þat boye / Truste me neuer more' (lines 203–04). This threat of 'belasshing' is, in the comic context, appropriately exaggerated, but it reminds one uncomfortably of Agnes Paston's hope that her son Clement's tutor would 'truly belash' him as the best master he had ever had had formerly done.³⁹

The friar runs into the field where the boy has driven his beasts, and threatens that unless he can find some really good excuse for what he has done to his stepmother 'thyn ars shall be bete' (line 218). The child affects innocence, and offers to shoot a bird for the friar. The greedy friar goes into a hedge to retrieve the shot bird, and the child takes up his pipe, forcing the friar to dance among the brambles. His clothes are so badly torn that he can hardly hide his private parts, and the villagers chase him away, scratched and bleeding, because they assume he must be mad.

The aggrieved friar tells his host (the boy's father) he has been dancing in the Devil's name till he nearly lost his life; if he had died, his host comments with more justice than compassion, he would then have been in great sin. When the boy comes home, his father insists

³⁸ The indulgent mother in the sixteenth-century educative morality *Nice Wanton*, when rebuked for not disciplining her children, uses the excuse that she does not want to lame them: *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama*, ed. Manly, I, 459–80 (lines 114–21). The fact that she, and the audience, need to be told that the Biblical injunction not to spare the rod and spoil the child does not imply laming is sufficiently alarming.

³⁹ *The Paston Letters*, ed. Norman Davis, World's Classics (Oxford, 1983), p. 46.

on hearing his pipe, to the friar's dismay. 'Bynde me to a poste', he pleads, like Odysseus approaching the Sirens' isle. The company at supper tie him up, laughing merrily: 'Pe frere shall not fall' (line 348), and the boy takes up his pipe, promising them 'a fytt'. No one can keep their feet, some bark their shins on furniture, others fall in the fire, and to the goodwife's gyrations is added her embarrassing infirmity every time she looks at Jack. The friar beats his head helplessly against the post, and the ropes rub him raw. Eventually the whole procession dance out into the street, and the entire village, including those who were naked in bed, come tumbling out to join in. Even the lame hop about on hands and feet. The boy's father thinks it the 'meryest fytt' he has had in seven years. In fact, the only persons who do not enjoy themselves are the goodwife and the friar. A later addition to the tale shows Jack indicted in court, where, in a parody of the legal transfer of power to a formerly disempowered child, he justifies himself with the sound of his pipe, while his stepmother is put to silence: 'The wyfe was ferde of a cracke; / Not one worde more she spacke.'

Perhaps neither Idleness nor Jack are pert enough to bear comparison with a witty child like Moth (even his name is a pun on *Mot* and *Mote*) in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and of course the lively imps of the nineteenth century, Dickens's Artful Dodger or Hugo's Gavroche, are still far in the future. But Idleness and Jack are worthy predecessors. They show that people in the Middle Ages had a better understanding of childhood than is sometimes thought. They help to confirm Eleanora Gordon's observation, based on her study of injured children brought to saints' shrines for healing, that 'medieval folk ... were very much aware of typical childish behavior and had appropriate expectations'.⁴⁰

Jenks argues that 'New forms of media [film, television and the internet] are now systematically undermining that distinction between child and adult ... As a consequence, childhood is disappearing'.⁴¹ Perhaps the collapse of childhood as a distinct state which he and other sociologists see the rapid transformations of the late twentieth century bringing about paradoxically takes us back to an older concept of the child which enables us to sympathize much more readily with that of the Middle Ages than Ariès and his followers were able to do.

⁴⁰ Eleanora Gordon, 'Accidents Among Medieval Children as Seen from the Miracles of Six English Saints and Martyrs', *Medical History* 35 (1991): 145–63.

⁴¹ Jenks, *Childhood*, 117.

A Poem 'Clepid the Sevene Ages'

Analogues to Jacques' famous speech on the Seven Ages of Man include, according to H.H. Furness citing Halliwell, in *The Variorum As You Like It*, a poem 'clepid the sevene ages' in the Thornton MS of the fifteenth century in Lincoln Cathedral. The reference is a tantalising one, since there is no indication where Halliwell makes the alleged statement, and the Thornton MS contains no such poem.¹

One runs the will-o'-the-wisp to earth in Cambridge University MS Ff. 2. 38 (subsequently called C), where a rubric on fol. 20^v reads 'here endiþ the profitis of erþeli anger and begynneþ the mirrour of vices & of vertues which also ys clepid þe seuene ages'.² The poem, written in double columns as verse but without breaks between the eight-line stanzas, is incomplete after 186 lines, as folios 22–27 are missing from the manuscript. Halliwell listed the contents of this manuscript in the preface to his edition of *The Thornton Romances*,³ and in citing *The Mirror* as item 18 of the list, Furness failed to notice that Halliwell had already completed his catalogue of the Thornton MS.

The poem thus detected is not unknown, though it hardly seems to have received the attention its literary merit and interest as an exemplar of a common form of mediæval schematization deserve.⁴ F. J. Furnivall

¹ *The Variorum Shakespeare: As You Like It*, ed. H. H. Furness (Philadelphia, 1890), p. 124. For the contents of the Thornton MS, see R. M. Woolley, *Catalogue of the MSS of Lincoln Cathedral Library* (Oxford, 1927), entry 91, 'The Thornton Romances'; also the Scholar Press facsimile, *The Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS. 91)*, introd. D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen (London, 1975): contents pp. xvii–xx.

² I have consulted the MS on microfilm, by courtesy of the Cambridge University Library. The foliation refers to the original order in which the manuscript was rebound in 1972. The entry for this poem in Carleton Brown's *Register of Middle English Religious Verse*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1916–20), I, 180, contains some errors of transcription.

³ *The Thornton Romances*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Society 30 (London, 1844), pp. xxv–xlv. *The Mirror* is item 18 on pp. xxxviii–ix.

⁴ It gets, for example, a fraction of a sentence in Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, *The Routledge History of English Poetry* 1 (London, 1977), p. 244, where it is somewhat strangely called 'a morality play in the form of a sermon'.

edited it in 1867 from MS Lambeth 853 (subsequently called L), where it runs to 82 stanzas, calling it *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life, or Bids of the Virtues and Vices for the Soul of Man*.⁵ Versions are extant in nine manuscripts, four complete, though of varying length, three incomplete because pages have been lost at the end, and two drastically abbreviated:

1. Lambeth 853, pp. 120–50: 656 lines = L.
2. Balliol 354, fols 194^r–99^r: lines 1–496: ends at L's line 488: stanza 50 not in L.
3. Camb. Univ. Ff.2. 38. 20^v–21^v: lines 1–186 = C.
4. Pepys 1584, fols 14^r–28^r: 664 lines, including one stanza (50) not in L; includes occasional speech headings.
5. Pepys 2125, fols 60^v–65^r: 654 lines: omits L's stanzas 24, 29, 30, 82; includes first six lines of 50 and three stanzas after L's 78 = P.⁶
6. BL Add. 36983, the Bedford MS, fols 298^r–305^r: 'complete' in 482 lines.⁷
7. BL Add. 37492, the Fillingham MS, fols 90^v–92^v: lines 1–142. Omits stanza 14; ends 'be he bolde wykeþ or ly3t' (variant of L 150).⁸
8. Huntington HM 135, 83^r–86^r; acephalous, with omissions and transpositions resembling those in BL Add. 36983.⁹
9. Astor A. 2, fols 194^r–208^r (now Takamiya MS 94 in the Beinecke Library at Yale), 832 lines, 192 of which are not found elsewhere. Colophon 'Amen q^d Gouer and perseuall'.¹⁰

⁵ *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ and Other Religious Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 24 (London, 1867), pp. 58–78. The MS has some speech headings, but Furnivall omits them, obscuring the scribe's rudimentary attempts to give the poem dramatic form. Unless otherwise stated, references are to L in this edition.

⁶ Edited by E. C. York (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1957): see *Dissertation Abstracts* 17 (1957): 1079.

⁷ Edited by B. S. Lee, 'Gubernacio Hominis: a Fifteenth-Century Allegorical Poem', *Medium Ævum* 50 (1981): 230–58. Omissions and transpositions, apparently arbitrary, suggest the original of this version was transcribed from memory. The Bedford MS is described by Sarah M. Horrall, in *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi I* (Ottawa, 1978), pp. 16–17.

⁸ This is the Fillingham MS: *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, ed. Mary I. O'Sullivan, EETS o.s. 198 (London, 1934): see pp. xiii–xv.

⁹ See Lee, 'Gubernacio Hominis', 254–55.

¹⁰ See Lee, 'Gubernacio Hominis', 257.

E.C. York concludes that MS Pepys 2125 (P) preserves the most authoritative text, and provides a diplomatic edition with variant readings, which are extensive, from the other manuscripts (except Astor).¹¹

The Mirror has little relevance to Jacques' speech. Even though 'clepid þe seuene ages' in C, it deals in fact with eleven, which run from birth to the ages of seven, fourteen and twenty, and then in ten-year intervals to a hundred. The presiding Virtue is Conscience; Vices are numerous. Up to fifty Man indulges his free will and treats Conscience with cheerful scorn; from sixty onwards he is contrite but insecure to the end. The introductory rubric in P summarizes these distinctions: 'Here begynneþ materes of 3outhe & of age And of vertues & of uices wyþ her kyndely condiciouns.'¹² Coxe in 1852 catalogued the poem as 'The life of man, corrected by Conscience, by Lydgate?, in eight-line stanzas'.¹³ Coxe wrote before MacCracken investigated the Lydgate canon,¹⁴ and when any anonymous fifteenth-century poem might as soon be ascribed to Lydgate as not; *The Mirror* seems metrically too various, and in language and imagery too startling, vivid and colloquial, to be by Lydgate.

Scribal licence and oral recitation probably account for the numerous textual variations that are evident. A brief comparison of variants reveals that the early copyists treated their exemplars cavalierly. The basically four-beat line tends on the whole to be shorter in P than in L, which sometimes expands for clarity: e.g. L 79 'Course of kynde is for 3ouþe to be wilde' reads in P 'Cours of kynde wul 3outhe be wilde'. There are exceptions: for L 367 'To þi mercy, lord, me vndirfonge' P, anticipating the metaphor of the ebbing tide in the next line, has 'And biddeþ me to go lond for shipmans þrong', for which

¹¹ Of these I have inspected all but the Balliol and Cambridge manuscripts, besides York's dissertation.

¹² Only C has a title stipulating seven ages. In Pepys 1584 it is 'The Merour of Mankynde', in BL Add. 36983 'Gubernacio Hominis', and in the list of contents prefixed to Richard Hill's commonplace book (MS Balliol 354) 'The treatyse of ye ages of man.'

¹³ See *Songs, Carols and Other Miscellaneous Poems, from the Balliol ms. 354, Richard Hill's Commonplace-book*, ed. R. Dyboski, EETS e.s. 101, (London, 1907), p. xlvii.

¹⁴ H.N. MacCracken (introd.), *Religious Poems*, Part 1 of *John Lydgate*, 2 pts, EETS e.s. 107 (London, 1910), pp. v–lviii.

Add. 36983 provides a more intelligible reading 'He biddeþ go to þe lond from shipmans throng / ffor þe tyde is ebbed, no more wil flowe' (fol. 301^v). C, as far as it goes, keeps fairly close to L, though with a tendency to abbreviate. C omits the following initial words in L: 52 Mi, 72 To, 81 Thus, 86 Þe, 92 And, 133 And, 169 Panne, 180 For. L 173 'Do þou to euery man þat is due' is contracted to 'Do þou euery man dewe.' Rarely, C is closer to P than to L, describing the fallen Lucifer as 'al aungels page' where L 142 has, uniquely, 'moost loopeli page'. The Lambeth scribe was doubtless responsible for this "improvement" since the common ancestor of L and C must have had the reading that was also in the exemplar of P. In 101, C mediates between L and P: L has 'Quod lust to conscience, "3ouþe so must"' (rhyme words *coost, loost, post*), P 'What conscience q^d 3ouþe þ^u it wost', and C 'What conscience youþe so moste'.

P has some inferior readings, but corrects certain errors in L. L is obviously wrong at 617 to begin a speech belonging to Man 'Quod þe worlde "Y wole hise dettis quyte"'; P omits 'Quod'; while the somewhat later MS. Pepys 1584 expands to 'Quod man to þe worlde'. In 505 P has 'The' for L's 'Pre': the former is preferable, as all the Sins speak, and not only the three in the first of the two stanzas allotted them. L 531 'Whanne sijknese comeþ men to craue' is more forcefully rendered in P '... somneþ men to graue'. L 558 'He sizkeþ for synnes ben not vnbounde' obscures the metaphor and is possibly unintelligible: P has 'his sak of synnes is nat vnbounde', a reading confirmed by the imagery in L 589–90, where confession is likened to shaking out a sackload of sin in front of the priest. In 416 P has the Devil speak where L only mentions him: Youth warns Age to make up his accounts 'Or þe deuel bringe þe countirtaille'; in this case P's reading 'Q^d þe deuel, I bryng þe countretaille' though possibly more dramatic seems to rob Youth of the necessary climax of his moral admonition.

The Mirror makes moral capital of a scheme originally neutral. The ancients had no religious motive in dividing the Ages of Man. Aristotle distinguished three ages in his treatise on Rhetoric: youth, prime and old age. His purpose was to help orators adapt their matter to the interests of their listeners. He noted contrasting characteristics of youth and old age: 'old men are nervous and anxious about everything, for their dispositions are opposite to those of the young: cold as against hot'. The age of prime shares the advantages of both

extremes,¹⁵ and occupies the position of the golden mean between their excesses and their defects. But he had some difficulty in deciding at what age the golden mean lay, as man is a composite being: 'the body reaches its prime between thirty and thirty-five, the mind about forty-nine'.¹⁶

Horace evidently had Aristotle's views in mind when he advised the aspiring dramatist to assign parts suitable to the ages of his characters.¹⁷ Horace describes four ages: the child is playful and his moods change rapidly, the youngster is feckless, prodigal, eager and a lover of vigorous sports, the man is ambitious and acquisitive, the ancient is querulous, timid and nostalgic about the past. Morality is not in question; to please his audience the dramatist should always suit the correct attributes to whichever of the four ages he is dealing with:

Ne forte seniles
Mandetur iuveni partes pueroque viriles;
Semper in adiunctis aevoque morabimur aptis
(lines 176–78).¹⁸

Four ages are illustrated from Orosius in *Flores Poetarum de Virtutibus et Viciis* IX (Cologne n.d., c.1490), while Blossius Aemilius Dracontius, a lawyer and rhetorician under the Vandals in late fifth-century Africa, distinguishes six as follows:

Sex sunt aetates hominum procul usque senectam,
hae distincta tenent tempora quaeque sua.
numquid adulatorum strepitus infantia simplex
vindicat aut fremitus pigra senectus habet?
non catulaster agit puerilia, non puer audet
attrectare tener Martia tela manu;

¹⁵ Cf. Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge, 1986). For a study of the *topos*, see also John Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986).

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford, 1959), Bk II, chapters 13–14 (pp. 100–104). My translation.

¹⁷ Horace, *Ars Poetica*, lines 153–78.

¹⁸ [Lest he happen to apportion the characteristics of old age to youth and of maturity to a child; we should always keep to what is appropriate to the time of life.] This, and subsequent translations unless otherwise stated, are mine.

non furit in venerem nondum pubentibus annis
 nec sub flore genae marcidus est iuuenis;
 maturus tractat, gemit et tremebunda senectus
 nescia fervoris vel levitatis inops.¹⁹

If, in classical antiquity, the treatment of the Ages of Man was pragmatic, in the Renaissance of the twelfth century the scheme was subsumed into theology.²⁰ Theologians were developing a Biblically-orientated view of world history, and they correlated the historical dispensations with the periods of man's life. The schemes they elaborated are conveniently summarized by Hugh of St Victor, who divides the contents of Scripture, and therefore the history of the world, into two 'status' (an old and a new dispensation), three 'tempora' (those of natural law, the written law, and of grace), and six ages. Of these the first five, from Adam to Noah, and then to Abraham, to David, to the Babylonian captivity, and to the coming of Christ, are in four successions, those of the patriarchs, the judges, the kings and the priests. 'Aetates dicuntur sex,' Hugh explains, 'ad similitudinem aetates hominum. Fuit enim mundus et infans et puer, &c.' [The ages are six, like man's: for the world has also been through its infancy and childhood, etc.]²¹ And according to Berengaudus, the Devil's minions featured in all seven ages up to that of the Antichrist.²²

Isidore of Seville, the seventh-century '*doctor egregius*', lists the six Ages of Man as 'infantia, pueritia, adolescentia, iuventus, gravitas, atque senectus,' answering to the years between birth and seven,

¹⁹ *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. F. J. E. Raby (1959, rpt Oxford, 1974), p. 48. [There are six ages of men all the way up to old age, each of which has their own separate periods. Surely simple infancy doesn't lay claim to adults' frantic behaviour, or disgusting age have turmoil? The adolescent doesn't engage in toddlers' pursuits, or the little boy dare to put his hands to weapons of war. A pre-pubertal child doesn't fall madly in love, nor is the flower of the cheek of a youth withered. A mature person busies himself, while an old one groans and trembles, unmindful of zeal and incapable of joviality.] On Dracontius see F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Secular Latin Poetry*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1934) I, 105–112.

²⁰ See M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, selected, edited and translated by J. Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago, 1968), chapter 5 'Theology and the New Awareness of History,' especially pp. 181–83.

²¹ Hugh of St Victor, 'De materia sacrae Scripturae,' *PL* 175, 24. For Hugh's discussion of the 'tria tempora' see *PL* 176, 32 (repeated, cols 312–13).

²² Berengaudus, 'Expositio in Apocalypsin,' *PL* 17, 959–60.

fourteen, twenty-eight, fifty, seventy and however much of life is left. He adds 'Senium autem pars est ultima senectutis' [Extreme age is the last part of old age].²³ Honorius of Autun has a similar list, except that he terminates *adolescentia* at twenty-one, calls the fifth age *senectus* and the sixth *decrepita*, and extends this last age 'ad centum annos vel usque ad mortem' [to a hundred years or right up to death].²⁴ The gloss on 'Agis sevy' in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* is based on Isidore, but adds '7^a est in resurrectione finali' [the seventh age consists in the final resurrection].²⁵

These lists lack moral or religious comment. Bonaventure, however, elaborates. He links the Ages of Man to those of the world by a sort of analogous necessity between the microcosm and the macrocosm, it being fitting that 'maioris mundi decursus correspondeat decursi vitae minoris mundi, scilicet hominis, propter quem factus est' [that the history of the macrocosm should match the life-span of the microcosm, man, for whom it was created]. The periods of world history correspond to the six days of creation by apt analogies: for instance, the sixth age in which Christ was born in human form answers to the sixth day on which the first man was made. Similarly Bonaventure justifies the relationship between human and cosmic ages: the first age, consumed by the Flood, is fittingly called *infantia*, since infancy is obscured by total forgetfulness; and the sixth *senium*, 'quia, sicut illa est quae copulatur cum morte, habens tamen magnam lucem sapientiae, sic sexta aetas mundi terminatur cum die iudicii, et in ea viget sapientia per doctrinam Christi' [because, just as extreme old age couples with death but has a great light of wisdom, so the sixth age of the world ends at doomsday and in it flourishes wisdom because of the doctrine of Christ].²⁶ The seventh age is the eternal

²³ *Isidori Etymologiae*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), II. Lib. XI, Caput II, 'De Aetatibus Hominum'; also *PL* 82, 415–16.

²⁴ Honorius of Autun, 'De Imagine Mundi' II, 75: *PL* 172, 156.

²⁵ *Promptorium Parvulorum*, ed. A.L. Mayhew, EETS e.s.102 (London, 1908), s.v. 'Agis.' *Adolescentia* goes up to a curious 29; otherwise the ages are named and delimited as by Isidore.

²⁶ St Bonaventure, *Breviloquium: Prologue*, ed. Jacques-Guy Bougerol (Paris 1966), II 2–3 (pp. 96–100). Note also St Julian of Toledo, *De Comprobatione Sextae Aetatis* [on the approval of the sixth age], *Corpus Christianorum* 115 (Turnhout, 1976), III, 3; Bede, *Epistola ad Pelegrinum de Aetatibus Saeculi*, ed. C. W. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 1943); Rabaunus Maurus, *PL* 111, 306–07. Of seventh-century influences on twelfth-

Sabbath of rest, as Augustine noted at the end of his *De Civitate Dei*.

It was the connection between the coming of death and the wisdom of timely repentance that later mediæval treatments of the Ages of Man took over when they applied them to the moral exhortation of the individual. For the theologians, the implication of the correspondence was that the world, now in its sixth age, *senium*, was declining, doddering towards doomsday in a sort of cosmological decrepitude. For the moralist, old age was a warning to youth to prepare for the end:²⁷ ‘bi rekenyng bi tyme bisili þou make.’²⁸ This is the theme of many a *timor mortis* poem about the brevity of youth:

Wyle Y was 3onge Y myght nat see
 þe straye waye to my last age ...
 þer was neuer ladd þat leuyt so long
 þat ne deyyt or dede schall be;
 þefore, bycauce Y haue lyuyd wrang,
 ‘Timor mortis conturbat me.’²⁹

It is also the point missed, or ignored, by the Victorian scholar Sidney Colvin in his romantic description of the flower-surrounded figures depicted on the floor of Siena Cathedral, in a mosaic dated 1476 (Figure 1):



Figure 1: ‘The Seven Ages of Man’, floor mosaic, Siena Cathedral.

century ideas, Bede’s and Isidore’s were much greater than Julian’s: see Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*.

²⁷ For example, the Vernon lyric ‘þenk on zuster-day’, lines 97–108, no. 101 in *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown, 2nd edn revised by G. V. Smithers (Oxford, 1957), suggests that God allows crooked and feeble old men to survive as warnings to young men.

²⁸ *The Mirror*, line 415.

²⁹ R.L. Greene (ed.), ‘A Middle English “Timor Mortis” Poem’, *Modern Language Review* 28 (1933): 234–38. Cf. George Herbert’s poem ‘Mortification’, describing five Ages, infancy, boyhood, youth, manhood and age, all grimly menaced with the prospect of death, but concluding with a prayer ‘That all these dyings may be life in death!’

The seven ages of man are shown in single white figures set in squares or diamonds of black. These ages are not divided as usual: four divisions are given to the time before manhood, as if to draw out as much as possible that season when life is life indeed. There is no mewling and puking, nor any whining school-boy: *Infantia* is a naked child playing among flowers; *Pueritia* an Italian boy in short cloak and cap walking in the fields; the season of youth is spun out, always among flowers, through *Adolescentia* and *Juventus*; manhood is not a soldier full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard, but a studious citizen walking with open book; *Decrepitus* moves, over a land flowerless at last, on crutches to his open grave.³⁰

What is unusual is not the division of the ages, or even Colvin's omission of one of them, but the idyllic viewpoint, which smacks more of the nineteenth than of the fifteenth century. The mosaic is reproduced by Edgar Fripp, who also provides a more detailed description than Colvin's. He adds that *Juventus* has a falcon on his fist; that *Virilitas* is 'a learned doctor in his robes, carrying a book of the law': that *Senectus* holds a rosary; and that the flowers represent the Garden of the World, while *Decrepitas* 'looks with bowed head into his tomb, within the House of God: *the largest and central picture of the series, with a Cross behind it*'. Fripp goes on to contrast what he calls Jacques' smart and cynical travesty of this happy and dignified representation of Life.³¹

Nevertheless the sobering and centralized conclusion of the series shows *Decrepitas* approaching his tomb. The iconography of the Ages almost inevitably has this sobering emphasis.³² In the sumptuous but fragmentary De Lisle psalter of the fourteenth century, the figures of *Infantia*, *Juventus*, *Senectus* and *Decrepitas* represent the four Ages at the corners of an illustration of a ten-spoked wheel depicting stages of

³⁰ Sidney Colvin, 'The History of a Pavement', *Fortnightly Review* (July, 1875), 53–4.

³¹ E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare, Man and Artist*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1938), II, 533–34.

³² The iconography of the Ages has been extensively studied by Samuel C. Chew, in 'This Strange Eventful History', *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. J. G. McManaway *et al.* (Washington, 1948), pp. 157–82, and in *The Pilgrimage of Life* (New Haven, CT, 1962), pp. 153–73.

life from the cradle to the grave.³³ The emphasis on death is apparent in Wynkyn de Worde's woodcut illustrating the chapter on the Seven Ages in John of Trevisa's translation of the *De Proprietatibus Rerum*.³⁴ In a landscape containing a castle, a terrace and hill, with birds flying above, are drawn a naked infant, a child playing with a hobby-horse and a windmill, a boy bending a bow, a gallant wearing a tall-feathered hat and holding a falcon on his wrist, and three soberly-dressed but scarcely differentiated figures; below the seven a physician scrutinizes a vial beside the bed of a sick man; the head and trunk of a corpse are visible behind the castle wall, and a surgeon is apparently cutting the throat of an unhappy-looking figure reclining on a stool. The chapter following concentrates on the medical or at least physical aspects of the Ages, detailing especially the disabilities of old age. The author seems to have as much difficulty as the artist in distinguishing the last three Ages, perhaps because Isidore, whom he acknowledges as his source, is somewhat confusing about the distinctions between *gravitas*, *senectus* and *senium*.

The physiological aspect of the Ages is best exemplified by Macrobius, who deals at length with the occurrence of the number seven in nature. He writes, 'Hic denique est numerus qui hominem concipi formari edi uiuere ali ac per omnes aetatum gradus tradi senectae atque omnino constare facit.'³⁵ There follows a detailed

³³ MS BL Arundel 83, fol. 126^v. On fol. 122 a note dated 'mil cccxxxix' mentions 'Robert de lyle'. The fine half-page illustration is reproduced by J. Winter Jones, 'Observations on the Origins of the Division of Man's Life into Stages', *Archaeologia* 35 (1853): 167–89 (p. 176). Winter Jones also reproduces and describes a fifteenth-century woodcut showing a 'rota vite' with representations of the Seven Ages around it (pp. 186–88). Cf. J. G. Waller, 'The Wheel of Human Life, or the Seven Ages', *Gentleman's Magazine* (May, 1853), 494–502; also Chew, 'This Strange Eventful History', pp. 166–67. Four quatrains describing man at twenty, forty, sixty and in his last age called 'decrepitus', occur in a carol about death in Richard Hill's commonplace book, no. 374 in *The Early English Carols*, ed. R. L. Greene, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1977), p. 222.

³⁴ *Bartholomeus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, trans. John Trevisa, printed by Wynkyn de Worde (1495), sig. M2^r, preceding Bk 6, ch. 1. For the text see *On the Properties of Things*, ed. M. C. Seymour et al., 3 vols (Oxford, 1975–87), I, 291–93.

³⁵ *Macrobius*, ed. Franz Eyssenhartd (Leipzig, 1868), p. 498. 'Again, seven is the number by which man is conceived, developed in the womb, is born, lives and is sustained, and passing through all the stages of life attains old age; his whole life is regulated by it': *Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. W. H. Stahl (New York, 1952), I. 6. 62 (p. 112). Macrobius goes on (62–75) to characterize the

description of the physical changes associated with each of the seven Ages. Comparison with the physical changes of human life made the theological divisions of history more readily intelligible, but the scheme proved less tractable when pressed into the service of moral exhortation. For the theologians, the analogy of the Seven Ages cut down the vast range of history to manageable proportions, but for the homilists it was more extensive than necessary. A life-span is not the appropriate object of moral exhortation, which requires a response from the individual addressed at the present stage of his life.

A case in point is the extended review of the Seven Ages in the Scots poem *Ratis Raving*, intended as a father's guide to practical morality for his son.³⁶ The review, which the author claims is 'vrytin in lytill space' (line 1099), although it takes up some 700 of the poem's roughly 1800 lines, is provided to help the son

To know the cours of thi 3outhede,
And of the mydys, and of thin eild,
As þow has feld and mar sal field
(lines 1101–03).

Any resemblance to Aristotle's three Ages is accidental: the author's concern is with the development of reason and the virtue it should promote, which he calls 'bounté'. The first two Ages, up to three and seven years, are devoted merely to nourishment and innocent play, and have no homiletic value; but in the third, from seven to fifteen, 'springis rutis of resone' (line 1152), and here the author warns against the frivolity of too much play, and the evil of dicing. The fourth Age, fifteen to thirty, when man grows to the perfection of reason, is the time to develop 'bounté'. In the fifth Age, thirty to fifty, man should reach 'the perfeccioune / Of resone and discreccioune' (lines 1414–15).³⁷ But too often this Age is given over to vice and tyranny:

physical features of each age, deriving most of his material, according to Stahl, from pseudo-lamblicus' *Theologoumena arithmeticae*, a Greek Pythagorean philosopher of the 3rd or 4th century.

³⁶ *Ratis Raving and Other Early Scots Poems on Morals*, ed. R. Girvan, Scottish Text Society 11 (Edinburgh and London, 1939), pp. 31–51 (lines 1098–1798). Girvan explains the title as the advice ('raving') of one Rate (p. xxi), which whoever added the epilogue assures us is not 'raving' but good moral sense. See also *Ratis Raving and Other Moral and Religious Pieces*, ed. J. R. Lumby, EETS o.s. 43 (London, 1870).

³⁷ 'About forty-nine', according to Aristotle (note 16 above), a delightful number

here the verse becomes a satire of contemporary oppression, with one Mortimer as an example, whose evil ways were confessed, if not in life than on his epitaph, in a version of Psalm 51: 3–9. The sixth Age, fifty to seventy or eighty (the terminal alternative agrees with the proof text, Psalm 89 [90]: 10), is too often covetous although the Psalter says ‘That halynes in eild suld bee’ (line 1648).³⁸ The last Age, eighty and beyond, is a time of toothless senility, with Albert Magnus’ reputed lapse into childishness as an example. The moral, wise rather than particularly spiritual, is that even if Hell and Heaven didn’t exist, philosophers agree that it’s better to be virtuous than vicious.

If the survey in *Ratis Raving* is unwieldy, the problem of achieving unity is neatly solved in the poignant lyric *The Hours of Man’s Life*.³⁹ Here the survey is presented as the reminiscence of a hoary old man lamenting his misspent life, whom the poet overhears while (ominously) ‘on(e) my playing’ (lines 1, 77). The narrative framework thus brings the substance of the old man’s monologue into the present with dramatic immediacy, and its obvious though unstated relevance to the carefree mood of the reckless young poet gives it homiletic impact. Each stanza ends with the refrain ‘This wor(l)d ys but a wannyté’, insisting on the poem’s single theme. Moreover, the Ages are

for Macrobius: ‘notandum uero, quod, cum numerus septem se multiplicat, facit aetatem quae proprie perfecta et habetur et dicitur, adeo ut illius aetatis homo—utpote qui perfectionem et adtigerit iam et necdum praeterierit—consilio aptus sit nec ab exercitio uirium alienus habeatur’ (*Macrobius*, I. 6. 75, ed. Eyssenhardt, 501): ‘And now we must call attention to the fact that the number seven multiplied by itself produces the age which is properly considered and called perfect, so that a man of this age, as one who has already attained and not yet passed perfection, is considered ripe in wisdom and not unfit for the exercise of his physical powers’ (*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. Stahl, 115).

³⁸ Perhaps ‘aetas senectutis vita immaculata’, Sapientia 4: 9: ‘an unspotted life is the true ripeness of age’ (NEB). *The Mirror* has ‘Quod Conscience, “certis it were riȝt / To be holi now or neuere moore”’ (lines 343–44) when Man at sixty grows old (‘Myn igen daswen, myn heer is hoore’, line 338) and ashamed of his sinful past.

³⁹ I use the title suggested in Carleton Brown and R. H. Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943), no. 349, and quote the edition by Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 230–33, from MS Porkington 10. See also the edition, from MS Lambeth 853, which lacks the second stanza, by F. J. Furnivall, *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, 83–5. A sixteenth-century copy in Bodleian MS Lat. Misc. e. 85, fols 81^r–82^r, omits the last stanza, and attributes the poem, or this copy of it, to one De Thomas Peny of Houghton.

concentrated into the passage of a day, to make an admonitory point about the brevity of human life:

Owre lewying ys but one daye,
 A3eynst þe world þat euyre schal be
 (lines 61–62).

Pope Gregory the Great related the five hours of the day mentioned in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20: 1–16) to the Ages of Man's life.⁴⁰ *Mane* corresponds to *pueritia*, *tertia hora* to *adolescentia*, the age of growing up resembling the way the heat of the climbing sun increases, *sexta* to *juventus*, resembling the sun in full strength, *nona* to *senectus*, resembling the sun descending, since in this age the heat of youth declines, and *undecima* to the age called *decrepita* or *veterana*. One recalls the imagery of Shakespeare's seventh sonnet, which compares the Three Ages of Man with the passage of the sun across the heavens. In *The Hours of Man's Life* the Seven Ages are each allocated a stanza and correlated with an appropriate time of day. At 'the morrow-tyde' (line 17) the child is born, 'At myde-morroo-daye' (line 25) he plays and fights with other children, 'At vnder-day' he goes to school and disobeys his master; dubbed a knight at midday and crowned a king at noon he proudly indulges his lusts, but 'at myd-vndure-none' (line 57) his powers decline, and 'at ewynsong tyme' he is cold and decrepit (line 65). Similar imagery occurs in *The Mirror*:

Þe sunne is past fer bi þe sowthe,
 And hi3eth swiþe in to þe weste
 (lines 347–8);

It is past euensonge of my day
 (line 374).

Each age is contrasted with the old man's present regret for his sin: for instance, he was born unblemished, but 'Sethe in sin I have I-be' (line 22). The moral is similar to that of *Everyman*, the old man recognizing that

⁴⁰ And to the Ages of the world: see *Sancti Gregorii Magni XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Lib. I Homilia xix, PL 76, 1153–59. See also Honorius, PL 172, 858. Cf. a Kentish sermon on the parable of the vineyard, 'Dominica in Sexagesima Sermo', in *An Old English Miscellany*, ed. R. Morris, EETS 49 o.s. (1872; rpt London, 1927), pp. 34–5, and *Pearl*, ed. E. V. Gordon (1953; rpt Oxford, 1966), lines 501–612 (pp. 18–22).

When I am dede and layd in grawe,
 Then no þing schall save me,
 But well and woo þat I done havfe
 (lines 69–71).

Everyman itself is a powerful dramatic homily on the inevitability of death, in view of which preparedness is all. But a case has been made for regarding it as embodying, like its massive forerunner *The Castle of Perseverance*, a survey of the Ages of Man's life.⁴¹ In *The Castle* Mankind begins as an innocent child guided by a good and a bad angel; he soon turns to the World and indulges in youthful follies that bring the Deadly Sins in their train; in middle age he repents and the Sins and the Three Enemies of Man fail to dislodge him and his attendant Virtues from the castle in which he has taken refuge; but as Age approaches he yields to Covetyse, and dies apparently doomed but with the word 'mercy' on his lips (line 3007), which, after the debate of the Four Daughters of God, proves sufficient to save his soul as the Bad Angel is carrying it to Hell. Such a life-span is less obvious in *Everyman*, which begins with the message from Death which Mankind in *The Castle* receives only at the end of his life. Yet the decline of Everyman's fortunes as his friends desert him corresponds to the inadequacy of youthful fellowship and frivolities that leave his Good Deeds shackled, until subsequent repentance unlooses them and provides the more reliable companions that indicate his preparedness for the death that will introduce his soul to Heaven.

The brief dramatic dialogue *Of þe Seuē Ages* may be regarded as a link between such morality plays and *The Mirror*.⁴² The conflicts of conscience that beset man at each age are allegorized by the argumentative figures of a Good Angel and the Fiend: similar figures appear in *The Castle of Perseverance*, *The Mirror*, *Dr Faustus*, and, in

⁴¹ *Everyman*, ed. A. C. Cawley (Manchester, 1961); *The Castle of Perseverance*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. M. Eccles, EETS o.s. 262 (London, 1969). Humanum Genus temporarily repents at forty (1575), and is presumably sixty (cf. 417) when he recounts the disabilities of old age (2482 ff.). Denis V. Moran, 'The Life of Everyman', *Neophilologus* 56 (1972): 324–29, traces Everyman's life from sensual youth to avaricious and finally repentant old age.

⁴² Edited, with facsimile of MS BL. Add. 37049, fols 28^v–29^r, by B. H. Bowers, 'A Medieval Analogue to *As You Like It* II. vii. 137–166', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3 (1952): 109–12. Less satisfactorily printed by E. C. York, 'Dramatic Form in a Late Middle English Narrative', *Modern Language Notes* 72 (1957): 484–85.

an amorous rather than ethical context, Shakespeare's sonnet 144.⁴³ The dramatic form dispenses with otiose descriptions of each age, which instead are indicated simply by the speaker's changing names: he is called 'þe Childe' (twice), '3outhe', 'Man', 'Age', 'þe Crepyl', and 'þe last Old Age'. In each case, his speeches imply a moral attitude. Illustrations accompany the text. At each age except the first the protagonist is flanked by his contrasting attendants. Man waves a battle-axe, Age clutches a purse, and the Cripple, like Senectus on the Siena pavement, carries a rosary. The Last Old Age lies dead in bed while the Angel extracts the Soul from his mouth.⁴⁴ As in *The Mirror*, the dramatic development, from sin to repentance, parallels the time sequence from youth to age, the homiletic emphasis going to the weightiest speeches, those on repentance, with which the dialogue concludes. The irony that the Fiend is forced to report the salvation that has defeated him drives home the moral message:

Bot mercy has taken hym to grace
 For þ' he has lyfed in þis world here
 And els in helle he hade had a place
 Emange fyre & fendes of vgly chere
 (lines 57–60).

Dyboski says of *The Mirror*, somewhat disparagingly, that it 'possesses a certain interest as presenting a transitional stage midway between the common Middle English allegorical vision and the early Modern English dramatic Morality'.⁴⁵ While the opening lines of the second stanza refer to the poet dreaming, the poem is without scenic content and does not establish a narrative framework by returning

⁴³ Cf. Thomas Waleys, quoted by Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960), p. 104: 'nos ponimus duos angelos, unum bonum et alterum malum, hominibus assignari' [we (*scil.* Christians) aver that two angels, one good and the other bad, are assigned to persons.]

⁴⁴ Cf. the speech of the Aungell who conveys Everyman's soul to Heaven (*Everyman*, lines 894 ff.). There are other reminders of the morality plays. The Fiend uses a proverb that recurs in *Youth*, in *Tudor Interludes*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth, 1972), line 607 (p. 133): '3onge saynt alde devell is an olde sawe' (9). The Angel warns 'Man (Bowers misprints 'þan') hafe mynde of þine endyng day' (18), which is like the concluding admonition of *The Castle of Perseverance*: 'Evyr at þe begynnynge / Thynk on 3oure last endynge!' (lines 3647–48), a commonplace also found at line 407 and, slightly varied, as the burden of Greene (ed.), *Carols*, 377.

⁴⁵ Dyboski, introd., *Songs, Carols and Other Miscellaneous Poems*, xxx.

to the poet as *The Hours of Man's Life* does. Dialogue is frequent, though usually not presented in dramatic form like the dialogue in *Of þe Seuen Ages*.⁴⁶ Allegorical figures debate, especially when Man is twenty, sixty and ninety. There are seventeen personifications in six lines of one stanza (33–8), but only a few of these speak elsewhere in the poem. The debates are of differing kinds: at twenty the Sins and corresponding Virtues compete alternately for Man's attention, at sixty Youth taunts Age, and at ninety Conscience argues with Despair.

As H. N. MacCracken long ago pointed out,⁴⁷ the early sixteenth-century morality *Mundus & Infans* is based on *The Mirror*. The dramatist's adaptations reveal what he felt the poem needed to turn it into drama. *Infans* addresses the audience with a paraphrase of the opening lines of *The Mirror*:⁴⁸

The Mirror, 1–8

How mankinde doop bigynne
is wondir for to scryue so;
In game he is bigoten in synne,
þe child is þe modris deedli foo;
Or þei be fulli partide on tweyne,
In perelle of deed ben boþe two.
Pore he come þe worlde with-ynne
Wiþ sorewe & pouert oute schal he goo.

Mundus & Infans, 28–35

Now semely syrs, beholde on me
How mankynde doth begynne:
I am a chylde, as you may se,
Goten in game and in grete synne,
xl wekes my moder me founde,
Flesshe and blode my fode was tho;
Whan I was rype from her to founde,
In peryll of dethe we stode bothe two.

The playwright has simplified, most obviously in that he rhymes on four sounds instead of only on two, and has translated third person

⁴⁶ There are some speech headings in the manuscript of L, not reproduced in Furnivall's edition, and more in Pepys 1584 where, after line 16, in a red block inset without top, the scribe writes 'The world answerth to the child and saith' (fol. 14^r), and occasionally names of speakers are placed in margins or centralized with red underlining.

⁴⁷ H. N. MacCracken, 'A Source of *Mundus & Infans*', *PMLA* 23 (1908): 486–96.

⁴⁸ *Mundus & Infans* was printed as 'a propre newe Interlude' by Wynkyn de Worde in 1522; see the facsimile edition, *A Proper New Interlude of the World and the Child, otherwise called Mundus et Infans*, by J. S. Farmer, Tudor Facsimile Texts (London, 1909). I quote the edition by J. M. Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, 2 vols (1897, rpt New York, 1967), I, 353–85. With modernized spellings, the play is found in *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, ed. E. T. Schell and J. D. Shuchter (New York, 1969), pp. 167–98, but the texts in this volume are woefully unreliable. *Mundus & Infans* is one of the *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, ed. G. A. Lester (London, 1981).

narrative into the first person speech of an actor facing an audience. The verbal differences are slight, but they have a noticeable effect on presentation and tone. As the Child in the play is addressing an audience, he inserts colloquialisms, 'now semely syrs', 'as you may se', which give his speech an easy familiarity in keeping with the conventionality of its content. He is saying simply 'Look, I'm a child, and you know what physically speaking that means.' But the word 'wondir' in the second line of the poem signals a different tone: 'Have you ever thought seriously about what it means to be human?' The answer comes with grimly cumulative logic: conception is sinful, birth perilous, and the beginning and end of life sorrowful and poverty-stricken. At the price of the poem's powerful fourth line, the play finds room for an otiose reference to bridge the gap between conception and birth. That paratactic fourth line is evidently explained, in a physical sense, by the two lines that follow, but Furnivall's punctuation suggests that it should be linked with the preceding line, giving 'deedli' a moral force.

The Child in the poem sets out at birth on a pilgrimage 'to seke deep' (line 29); a familiar homiletic theme that recurs in the moralities, and informs the verses said to have been made by Sir Walter Raleigh the night before he was beheaded.⁴⁹ A pilgrimage is a journey to a shrine; so too life, from a homiletic point of view, may be pictured as a progress to a spiritual end, in which death and the Judgment are inevitable stages on the way to the seventh Age, which is 'in resurrectione finali'. Infans in the play alludes to the theme of death, but not of pilgrimage, in a quatrain that is a simplified and less powerful version of the fourth stanza of the poem:

⁴⁹ Cf. E. T. Schell, 'On the Imitation of Life's Pilgrimage in *The Castle of Perseverance*', *JEGP* 67 (1968): 235–48. For the pilgrimage theme see Rosamond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), pp. 145 ff., and Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life*. For the theory of 'the allegoric progress' see Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: the Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY, 1964), chapter 3, 'Symbolic Action: Progress and Battle', pp. 147–80, especially pp. 151–57. See also Chaucer's *Balade de Bon Conseyl* ('Truth'), 17–20, and the notes in F.N. Robinson's edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn (London, 1957), p. 861.

The Mirror, 27–32

Naked out of the wyket of synne
 Of the perellis of streite passage,
 To seke deef y did bigynne
 Pat ilke dredful pilgrymage,
 Mi body & soule to parte a tweyne,
 To make a deuourse of pat mariage.

Mundus & Infans, 36–39

Now to seke dethe I must begyn
 For to passe that straye passage;
 For body and soule that shall than twynne
 And make a partynge of that maryage.

The play uses fewer lines in this passage because it has simplified, not compressed, its original. As a physical description of birth 'streite passage' has objective force, especially in the context of 'wyket of synne'; applied to death as it is in the play, the same phrase becomes a commonplace. To the child in the play death remains a remote future event, but the lines in the poem bring it frighteningly close, for they show that the struggle of birth, both physically and spiritually perilous, is actually the start of that search for death which is what the grim journey of life inevitably entails. And the process is not merely physical, for it starts at the 'wyket of synne', and is a 'pilgrymage' to a spiritual destination. Were the aim of preaching not salvation, the prospect would be gloomy indeed!

Mundus & Infans deals with the problem of structure by perforce concentrating on significant moments of moral decision or conflict. The Ages up to manhood are telescoped into a few brief monologues delivered while the youngster is under the tutelage of the World; youth and manhood are dramatized as a debate with Conscience on the Deadly Sins and as a lively encounter with Folye; and Age is shown lamenting his youthful excesses and after repentance receiving belated instruction in the elements of the Christian faith from Perseueraunce. There are never more than two characters on stage at one time; whether or not this arrangement was intended to facilitate doubling of actors' roles, its effect is to highlight the contrast, in clearly defined scenes, between the central figure and the allegorical Vice or Virtue influencing him.⁵⁰ Effectively there are four scenes, the protagonist encountering in each a different allegorical figure, alternately a bad and a good one, but he does pass through seven ages, more or less

⁵⁰ Concluding from the structure of *Mundus & Infans* that only two actors were available to play five parts, David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), pp. 117 ff., argues, I believe unconvincingly, that the structure was pre-determined by casting restrictions, rather than shaped by artistic and thematic considerations.

matching seven different names he goes by. He is Dalyaunce, Wanton, Lust-and-Lykyng and Manhode Myghty in the first four ages. During the course of the fifth, Folye changes his name to Shame. His last two names are Age, when he despairs, as Man in *The Mirror* does at ninety, and Repentaunce, when he learns all that is necessary to win Heaven, as the decrepit centenarian does at the end of *The Mirror*. But whereas the play draws out as much as possible that season when life is life indeed, in *The Mirror* Man reaches old age and has to face the prospect of death when the poem is only half over: the emphasis therefore falls on the theme of repentance, while the contrite sinner lingers on decade after decade to the last gasp of decrepitude.

The two stanzas describing the Child between seven and fourteen contain complementary advice from the Good Angel and the Bad; in the play Wanton's monologue is purely an expansion of the Bad Angel's advice. The period from fourteen to twenty (twenty-one in the play)⁵¹ features the opposing instructions of Reason and Lust: the former advises 'Goo to oxenford' (line 90) to learn law, the latter more alluringly advocates music, violent sports, and womanizing in the taverns with wild companions.⁵² In the play Lust-and-Lykyng is much less specific, except on the subject of 'loue-longynge'.

When Man is twenty the Sins address him, each in two lines, then each in a stanza answered in turn by the corresponding Virtue. There is no narrative progress, the symmetrical speeches resembling a verbal ballet rather than a dramatic confrontation. Man himself does not speak till the next Age, when Conscience reiterates the arguments against the Sins and Man scorns him. In the corresponding scene in *Mundus & Infans*, however, although Conscience and Manhode are given alternate four-line speeches, the symmetry is both progressive and passionate. Conscience forbids Manhode the company of each Sin in turn, Manhode growing angrier all the time; at last, with a neat twist for which there is no parallel in *The Mirror*, Conscience disarms

⁵¹ Most manuscripts give the age here as 'xx⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾' (89); Furnivall conjectures that xx is a mistake for xv (*Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, vii). BL Add. 36983 has the apparently correct 'xiiij^e'.

⁵² The stanza concludes with a crux: 'And be to bemond A good squyer / Al nyzt til þe day do dawē' (95–96). As a proper name, 'bemond' is not in *MED* or *OED*. Furnivall suggested it was the name of a dog, and that the reference might be to poaching; later he opined that it referred to sports in Oxford's Beaumont Street. York thought it might be a form of 'beau monde'. Perhaps 'be to bemond(e)' was a scribal dittography in the archetype, and the original read 'be to þe (or le) monde', summarizing the worldly follies Lust is advocating.

his adversary by unexpectedly permitting him to be covetous—but then he explains that he means covetous of well-doing. The “debate” in *The Mirror* entails a detailed self-exposure of the nature of the Sins and Virtues, a familiar function of allegory;⁵³ but in the play description is entirely sacrificed to the dramatic form of the confrontation.

At fifty Man rejects Conscience’s advice to ‘use werkis of good vertu’ (line 324), and welcomes Coueitise instead, the traditional vice of old men.⁵⁴ But in his sixties he grows contrite as his physical powers decline, meekly accepting the taunts of Youth, who bids him ‘Hange up þin hachet & take þi reste’ (line 346).⁵⁵ The debate between Youth and Age is not an exchange of mutual recriminations: instead Youth, somewhat oddly perhaps, since it is usually Age who preaches to Youth, becomes Age’s moral counsellor, rebuking him for misspending his earlier years, and warning him that ‘God wole haue rekenyng of al þis’ (line 440).⁵⁶

Meekness’s warning that Pride ‘zeueþ but woo & wysshes(s) to

⁵³ Cf. the gloating self-revelations of the hags representing the Deadly Sins in Guillaume de Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*: see Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 174 ff.

⁵⁴ Examples could be multiplied. Cf. Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica*, ed. Ross, 103/14–15: ‘their passions have slackened off and they are enslaved to gain’. Pope Innocent’s old man is ‘tenax ac cupidus’ [grasping and greedy]: *Lotharii Cardinalis De Miseris Humane Conditionis*, ed. M. Maccarrone (Padua, 1955), chapter X (on old age), p. 16; also *PL* 217, 706. Chaucer’s Criseyde knows that ‘elde is ful of coveytise’, and plans to bribe her father to allow her to return to Troilus: *Troilus and Criseyde* IV 1369 ff. (*Works*, ed. Robinson, 455–56). In Henry Medwall’s *Nature*, I, 1243 and II, 989–92, in *Quellen des Weltlichen Dramas in England vor Shakespeare*, ed. A. Brandl (Strassburg, 1898), pp. 73–158, Man sets little store by the counsel of Coveytise until he begins to grow old.

⁵⁵ A conventional expression meaning ‘stop what one is doing’, ‘give up’: for examples see *MED* s.v. ‘hachet’ (c), and *MED* s.v. ‘axe’ (2b). In *Sir Gawain and the Grene Knight*, line 477, it is used both literally and figuratively.

⁵⁶ In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. M. Y. Offord, EETS o.s. 246 (London, 1959), Old Age preaches to Youth and Middle Age. On this text see, for instance, Anne Kernan, ‘Theme and Structure in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 75 (1974): 253–78; Beryl Rowland, ‘The Three Ages of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*’, *Chaucer Review* 9 (1974–5): 342–52; Thorlac Turville-Petre, ‘The Ages of Man and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*’, *Medium Ævum* 46 (1977): 66–76. John F. Adams, ‘*Piers Plowman* and the Three Ages of Man’, *JEGP* 62 (1962): 23–41, argues for correspondences between youth, middle and old age and the Dowel, Dobet and Dobest sections of Langland’s poem.

wage' (line 138) has proved true of all the Sins, and Age complains 'Now haue y nouȝt but wiſſhis to wage' (line 381)—a poor reward for sinful indulgence. After line 392, L omits a stanza found in the four most complete of the other manuscripts, possibly because the next stanza covers what it says, and in fact starts by repeating its seventh line.⁵⁷ This next stanza is a cumulative list of the old man's misfortunes, each line ending with 'me' as object to the rhyming word. The old man finds himself forsaken by the false world, hated by the Sins he loved, accused before Conscience, and awaited by fiends and hell-hounds. In two vivid metaphors he anticipates the coming of death:

Deep seiþ, my breed he haþ baken me;
Now schakeþ he his spere to smite me
(lines 399–400).⁵⁸

At this point, following man's decline, contrition and expectation of death, it is perhaps surprising that so much of the poem is left, and that Man has yet four periods of life ahead of him, as if to draw out as much as possible that season when repentance is repentance indeed. As a homiletic device the Ages of Man has the disadvantage of seeming to invite the delay of repentance till old age (for why should not *Juventus* have a rosary as well as *Senectus*?), otherwise the climax would come too soon for dramatic convenience. But it would be a travesty in the manner of Jacques to suggest that the scheme of the Ages unwittingly approves the Fiend's proverb 'ȝonge saynt alde deuell'; more apposite is Gregory's interpretation of the labourers' entering the vineyard at the eleventh hour: 'Et si Deo vivere in pueritia et iuuentute noluistis, saltem in ultima aetate resipiscite' [if you weren't willing to live for God in childhood and youth, at least come to your senses now your time is nearly up].⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Hence, no doubt, the omission in P, by homoeoteleuton, of the last two lines of this stanza that is lacking in L. See the description of P referred to in note 6 above.

⁵⁸ Two stanzas later the author uses another, of special interest because it recurs in *Hamlet* V. ii. 278: 'God-is seruauantis in areest haþ þee take / Til deep on þee haue doon bataile' (lines 413–14). Here BL Add. 36983 reads 'seriaunt'. See M. C. Pecheux, 'Another Note on "This fell sergeant, Death"', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975): 74–75.

⁵⁹ Gregory the Great, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Lib. I Homilia xix. Cf. *Pearl*, ed. Gordon, lines 617–24: everyone but the innocent infant would forfeit Heaven through sinning, 'And ay þe ofter, þe alder þay were' (621), were not God's mercy and grace sufficient.

Two stanzas (lines 449–64), of which the first looks like an uncanceled draft of the second, since the second incorporates the ideas of the first and adds more of the traditional signs of old age, describe Youth and Age as two thieves, one stealing from and the other on the ageing Man.

3ougþe steeliþ from me, Y 3eede up ri3te;
Age steeleþ on me, Y bowe and 3eelde
(lines 459–60).⁶⁰

P has 'I hokke & helde' [I bend and stoop]. Besides the crooked back and the unsteady gait, other traditional signs of old age are nervous irritability, cowardice and frigidity. For L 462 'Y wexe on-mylde' P reads 'cowardyse & unbelde' (timidity) and has Youth proudly threatening to fight Man in the next line, where L reads '3ougþe steeleþ my corage To pleie & fi3te.' Finally, what in P is simply another sign of old age, 'Age steeleþ on me to suffre myche chelde', becomes in L the climax of the section: 'Age is so on me stoolen þat y mote to god me 3ilde' (line 464).⁶¹

At ninety the old man finds himself 'But skyn & boon' (line 492), deserted by his friends (like Everyman) and by the Sins he loved so well: he laments 'Now y am vndure Fortunes whele (line 493).⁶² At this age Conscience defeats Wanhope in the most dramatic of the debates in the poem, attacking him as 'þou dotid hoore' (line 561) when he misquotes Scripture in order to prevent Man from repenting, and because

Pou wenest þi wickidnesse were moore
Pan god-is goodnesse & his mercie
(lines 563–4).⁶³

⁶⁰ Pepys 1584 is witness to a weaker substitute: 'Youthe stelith fro me, þat sore me grevis, / Age stelith on me bothe day and nyght.' Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 175–6: 'anni venientes . . . recedentes' [the young see the years as they come, the old as they go].

⁶¹ For the signs of old age see G. R. Coffman, 'Old Age from Horace to Chaucer: Some Literary Affinities and Adventures of an Idea', *Speculum* 9 (1934): 249–77.

⁶² For examples of the fusion of the theme of the Ages of Man with that of Fortune, see Chew, 'This Strange Eventful History', pp. 167–68, and Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), p. 334.

⁶³ The passage (537–68) is used in *Mundus & Infans*, 858–67, though without Wanhope's egregious misapplications of Scripture. The efficacy of divine mercy is the subject of *Merci passiþ ri3twisnes*, a dialogue between Mercy and a sinner, in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, ed. Furnivall, 95–100 (from MS Lambeth 853), and in Auvo

Man's sinful past continually returns to chide him. When the Sins (apart from Slouþe and Coueitise, whom Age favours) have announced that they have left him (lines 505–20), when Conscience has defeated Wanhope, and when Man is calling for the Virtues, Conscience ungenerously reminds him 'þou flemed us from þee' (line 573), and Richelees presents instead his company: 'þe synnes þat þou louedist & seruedist' (line 576). However, in the last decade Good Hope comes to rescue Man from his enemies, the World, his Flesh, Wanhope, Hell hounds, Fiends and Death (lines 593–600).⁶⁴ After 624 P uniquely inserts three stanzas in which Man rejects each of the Deadly Sins. Having thus made his confession, Man asks for God's mercy to be sown among his seed, 'And Repentaunce my corne schal weede' (line 627). Then the Ten Commandments are the lock, and the Seven Works of Mercy and the Creed are the keys, to let him in at Heaven's gate.

Here BL Add. 36983 concludes uniquely with a four-line prayer that we may all have grace to come to Heaven, other manuscripts extending a similar sentiment over two stanzas (lines 638–48). Astor A.2. adds another fourteen stanzas, which, like the ten earlier ones inserted here and there, are all some moral thing, the dispensable outpourings of an unpoetic mind. L and Pepys 1584 have a concluding stanza in a different rhyme scheme from the rest of the poem. The writer of L requests the reader to 'Praie for þe soule þat wroot þis tale' (line 651); the scribe of Pepys 1584 is more specific: 'prey for þe soule

Kurvinen (ed.), 'Mercy and Righteousness', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 181–91, from MS Porkington 10, which has six extra stanzas and where 'þe synner' is called 'Ry3t'. The basic text is Psalm 144: 9, 'miserationes eius super omnia opera eius', a favourite: quoted, for instance, in *Piers Plowman*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London, 1982), B xvii 315a; *Do merci bifore thi Jugement* 40, in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, ed. Furnivall, 19, *The Mirror* 608, *The Castle of Perseverance* 3456a, *Mankind* 224, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. Eccles, 161, and *Youth*, 105–09, in *Tudor Interludes*, ed. Happé. Chaucer uses it in the context of courtly love: *Troilus*, III 1282; *Prologue to Legend of Good Women*, F 162; *The Knight's Tale*, 3089. It also occurs in *Titus & Vespasian: or, The Destruction of Jerusalem*, ed. J. A. Herbert (London, 1905), p. 109 (line 2410).

⁶⁴ Good Hope is naturally the supplanter of Wanhope: in *Piers Plowman*, ed. Schmidt, B xvii, 312, however, 'Good hope, þat helpe sholde, to wanhope torneþ'. In John Skelton's *Magnyfycence*, ed. R. L. Ramsay, EETS e.s. 98 (London, 1906), p. 72 (lines 2309–24), Good Hope, in a dramatic scene possibly based on a livelier comic one in *Mankind*, puts Despair and Mischief to flight as they are trying to persuade Magnyfycence to kill himself. In *The Faerie Queene* I ix 52 similar help is brought to the suicidal Redcrosse Knight by Una, but in the following canto (I x 21–22) Spenser appropriately allocates the task of rescue to Speranza.

of percivale' (fol. 28^r). We might think that was his name, but 'Wm Percivale' recurs, with that of 'Gouer' in Astor A.2., and it is hard to see Gower, the author of the *Confessio Amantis*, as responsible for *The Mirror*!

Whatever precedents the lugubrious Jacques may have had for his jaundiced view of the Ages of Man, in none of which he saw any virtue or moral warning, they could hardly have included the comprehensive survey of the moral struggle between Conscience and Sin contained, with a wealth of metaphor and homiletic fervour, in the 'poem clepid þe seuene ages'. Jacques' speech on the Ages is intended to reveal something of his character, but *The Mirror*'s purpose is unabashedly didactic:

Now in þis mirroure loke 3ou soo:
In 3oure free wille þe choice lijs,
To heuen or helle whiþir 3e wille goo
(lines 638–40).

Florimell and Galatea: Statuesque Love in the Middle Ages

I

Tall girls in beauty contests are often described as ‘statuesque’: the word is not usually applied to male wrestlers or weight-lifters. Apparently coined by Coleridge on the analogy of ‘picturesque’, its meaning was originally neutral: it simply meant ‘like a statue’, and only subsequently came to be reserved for nubile young women of imposing proportions.¹ This semantic development may illustrate the contention of the modern historian of sexuality, Michel Foucault, that ‘in the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex. Not so much to sex as representing nature, but to sex as history, as signification and discourse ... The West has managed ... to bring us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire.’² To a mediæval moralist convinced of the degenerability of the human race, this would have seemed a grotesque fulfilment of his direst predictions.

The classic paradigm of the man who makes an idol of his desires is Pygmalion, in the post-Romantic period an admired symbol of artistic creativity, but to the Middle Ages a fabricator who had the temerity to compete with God’s viceregent Nature. It is these contrasting attitudes,

¹ *OED*, s.v. ‘statuesque’: S.T. Coleridge, ‘Recapitulation and Summary of the Characteristics of Shakespeare’s Drama’, in *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare and Some of the Old Poets and Dramatists* (London, 1849): ‘Their productions were, if the expression may be allowed, statuesque, while those of the moderns are picturesque’ (p. 71). ‘Her statuesque grace’ is attested from 1855, and ‘statuesquely beautiful’ from 1865, but most of the quotations echo Coleridge’s neutral sense: the *OED*’s earliest illustration of ‘artefact’ is from Coleridge also.

² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 78.

and their implications in literature for the subject of love, that I wish to develop in the present paper.

In the classical story of the statue transformed into a wife for its sculptor, Venus grants Pygmalion's prayer as a reward for his faith in her divinity.³ The foul Propoetides had denied that she was a goddess, and cynically prostituting themselves had become so hardened that their metamorphosis into stone was not a great change. Disgusted by them, Pygmalion avoided women and fell in love with his own skilfully carved ivory statue. Its animation is the opposite of their petrification. Venus rewards him not for artistic skill or creativity (*pace* Anderson)⁴ but for his genuine devotion to love, which the Propoetides scorned.

The Romantic period imagines Pygmalion working in stone rather than in ivory—preferring the ampler medium for more sensuously realistic effects, perhaps; but effects valued less for themselves than for their capacity to embody ideal beauty. Falconet, in the eighteenth century, stresses the importance of 'le sentiment' as the vivifying principle of a work of art, and he aims at sentiment in his sculpture of the winsome nude before whom Pygmalion kneels enraptured (he clasps his hands and inclines backwards).⁵ She, not Pygmalion, is manifestly the focal centre of the group. The girl's unselfconscious innocence is suggested by the unstudied disposition of her hands, and by the angle of her body, the lower part square on to the viewer, the shoulders and head turned slightly towards Pygmalion, so that all her attention is directed to him. Venus' cherub kisses her right hand and seems to present her to him; the tentatively spread fingers of her unsupported left hand seem trustingly ready to return his eager handclasp. If she has not quite learned to smile yet, we feel she will at any moment.

³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 238–97; Philostephanus, in *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. K. O. Müller et al., 5 vols (1841–83), III, 31, fr. 13, calls the statue a figure of Aphrodite. Possibly Pygmalion was a priest-king of Cyprus, associated with the worship of Aphrodite-Astarte.

⁴ William S. Anderson (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6–10* (Norman, OK, 1972), p. 495: 'Ovid concerns himself with the artist's pursuit of perfection in artificial beauty.'

⁵ D. W. Robertson, Jr, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ, 1962), pp. 101, 158, and plate 21.

In contrast, the Pygmalion miniatures in MSS of *Le Roman de la Rose*, though detailed, well-drawn, and in colour, do not invite the viewer to share the feelings of the enamoured sculptor, and so leave room for criticism of him instead.⁶ In Douce 364, fol. 153^v, he gingerly touches an aristocratically well-dressed figure on its high pedestal; and two folios further on, with his back to the figure, he prays to a figure of Venus, who resembles somewhat the Red Queen in illustrations to *Alice*; in Douce 195, fol. 151, by a different artist, he lays a stiff, partially draped statue on a bed. No viewer could possibly be tempted, by these illustrations, to share his infatuation.

For Schiller, here at any rate expressing the quintessential Romantic vision, the awakening statue represents his discovery of nature's power to delight and educate his heart:

As once with prayers in passion flowing,
 Pygmalion embraced the stone,
 Till from the frozen marble glowing,
 The light of feeling o'er him shone,
 So did I clasp with young devotion
 Bright nature to a poet's heart;
 Till breath and warmth and vital motion
 Seemed through the statue form to dart.
 And then, in all my ardor sharing,
 The silent form expression found;
 Returned my kiss of youthful daring,
 And understood my heart's quick sound.
 Then lived for me the bright creation,
 The silver rill with song was rife;
 The trees, the roses shared sensation,
 An echo of my boundless life.⁷

⁶ Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, plates 18–20.

⁷ Translated by S.G.B., in Thomas Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable*, ed. Earle Toppings (New York, 1965), p. 63. This identification of nature with the statue would have seemed a hopeless confusion to the Middle Ages, which regarded Nature as an awe-inspiring figure, creator especially of beautiful women. See J.A.W. Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation* (Oxford, 1957), Appendix, 'Natura, Nature and Kind', pp. 194–212.

Schiller's metaphor, identifying nature and artefact, would have puzzled mediæval thinkers. Nature inspires Schiller, but it is Schiller's ardour that awakens the statue, nature, to inspire him. He plays the part the Middle Ages would have assigned to nature, and the god he worships is his own sensations.

Beddoes's poem *Pygmalion* (c.1820),⁸ richly sensuous in the metre and style of *Endymion* or *Epipsychidion*, elaborates the typically Romantic theme of the isolation of the creative artist, passionately consumed by the power of his individual vision, which is so far unattainable that its realization coincides with the moment of his death.

In the lavish surroundings of a Cyprian city, with its palaces and gardens, 'lonely Pygmalion' ignores 'the chambered ladies' who desert their spinning wheels to gaze eagerly after him as he passes, preferring 'unfrequented dell and wood' to their company. He finds in an unfrequented fountain 'a fragment of pale marble', a 'close stonebud' from which to shape his 'lady wonderfully fair'. After finding the marble, he ceases to venture forth, except in the sweltering siesta time when Nature's fertility infuses too abundant life into him, which he then in creative bursts pours 'warm upon the growing stone'. He creates an artefact so beautiful that it entitles him to be called divine, except that he cannot give it life; and his yearning for it gradually destroys him. Thanks to Venus, however, the statue acquires life, but tantalizingly slowly, until, after an earthquake-like agony of ecstasy, the palace collapses and

He lies beside a fountain on the knee
Of the sweet woman-statue, quietly
Weeping the tears of his felicity.

(lines 229–31)

The Romantic artefact objectifies an erotic ideal: wishful thinking made actual, the idea congealed in stone. Pygmalion's work of sculpturing is a synecdoche for all artistic creativity; the finished statue embodies the artist's own imagination, and finally the live woman, animated by the passion of his soul, reflects his own designs and his own desires. She

⁸ 'Pygmalion. The Cyprian Statuary', in *The Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, ed. H. W. Donner (Oxford, 1935), pp. 78–83.

is himself responding to himself, in self-perpetuating, self-destructive narcissism.

It would be hard to get further from the spirit of the Middle Ages than Beddoes does in this poem. Its chief ingredients, a sublimated eroticism that glorifies the passions rather than the reason, a conception of imagination as godlike creativity, and a humanistic admiration for the individual as isolated genius, would be deplored as the Devil's own instigations to lechery, pride, and idolatry.

George MacDonald quotes from Beddoes's poem in an epigraph to Chapter V of *Phantastes*.⁹ The hero, in a kind of semi-mediaeval fairyland, enters a cave containing a bas-relief, which, 'after some pondering, I concluded to represent Pygmalion as he awaited the quickening of his statue'. Looking further, he finds his ideal woman sleeping in a translucent block of alabaster. 'What I did see appeared to me perfectly lovely; more near the face that had been born with me in my soul, than anything I had seen before in nature or art.' He frees her by singing; but in the end it turns out she loves a more eligible fairy knight. In MacDonald's mythopoeic imagination, the hero seems to create his fairy world as he moves through it, seeking the face born with him in his soul.

Pygmalion's love for an inanimate statue is of course irrational, and in most versions of the story he acknowledges that he is mad; in none more so than in that of William Morris,¹⁰ but in Morris's *Earthly Paradise* the madness proves worthwhile. Behaviour which a mediaeval poet would expect his audience to recognize as unmanly (like that of a beast that wants discourse of reason) or ungodly (according to the fourteenth-century friar Holcot, a man who thinks too much of the beauty of women makes idols for himself and is preparing for a fall),¹¹ leads directly to exquisite happiness, as Pygmalion wanders about the gardens hand in hand with his awakened Galatea and they talk of the joys of love.

Writers before Morris rarely bother to consider the statue's own feelings when she becomes a woman. She is scarcely even named,

⁹ George MacDonald, *Phantastes* (1895; rpt Tring, Hertfordshire, 1982), pp. 35–36.

¹⁰ William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise: A Poem* (1868), 4 vols (London, 1905), II, 231–54 (August).

¹¹ Holcot is quoted by Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, 99.

till W.S. Gilbert wrote his comedy *Pygmalion and Galatea* in 1871.¹² Even for Morris she remains little more than an object of desire, who fortunately returns her sculptor's affection with ardour. In Gilbert's comedy there is a domestic complication, however, and at the end she voluntarily reverts to stone out of pity for Pygmalion's jealous wife.

Shaw's adaptation¹³ of the myth to the subject of linguistic and thereby social remodelling involves also a spiritual awakening for the transformed Cockney flower-girl; as her mental horizons widen, Eliza Doolittle outgrows the limited objectives of her teacher, and develops independent ambitions. The weakening of class structures in the twentieth century no doubt helps to account for the popularity of this play, and of the sentimentalized musical version, *My Fair Lady*. But growing interest in the emancipation of women was also a factor.

It would be no surprise to find the awakened statue becoming in the later twentieth century the spokesperson for modern feminism: a local (South African) example is Ruth Miller's poem 'Galatea':¹⁴

Glacial Galatea knows
Nothing unless she knows
She was herself before Pygmalion's bold
Stare broke truth from her in a truth as cold.

Though brittle, breaks not.
Though eaten, wastes not.
Though thirsting, slakes not.
I was myself before you touched me. I.

One need not go nearer to the Middle Ages than the seventeenth century to encounter the obverse of the modern humanistic attitude. Anyone who reads Bacon's essay 'Of Love' expecting to find love commended as an ennobling passion will be startled to see how

¹² W.S. Gilbert, *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871). Galatea is properly the name of a sea-nymph beloved by the Cyclops. Helen H. Law, 'The name Galatea in the Pygmalion myth', *The Classical Journal* 27 (1932): 337–42; Meyer Reinhold, 'The Naming of Pygmalion's Animated Statue', *The Classical Journal* 66 (1971): 316–19. She is Galathée in Rousseau's brief but influential *Pygmalion. Scene Lyrique* (1762).

¹³ G. B. Shaw, *Pygmalion* (1914; published 1916).

¹⁴ Ruth Miller, *Selected Poems* (London, 1965), p. 19. Her collection *Floating Island* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1965), p. 5, also includes a poem entitled 'Galatea', but that refers to the sea-nymph, so named in antiquity.

unromantically mediæval Bacon's ideas of love are. He condemns it as an irrational passion inimical to man's highest faculty, reason. Accordingly, few great men have been 'transported to the mad degree of love', which entails as it were kneeling before a little idol instead of contemplating heaven and all noble objects.¹⁵

Bacon's view was by no means idiosyncratic. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), that astonishing hold-all of recondite lore, Robert Burton, in the course of a two-page list of sexual perversions too appalling to be translated out of the original Latin, mentions the insane lust of those like Ovid's Pygmalion who were madly in love with idols and images.¹⁶

George Sandys, colonial administrator of Virginia, in 1632 added a commentary to his previously published translation of *Ovid's Metamorphosis* in the course of which he offered three explanations of the myth: the life which Venus gave the statue signifies its artistic grace and beauty 'which made it live in the estimation of those times and the admiration of posterity'; or, historically, the statue was some obdurate virgin 'mollified at length by [Pygmalion's] obsequiousness'; or, finally, Pygmalion's infatuation was simply a foul perversion like that recounted in explicit detail by Lucian and Pliny of a noble youth who lusted after the marble Venus carved by Praxiteles.¹⁷ Ovid's tenth book, according to an earlier translator, Arthur Golding (1567), 'chiefly doth contain one kind of argument / Reproving most prodigious lusts'.¹⁸ Attempts to moralize the story had long been current. Caxton's version rather more leniently suggests it typifies a poor, naked, uneducated servant, 'dry and lean as an image', in some great lord's house, whom he nurtures up and eventually marries.¹⁹

¹⁵ Francis Bacon, 'Of Love', in *Bacon's Essays*, World's Classics 24 (London, 1902), pp. 25–26.

¹⁶ 'Eorum vesanam libidinem qui etiam idola et imagines depereunt. Nota est fabula Pygmalionis apud Ovidium': Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. A. R. Shilleto, 3 vols (London, 1896), III, 56.

¹⁷ Excerpts are contained in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, ed. F. Kermodé et al., 2 vols (New York, 1973), I, 523–25.

¹⁸ *Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, I, 520.

¹⁹ *Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, I, 522. An interesting precursor of Richardson's *Pamela*—or inversion of it, for a contemporary criticism of the novel was that its heroine had scandalously engineered her own promotion.

John Marston takes a similar view to Bacon's in his satire of amorous verse, 'The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image' (1598):

Looke how the peevisch Papists crouch, and kneel
To some dull Idoll with their offering,
As if a senceles carved stone could feele
The ardor of his bootles chattering,
So fond he was, and earnest in his sute
To his remorsles Image, dum and mute.
(stanza 14)²⁰

For Marston, as for Bacon, amorous love is closely related to idolatry. Anthony Caputi accepts Marston's claim that he meant to satirize rather than imitate the Amorists, but also considers the poem an ingenious argument for sexual surrender: 'His mistress, like the statue, is dead, cold, stony, and heartless until she yields: indeed chastity is a state equivalent to lifelessness. Love, on the other hand, is a power capable of almost supernatural transformations'. Marston is moving in the direction of seventeenth-century "Metaphysical" love poetry.²¹ R. W. Ingram, on the other hand, calls the poem 'dull and indecent', and complains that it suggests 'Marston is antipathetic to love itself. He describes lust rather than love: in lovemaking he more readily finds beastliness than beauty'.²²

Precisely. That is the mediæval way to interpret the story of Pygmalion. Jean de Meun inserts the story as a *digressio* near the end of *Le Roman de la Rose* just before the lover storms the citadel, or gets in, physically, to the 'sanctuary'.²³ Two considerable critics, D. W. Robertson and Rosemond Tuve, warn us not to interpret the explicitly erotic conclusion as simply salacious entertainment: rather,

²⁰ John Marston, 'The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image' (1598), stanza 14, in *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (London, 1963), pp. 244–52. For a scornful dismissal, see C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 472–73.

²¹ Anthony Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist* (New York, 1976), p. 21. William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1977), pp. 134–61, discusses at some length the satirical and erotic ambivalence of Marston's poem.

²² R. W. Ingram, *John Marston* (Boston, 1978), pp. 21, 23.

²³ *Le Roman de la Rose*, 20817–21214; *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York, 1962), pp. 441–51.

Jean's religious imagery shows that he means the lover's passion to be regarded, like Pygmalion's, as idolatrous.²⁴

A similar motive doubtless lies behind Gower's rather perfunctory retelling of the anecdote in the *Confessio Amantis*.²⁵ Pygmalion is apparently commended, but it is necessary to remember that the story is told to the lover by Genius, or natural inclination, as a warning against sloth in love. Pygmalion pestered Venus till she animated this statue:

By this ensample thou miht finde
That word mai worche above kinde.
(IV.437–38)

There is something wrong with a natural inclination that seeks to go beyond the course of Nature in satisfying its desire.

As Nature is God's viceregent on earth, her work, unlike man's, is, of course within sublunary limits, perfect. 'Who', she asks in Chaucer's *The Physician's Tale*,

kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn,
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn
Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.²⁶

Chaucer imagines Pygmalion, and the Athenian painters Apelles and Zeuxis, working in a variety of artistic media. His source is a passage in *Le Roman de la Rose* where Jean de Meun argues for the superiority of Nature over art; these are three among a number of artists who failed to match Nature's consummate work.²⁷ An unnoticed echo of

²⁴ Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, 91–104; Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), pp. 262–63.

²⁵ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck (New York, 1968), pp. 198–200 (IV.371–445).

²⁶ *The Canterbury Tales* VI [C] 13–18, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd edn (London and Boston, 1957), p. 145.

²⁷ *Le Roman de la Rose*, 16005–248; *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Robbins, 345.

Chaucer's lines by Richard Johnson in 1612 illustrates a love-song that goes to the tune of 'Apelles':

Pygmalion, with his gravers, then,
 Could never worke so fair a peece,
 Nor yet Apelles, in his time,
 Did ever see the like in Greece;
 For if he had, he would have said
 That Venus was not like this maid.²⁸

Here Nature is not mentioned, but the anonymous author of a love poem in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557)²⁹ argues that if Pygmalion, duped by fancy, was inflamed by a dumb idol, it is no wonder that he loves one

In whom hath nature set the glory of her name,
 And brake her mould in great dispraise your like she could not frame.

Dryden takes exactly the opposite view to Chaucer's in his expanded translation of Ovid:

[Pygmalion] carv'd in Iv'ry such a Maid, so fair,
 As Nature could not with his Art compare,
 Were she to work; but in her own Defence,
 Must take her Pattern here, and copy hence.
 (*Pygmalion and the Statue*, 7–10)³⁰

Ovid says merely that the statue was lovelier than any woman born;³¹ Dryden, equally unperturbed by the theological implications, wishes only to illustrate Pygmalion's supreme skill.

²⁸ 'A Lover's Song in Praise of his Mistress', stanza 4 (of 7), in Richard Johnson, *The Crowne-Garland of Golden Roses* (1612), ed. W. Chappell (London, 1842), p. 50.

²⁹ *Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Kermode, I, 525–26.

³⁰ *The Poetical Works of John Dryden*, ed. John Sergeant (1910; rpt Oxford, 1952), pp. 445–47.

³¹ *Metamorphoses*, X, 248–49: 'formamque dedit qua femina nasci / Nulla potest'.

II

So much then for Pygmalion. I proceed to ask why the Middle Ages distrusted a form of creativity which later times admired or envied. Of course I do not say that mediæval artists and poets were not creative, only that many people felt that man should not compete with Nature, for to do so would be contrary to the will of God.

The theological implications of skilful manufacture may be illustrated by Hildebert of Lavardin, a poet whom the Norman King William II of England once imprisoned because he failed to dismantle the fortifications of the city of which he was bishop.

Poetically, Hildebert's two Roman elegies represent a high point in early twelfth-century admiration for classical art: the first elegy praises the ruins of Rome, greater as ruins than modern builders can equal, too great for modern builders to restore; the second paradoxically asserts that Christian Rome is greater now she's conquered and in ruins than she ever was at the height of her imperial pagan glory. The idols earn more praise as artefacts than they could ever do as gods:

The gods themselves admire the idols here,
And wish they looked as good as they're portrayed;
Nature could not make gods so fine appear
As do these wondrous statues man has made.
To embodied deities the sculptors' skill
Attracts more worship than their godhead will.³²

The idols are worth more than the gods they represent because the pagan gods have no real claim to be divine. Only here can man outdo Nature: the reason Nature cannot make gods as good as these that man has made is that Nature doesn't make gods at all.

³² My translation of lines 31–36 from the first of Hildebert's two Roman Elegies, in *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. F.J.E. Raby (1959; rpt Oxford, 1974), pp. 220–22:

Hic superum formas superi mirantur et ipsi,
Et cupiunt fictis vultibus esse pares.
Non potuit natura deos hoc ore creare
Quo miranda deum signa creavit homo.
Vultus adest his numinibus potiusque coluntur
Artificum studio quam deitate sua.

Nature is often depicted like a smith, working with hammers and anvil: in Alan's *De Planctu Naturae* men have divorced the hammers from the anvil by neglecting Nature's law of procreation.³³ In Alan's *Anticlaudianus* the anvil is worn out from overwork, and Nature needs to consult the Virtues before commencing the task of constructing a perfect man to counter human corruption.³⁴

The *Anticlaudianus* is a remarkable demonstration, in nine books of nearly 5000 involved hexameters, of how Nature goes to work to make a man. Alan of Lille, the so-called Universal Doctor, displays all the resources of twelfth-century humanism in the making of Nature's paragon of a cultured gentleman: the four elements, the cardinal virtues, the seven liberal arts, not to mention various graces of civilized deportment, all have to be awarded him. But Nature cannot usurp God's function: her sphere is sublunary, where she acts under His direction. In the *De Planctu*, Nature contrasts her work, various, incomplete and changeable, with God's, which is simple, sufficient, and miraculous.³⁵ The authority of theology, which apprehends God by faith, is more to be trusted than Nature's faculty of reason. Accordingly she makes mutable man a microcosm, so that he may more closely resemble God's perfect work the macrocosm.³⁶

³³ 'Venus ... cum Antigamo coepit concubinarie fornicari ... meumque inficiata praeceptum, malleos ab incudis exhaeredans consortio, adulterinis damnat incudibus, ipsae enim incudes nativae, suorum malleorum deplorentes absentiam, eosdem lacrymabiliter videntur deposcere': Alan of Lille, *De Planctu Naturae*, PL 210, 459: 'Venus ... began to live in fornication and concubinage with Antigamus [fn. not *Antigamus*] ... and studiously corrupting my precept, she dispossessed the hammers of fellowship with their anvils and sentenced them to counterfeit anvils. These natural anvils could be seen bewailing the loss of their own hammers and begging for them with tears': Alan of Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. James J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1980), pp. 163–4. On Alan, see C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 98–109, and Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, NJ, 1972), pp. 188–210.

³⁴ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, PL 210, 487–576.

³⁵ 'Ejus operatio simplex, mea multiplex; ejus opus sufficiens, meum deficiens; ejus opus mirabile, meum opus mutabile' (Alan of Lille, *De Planctu Naturae*, PL 210, 445): 'His operation is simple, mine is multiple; His work is complete, mine is defective; His work is the object of admiration, mine is subject to alteration': Sheridan (trans.), *The Complaint of Nature*, 124.

³⁶ Ego sum illa, quae ad exemplarem mundanae machinae similitudinem, hominis exemplavi naturam: ut in eo velut in speculo, ipsius mundi scripta natura appareat

For all her engineering skill, she cannot provide her paragon with an immortal soul; in the *Anticlaudianus* she sends Reason and Prudence on an aerial journey to the throne of God in search of one. Reason cannot ascend beyond the furthest astronomical sphere into the celestial realm, but Theology supports the fainting Prudence, and Faith conducts her to the citadel of God. Humbly she submits that God's own realm is threatened, when Nature's laws are so openly flouted. So Nature plans to construct a new man to make up for the ruin of her former work, so that at least one star can shine forth in a world that lies buried in the dark night of error.³⁷

The argument is startling but effective. Instead of sending another flood, or a host of other punishments, God mercifully provides a soul, and endows it with every grace. Because his mercy exceeds his justice,³⁸ God creates an emblem of divinity, the idea of the human mind,³⁹ endowed with the beauty of Joseph, the courage of Judith, the patience of Job, the zeal of Phineas, the meekness of Moses, the single-mindedness of Jacob, the faith of Abraham, and the piety of Tobit.⁴⁰ And so Nature with God's help completes the task, assisted by the various allegorical figures that go to make up a good man fitted to overcome the assault of the vices.

(Alan of Lille, *De Planctu Naturae*, PL 210, 443): 'I am the one who formed the nature of man according to the exemplar and likeness of the structure of the universe so that in him, as in a mirror of the universe itself, Nature's lineaments might be there to see': Sheridan (trans.), *The Plaint of Nature*, 118.

³⁷ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, VI vi 35–6, 41–2 :
 Quo veteres operum possit pensare ruinas,
 Vult hominem formare novum ...
 Ut saltem mundo sidus praeifulget unum,
 Qui jacet errorum tenebrosa nocte sepultus.

³⁸ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, VI vii 29: 'Quia iustitiae vincit miseratio normam'. The source text is Ps. 144: 9: 'miserationes eius super omnia opera eius', frequently quoted, e.g. by Langland, *Piers Plowman* B xi 139a, B xvii 315a, Chaucer, *Troilus* III 1282, *The Knight's Tale* (CT I.3089).

³⁹ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, VI viii 5–6:
 ... vocat ergo noym quae praeparet illi
 Numinis exemplar, humanae mentis ideam.

⁴⁰ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, VI viii 15–17:
 Forma Joseph, sensus Judith, patienti iusti
 Job, zelus Phineas, Mosique modestia, Jacob
 Simplicitas, Abrahamque fides, pietasque Tobiae.

It seems a strangely Pelagian poem for an admired Doctor of the Church, if misread as an allegory of salvation; but Nature is making no saviour of mankind. The poem says only that man with his natural advantages and the immortal soul provided him by God can and must strive for goodness against the force of evil. For all its talk of Theology and the visit of the Virtues to the throne of God, it is a humanistic rather than religious poem.

If Nature can make man without usurping God's prerogative, not so man, who tends to worship what he makes. The danger is illustrated by the often repeated story of the young man who puts his betrothal ring on the finger of a statue, and on his wedding night finds himself claimed by an apparition of what the statue represents.⁴¹ Burton uses the story in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, to illustrate the love melancholy that results from affairs between spirits and mortals. The story comes, he says, 'from an honest historian of our nation, under the year 1058, for he tells it so confidently, as something talked of all over Europe'.⁴² It is certainly talked of in the massive *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais (c.1265), the most famous history book of the Middle Ages;⁴³ and William Morris retells it in octosyllabic couplets, as 'The Ring Given to Venus', in his *Earthly Paradise*.⁴⁴

Vincent describes the young bridegroom playing football during the wedding celebrations; so as not to damage his ring he hangs it on the extended finger of a bronze statue of Venus that is conveniently situated in a niche of the wall. But when he returns for it after the game, he discovers that the finger has closed on the ring, and he cannot get it out of the fist. He returns at night with a hacksaw, but finds the finger extended as before, and the ring gone.

On his way to the bridal chamber, he is confronted, according to

⁴¹ P.F. Baum, 'The Young Man Betrothed to a Statue', *PMLA* 34 (1919): 523–79.

⁴² Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Shilleto, III, 51–52. Burton calls his source 'Florilegus', probably meaning Matthew Paris's adaptation of Roger Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*. Roger, like Vincent, would have had the story from William of Malmesbury, who gives the earliest extant account: see *The Church Historians of England*, trans. John Sharpe (1815), rev. Joseph Stevenson, 5 vols in 8 (London, 1853–1858), III, pt 1.

⁴³ Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*, XXVI, 29, in *Bibliotheca mundi seu Speculum majus Vincentii Burgundi*, 4 vols (Douai, 1624), IV.

⁴⁴ Morris, *The Earthly Paradise*, IV, 169–214 (January).

Morris, by the apparition he has inadvertently married:

But in the way before his eyes
A cloudy column seemed to rise,
Cold, odorous, impalpable,
And a voice cried, 'I love thee well ...'

and much more to the same effect.

Then round about him closed the mist,
It was as though his lips were kissed,
His body by soft arms embraced,
His fingers lovingly enlaced
By other fingers,—until he
Midst darkness his own ring did see.

The experience is a shock, but not unpleasant; at least the misty arms are softer than stone. In mediæval versions it is not till he's in bed that this unsubstantial yet impenetrable cloud separates him from his bride. After three nights enduring this untenable situation, the understandably frustrated bride tells her father. Sympathetically he directs the young bridegroom to a certain 'presbyter suburbanus,' a suburban priest named Palumbus, who is also a necromancer: an interesting representative of the uneasy borderland between Christianity and paganism in the early centuries.

Palumbus gives him a letter to take to a certain crossroads at midnight, where he'll see a weird procession of both sexes, all ages and various conditions. He must address no one, but give the letter to the last rider, an imposing figure whom Burton calls 'old Saturn'. Tight-lipped before the demon host, among whom he notes a meretricious woman, 'paene nuda'—Venus in dishabille—he hands the letter to the leader, who cries out, 'How long, Almighty God, will you suffer the wickedness of this Palumbus?' but sends his attendants to Venus who very reluctantly gives up the ring. When Palumbus hears of the demon's exclamation, he knows his time is up, and voluntarily undergoes mutilation and a painful death. His exorcism of Venus, which has saved the young couple's marriage, is apparently small mitigation of the crime of meddling with paganism.

This statue story was Christianized by substituting the Virgin Mary for Venus; the story becomes a Miracle of the Virgin, a form

of literature popularized in the thirteenth century in the interests of encouraging celibacy among the clergy. Whereas Venus is an intruder to be defeated, the Virgin confers a great blessing on the young man whose marriage she successfully prevents. No metamorphosis of an idol is involved: rather, chastity replaces sensuality, and fixation on an artefact is sublimated into worship of the divine reality it represents.

Vincent (of course) also has the Christian version of the story.⁴⁵ Rather to the dismay of his fellow footballers, the bridegroom pops into a church during the game to say his devotions. There he sees a statue of the Virgin, and overcome by her beauty vows to marry her instead of the girl who has given him his ring. He puts it on the statue's finger, and, *mirabile dictu*, the finger closes upon it into the fist. Awed by the miracle, his friends warn him to keep his vow; but eventually, overcome by the thorns of this world's riches, he does marry, and then, every time he drops asleep, he has a vivid vision of the Virgin, now sadly remonstrating with him, and now angrily threatening. At last he can endure no more, and leaving his wife rushes off to become a hermit.⁴⁶

In Spenser's *Faerie Qveene* chastity is exemplified particularly by Britomart and Florimell, whose story, interlaced with much other more or less unrelated material, extends over Books III to V.⁴⁷ The warrior maid Britomart represents chastity as an active principle; she is aggressive as well as invincible, suggesting the positive quality of her virtue in a manner not surprising at the Elizabethan court

⁴⁵ Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*, VII, 87. There is a Middle English version in *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mary M. Banks, EETS o.s. 126–27 (London, 1904–05), no. DCLVI, pp. 438–39. Cf. a Harley MS variant, no. 71 in Thomas Wright, *A Selection of Latin Stories from MSS. of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1842), p. 65, which contains a ring but no statue, and another by Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, in *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. Scott and C. Swinton Bland, 2 vols (London, 1929), I, 499–501 (VII, xxxii), where the Virgin's kiss replaces the ring and a vision of her outside the church replaces her statue inside it.

⁴⁶ Behaviour famously exemplified by the popular romance hero Guy of Warwick, who spends only fifty days (fifteen in the ME versions) with his beloved wife Felice before becoming a hermit: Anglo-Norman text (c.1200–1210) *Gui de Warewic: Roman du XIIIe Siècle*, ed. Alfred Ewert, 2 vols (Paris, 1933); *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The Second 15th Century Version I and II*, ed. J. Zupitza, EETS e.s. 25–26 (London, 1875–76), from the Auchinleck MS and Caius MS.

⁴⁷ *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (1912; rpt London, 1950).

where political power was vested in the person of the Virgin Queen. Britomart overthrows Marinell, a proud knight who scorns the love of women, grievously wounding him in a joust that probably indicates, allegorically, that chastity certainly does not imply a proud contempt of love, but rather promotes the virtue of faithfulness in true and fruitful love.

Here, then, we reach an ideal of natural love that contrasts with the celibacy promoted by the story of the young man wedded to the statue of the Virgin. For him the statue represents not a perversion but devotion to a higher spiritual reality than the world can provide. Now the new ideal of chaste natural love is further explored by Spenser in the story of Florimell.

Florimell exists in two forms: as Nature's paragon, and as a counterfeit manufactured by a witch. She represents the passive and therefore more conventionally feminine aspect of love, the true Florimell chaste, the false unchaste. The problem for the men fascinated is to recognise which is which: since in themselves the Florimells are indistinguishable, discernment depends on the virtue of the Florimell-pursuers: in the end the lustful lose and the loving win.⁴⁸

The true Florimell's love for Marinell is unswerving in its fidelity, but she spends most of her time fleeing from the aggressive lust of her pursuers. She appears first at speed past Guyon, Arthur and Britomart, with a 'griesly Foster' (III i 17.2), or horrible woodsman, in hot pursuit. Britomart, not smitten like the men by Florimell's startling beauty, goes her own way, which eventually leads to the shore where she overthrows Marinell, but the others hasten to the rescue.

Florimell outrides both the forester and Arthur, whose intentions she misinterprets, and he loses her in a sheltering mist. She takes refuge for a time in a witch's cottage, the witch and her boorish son fearing to harm someone so naturally superior to them. Her courtesy, however, inflames the 'Chorle', who 'cast to love her in his brutish mind; / No love, but brutish lust, that was so beastly tind [kindled]' (III vii 15.8–9). Fearing mischief, she leaves early in the morning, and to avenge her despairing son the witch dispatches a woman-eating hyena

⁴⁸ For Spenser's treatment of the problem of distinguishing between the true and the false see now Robert W. Tate, 'Haunted by Beautified Beauty: Tracking the Images of Spenser's Florimell(s)', *Spenser Studies* 29 (2014): 197–218.

after her. Reaching the seashore Florimell leaps into a fisherman's boat and the beast can only kill her palfrey. The old fisherman in the boat awakes and attacks her, but before he can satisfy his lust the demigod Proteus shepherding Neptune's herd comes by and rescues her. But he too succumbs to her charms, and imprisons her in a submarine dungeon.

Meanwhile, the witch has constructed a Florimell look-alike, out of snow and evil spirits, to console her languishing son:

She there deuiz'd a wondrous worke to frame,
Whose like on earthe was neuer framed yit,
That euen Nature selfe enuide the same,
And grudg'd to see the counterfet should shame
The thing it selfe.

(III viii 5.2–6)

The churl does not enjoy her company long: she is taken from him by that disgrace to knighthood, Braggadocchio, and from him in turn (without a fight) by Sir Ferraugh, who subsequently loses her to Blandamour. She is passed on rapidly from one knight to another as the real Florimell flees a similar fate. Though Ferraugh is deceived by the false Florimell into thinking 'him selfe in heauen, that was in hell' (III viii 19.9), she does no active harm, and as a figure of evil is emblematic rather than dangerous. In Book IV, which deals with friendship, Blandamour and Paridell fight over her, and are then reconciled by the Squire of Dames, but she is no real threat to virtue, functioning only as a worthless reward to the worthless.

A comparison suggests itself with Hawthorne's moralized legend Feathertop, a satirical allegory of nineteenth-century American society.⁴⁹ A witch makes a typically empty-headed beau out of straw and a broomstick, animated by her pipe, which a familiar demon keeps alight. But Feathertop acquires not only a physique but somehow a conscience too, and when his appearance deceives the most eligible maiden in town, he throws away his pipe and collapses back into straw and a stick. The false Florimell, on the other hand, has no conscience, and is not a satirical allegory so much as a picture of the vice of hypocrisy. Beautiful enough to deceive even noble knights, she

⁴⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'Feathertop, a Moralized Legend', in *Mosses From an Old Manse* (1846; rpt London, n.d.), pp. 198–211.

is revealed as a counterfeit by contrast with the real Florimell of whom she is a diabolical imitation.

Satyrane arranges a tournament, the prize being Florimell's girdle which she dropped when fleeing the hyena. Britomart wins, restoring the prize to 'Knights of Maydenhead' (IV iiiii 48.2). It is then to be awarded to the most beautiful lady present. The false Florimell is adjudged the most beautiful, but cannot put it on, for 'That girdle gaue the vertue of chaste loue, / And wiuehood true, to all that did it beare (IV v 3.1-2). It had formerly belonged to Venus, forged by Vulcan to keep her chaste—as it did, when she wore it; on one of the other occasions Florimell found it (for she was brought up by the Graces in Venus's own territory) and it fitted her perfectly ever after. Few of the ladies present at Satyrane's tournament manage to put it on, to the scornful amusement of the knights; and false Florimell chooses to depart with the least worthy, Braggadocchio, since he had been the first to win her.

Florimell is eventually released from Proteus' dungeon by order of Neptune, at the instigation of the mother of Marinell, who is by now desperately in love with her; she thus provides for her son the reality which the witch tried to destroy before making the counterfeit to solace her son. At Florimell's wedding feast, Artegall, knight of justice, places them side by side 'Like the true saint beside the image set' (V ii 24.2), and the counterfeit melts like snow before heat, leaving only the stolen girdle, which Artegall restores to Florimell, 'Who round about her tender wast it fitted well' (V iii 27.9). Thus the superiority of Nature's masterpiece, the true Florimell, over a diabolical imitation is demonstrated, and the virtue of chastity triumphs at a marriage feast.

III

It is obviously easier to claim Spenser than Shakespeare for the so-called Middle Ages, but the themes so far discussed reach a natural climax at the threshold of the modern era in *The Winter's Tale*, a play concerned with chastity (in the sense of wedded love rather than celibacy), and the relationship between nature and art, and concluding with a Pygmalion-like statue scene.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford (1963; rpt London, 1966). See also Fitzroy Pyle, *The Winter's Tale: A Commentary on the Structure* (London, 1969), pp. 119-38.

Shakespeare's invention of the statue scene enables him to conclude *The Winter's Tale* with a remarkable *coup de théâtre*. No wife given up as dead returns after sixteen years disguised as a statue in Greene's novel *Pandosto*, the source which Shakespeare followed for the most part fairly closely. The final scene of the play is a theatrical *tour de force*, the audience, who have no more information than Leontes that his wronged wife Hermione is alive, being made to share his wonder and joy by the animation of her supposed statue; but it can hardly be interpreted as a plausible event in a realistic narrative.

That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale

(V iii 115–7)

—yet she and Paulina have kept their secret sixteen years on Leontes' doorstep, and now she allows Paulina to stage-manage so uncomfortable a reunion, during which she must stand motionless and unwinking while her newly recovered family fail to perceive that she is not a freshly painted statue after all. Shakespeare's conclusion is emblematic, not realistic; the mediæval method of allegory enables him to make a point about a typically mediæval virtue, chastity.

Idly unresponsive to the ardent recollections of her repentant husband, and to the kneeling daughter, image of her own youthful perfections, whom she is seeing now for the first time, Hermione waits like an unawakened Galatea for the long petrification occasioned by her husband's unjust repudiation of her to thaw: as a painted statue, she is an idol, a delusion, created by Leontes' own jealousy, and the magic spell Paulina seems to use in bringing her to life is in fact an 'art / Lawful as eating' (V iii 110–11); it is not an art that usurps the power of Nature, but, in the words of Polixenes to Perdita, 'an art / That nature makes', for 'nature is made better by no mean / But nature makes that mean' (IV iv 95–6, 89–90). The art is simply the reconciling power of true love; the animation of this statue, which proves it to be no statue but a natural living being, entails a restoration of reality, and is the opposite of the work of Pygmalion or Spenser's witch, who produce artefacts that rival or counterfeit the creations of Nature, and consequently endanger the spiritual wellbeing of those who are deceived by them.

From Hall Floor to Traverse and Stage

Review of Richard Southern, *The Staging of Plays before Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 1973); 603 pages, with 6 plates and 45 illustrations.

An interlude!' cries Goneril in scorn, as her husband denounces her. With almost equal scorn, literary historians have usually dismissed the sixty or so rarely read and still more rarely performed interludes which are the subject of Southern's long and beautifully appointed *magnum opus*. Helen Gardner tells us that in the writing of his chapters on Shakespeare, F. P. Wilson found 'a reward for the long years in which he had toiled on the barren pastures of mid-Tudor drama'.¹ It is the merit of Southern's book that he has evidently not found the toil irksome or the pastures barren; moors no doubt, but at least some of them worth battening on.

Not that he endeavours to treat all the plays thoroughly. He assumes, for instance, that *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is too well known for him to need to describe its plot (p. 401); but in its day it was a new kind of comedy and probably 'experimental theatre', so he concentrates on the theatrical puzzles it presents. In discussing Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres*, the first English secular comedy of any consequence to have survived, and a remarkably sophisticated one, he apologises for having to neglect 'matters of a literary character, and such as refer to the thought of the times. But all this I leave to the specialists in order to keep myself to the one subject of presentation which has been studied much less frequently' (p. 126).

He quarries the texts of numerous plays for indications of how they were performed. Not all of them repay investigation. Wager's *Mary*

¹ Introduction to F. P. Wilson, *Shakesperian and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1969); the long years were spent on *The English Drama 1485-1585* in the Oxford History of English Literature series (Oxford, 1969).

Magdalene is described as brilliant, but not discussed, as it adds little to our knowledge of staging. Heywood's Witty and Witless, simply a disputation on the nature of ability in wit, is re-consigned to an apparently deserved oblivion; not so his better known *Johan Johan the Husbände*, where wit and action provide an entertainment that may be played either as a scurrilous farce or as a comedy in which the innuendoes are more subtle. Southern is not interested in how far it may improve on its French original,² but demonstrates its theatrical effectiveness by textual analysis and a diagram.

Early English drama was much more theatrically sophisticated and entertaining to watch than critics until recently were prepared to admit. Rehabilitation is sufficiently advanced for Southern to forego customary apologies in this his latest and most extensive appreciation of early theatre. Happy prologues include, appropriately, his own *The Medieval Theatre in the Round*; in spite of rough handling from Natalie Crohn Schmitt,³ it remains an indispensable demonstration of how impressive a performance of that apparently unwieldy allegory *The Castle of Perseverance* must have been. In *The Tudor Interlude*, T.W. Craik⁴ pioneered the discussion of setting, costume and action which Southern builds upon in his latest work, where he also develops Craik's observation that 'Many critics who disparage the Tudor interludes do so because they have ignored the effectiveness of these plays in performance.' A fundamental extension and to some extent correction of E.K. Chambers's monumental textbooks on the mediæval and Elizabethan stage is Glynne Wickham's *Early English Stages*,⁵ which indicates the variety and lavish splendour of mediæval theatrical entertainments, and dispels the long-standing myth that they were mostly primitive shows incompetently performed on rickety haycarts. Possibly Southern underplays the variety of contraptions

² On this topic see T.W. Craik, 'The True Source of John Heywood's "Johan Johan"', *Modern Language Review* 45 (1950): 289–295.

³ Richard Southern, *The Medieval Theatre in the Round* (London, 1957); Natalie Crohn Schmitt, 'Was There a Medieval Theatre in the Round?', *Theatre Notebook* 23 (1969): 130–42 and 24 (1969): 18–24.

⁴ T.W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester, 1958).

⁵ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300–1660*, 3 vols in 4 (London, 1959–81), Vol. 1: 1300–1576.

available to make sixteenth-century plays spectacular; a description, based on Wickham's work, of siege scenes, by John Elliott,⁶ may be compared with Southern's account of the siege in *Horestes*, which Elliott fails to mention.

Southern's starting point is the intimate atmosphere of the stageless Tudor hall. He challenges previous assumptions by arguing that no indoor interlude before mid-century was 'staged' in the literal sense. If there was a stage in John Rastell's garden about 1530, we know too little of its construction to guess how plays may have been performed there. Craik thought the 'hyghe deasse' Palsgrave mentioned in 1540 might have been a stage dais; Southern explains it as the dais on which stood the high table, in front of which the early interludes were performed down the length of the hall, between the diners' tables. Actors entered through two doors in the screens at the lower end of the hall, pushing past and joking with the retainers that stood in their way. Dramatic techniques were developed that Shakespeare inherited. Asides and soliloquies, unconvincing when bawled to the ceiling from behind footlights, would in a Tudor hall seem like quite natural personal chats with members of the audience. Dramatic capital could be made of the time it took for an actor to make contact with the characters already on the floor: hence the heralded entrances, like 'Look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading,' or Iago's 'Look where he comes: not poppy ...' etc., which are difficult to make convincing on a modern picture-frame stage. Southern demonstrates how each of the scenes in *Respublica* is linked to the next by a heralded entrance, breaks occurring only between the acts, and where but for classical precedent a sixth act might have commenced. Contact might be postponed, as if an invisible curtain separated the players: Southern calls the phenomenon 'differentiation of acting area.' It anticipates such odd effects as Richard and Richmond occupying adjacent tents on Bosworth field. But Wickham has made clear that the illusion of reality was not a primary feature of the theatre till after Inigo Jones developed his proscenium-arched stage.

Later a 'travers,' or curtained withdrawing space, rather like the top of the booth-stages used in inn-yards, was erected in front of the

⁶ John R. Elliott, 'Medieval Rounds and Wooden O's: The Medieval Heritage of the Elizabethan Theatre', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. Neville Denny, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 16 (London, 1973), pp. 222-46.

screens—possibly anticipating the tents in *Richard III* and harking back to the travers that was drawn in Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale* (*The Canterbury Tales* IV.1817) round Januarie's bed on his wedding night. Subsequently a small stage was placed between the screen doors, so that the actors could play both on it and on the floor round about it.

These then are the features that Burbage had in mind when he built The Theatre in 1576. Comparison with Neville Denny's drawing of a typical Elizabethan play house,⁷ and with De Witt's drawing of the Swan, shows that the problems are still complex. Indeed, Southern's conclusions may seem rather few for so long a book. But its essence lies rather in the sense it gives of what it would have been like to be present in Tudor times at a performance of any of these plays.

To illustrate: Southern admirably demonstrates the theatrical cleverness and vivid, unexpected developments of *Nature*, a two-part morality by Henry Medwall, who was chaplain to Cardinal Morton at the end of the fifteenth century. Yet *Nature* has been much maligned. Ramsay spoke of Medwall's 'deadly conscientiousness',⁸ and Tucker Brooke of 'the prevailing dreariness of the play'.⁹ But the worst offender was John Payne Collier, although he conceded magnanimously that 'it is constructed and illustrated with ingenuity, and is written with considerable facility and power'.¹⁰ For Collier invented an anecdote about a non-existent play called *The Fyndyng of Troth* which bedevilled Medwall's reputation till the rediscovery of *Fulgens and Lucres* in 1919. *The Fyndyng of Troth*, Collier said, was too long, and Henry VIII got up before the performance was over and departed to his chamber. Alternatively, it was not liked because 'the satire was too pungent at the dawn of the Reformation, and the hits too bold and well-directed'. Was Collier thinking of Claudius, or Shakespeare of Henry VIII? Carew Hazlitt, in his edition of Warton's *History of English Poetry*,¹¹

⁷ Elliott, 'Medieval Rounds and Wooden O's', 234–35.

⁸ Robert Lee Ramsay (introd.), *Skelton's Magnyfycence*, EETS e.s. 98 (London, 1906), p. clxi.

⁹ C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Tudor Drama* (London, 1912), p. 73.

¹⁰ John Payne Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*, 3 vols (London, 1831), II, 299.

¹¹ Carew Hazlitt (ed.), *The History of English Poetry*, by Thomas Warton, 4 vols (London, 1871), III, 189.

compounded the felony by saying that it was *Nature* that the King walked out of. It is perhaps the sort of anecdote that deserves to be true. However, A. W. Reed exposed Collier's fabrication,¹² as Southern acknowledges. Even so, he cannot bring himself to jettison it: to show that interlude writers were not theatrically incompetent, and knew how important it was to hold their audiences, he blandly observes, 'We know that even the King would get up and walk out of an Interlude if he couldn't stand it' (p. 63).

Re-robing a character in the moralities symbolises a moral conversion.¹³ Southern shows how effective such a robing might be, by analysing the speech that World makes in *Nature* as Man, no longer innocent, dons the garments of Worldly Affection (pp. 66-9). Later Pride, whose flamboyant attire typifies his nature, provides Man with another change of clothing. 'Euery proude man es intollerable', said St Bernard, 'for hys clothyng es to ouere mych'—'outrageous' was the word Chaucer's Parson used. Pride, outrageously intolerable, 'striding into the acting-area as if it contained no one in the world but himself', draws attention to the details of his splendid attire. One point in Southern's description needs correction: it is not Pride's general colour that is a staring scarlet (p. 73), but his headgear only. Southern used Brandl's edition of *Nature* (1898), which, like Farmer's in 1907, omits the line preceding 'a staryng colour of scarlet red' (*Nature* I, 749) because it is so badly trimmed at the top of the page in the Tudor copy which they edited that neither of them was able to read it; but it is possible to make out from fragments of letters that remain, and a copy in the Bodleian library confirms, that it read 'Bihold the bonet vppon my hed.'

Sensuality describes a quarrel between Reason and Man in a tavern, which arose because Reason 'gave our mayster an hete worth an hangyng'. Southern glosses 'hete' as '?hit', and comments 'surely an extremely ill-judged action in the circumstances from such a person as Reason of all people' (p. 82). So doubtless it would have been, but 'hete' means simply 'rebuke'. The courteous Sir Bors, in Malory's account of how Sir Lancelot went mad because of Guinevere's cruelty,

¹² Collier, *Dramatic Poetry*, I, 65; A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama* (London, 1926), pp. 95-96.

¹³ See Craik's chapters on 'Dress' and 'Changes of Costume', *The Tudor Interlude*, 49-92.

promises to 'turne agayne unto quene Gwenyver and gyff her an hete'—certainly not a blow!¹⁴

Embarrassing the audience was a favourite and highly entertaining technique of the early interludes. Pride, on his way to seek Man in the stews, has the effrontery to ask an innocent spectator the way, and threatens to clap the 'horseson cukold' on the crown because he appears to be deaf! Southern may have missed another instance of this kind of joke: Gluttony says 'hote drynkys and delycate refeccyon / Causeth fleshely insurreccyon' and then adds 'ye know yt as well as I'. Southern assumes that this last line is addressed to Bodily Lust, although it is Man who unexpectedly replies, but there is no indication that Bodily Lust is yet present, and the line would surely be more effective if delivered at one of the diners watching the play—with open mouth and food in fingers or on knife's end ready to be popped in, perhaps!

Craik's *The Tudor Interlude*, the pedestal on which Southern rears his column, provides a chronological list of all the surviving interludes to 1589. (Among other things it also provides a 'useful detailed study' of Wager's *Enough Is as Good as a Feast*, which saves Southern the trouble of having to say anything about it himself, except that its date is about 1564 when Shakespeare was born!) Southern's book ends with the last three on the list (or four, since 'for the sake of completeness' he mentions *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*) although they post-date The Theatre, because they conveniently sum up his survey, being designed, apparently, for hall-floor, for stage and floor, and for public playhouse presentation respectively.

Craik's dates are admittedly tentative, but at least one adjustment should be made. It can no longer be maintained that *Youth* is a neat epitome of the clumsier, more chaotic *Hyckescorner*; rather *Hyckescorner* must be an expansion of *Youth*, as E. T. Schell is surely right in arguing.¹⁵ Therefore *Youth* should come a good deal earlier in Southern's survey.

¹⁴ MED, s.v. hete 2c. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1967), II, 807.

¹⁵ E. T. Schell, "Youth" and "Hyckescorner": Which Came First?, *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 468–74. Ian Lancashire, 'The Sources of *Hyckescorner*', *Review of English Studies* 22 (1971): 257–73, rejects all Schell's arguments in favour of others of his own that tend to the same result. See now his edition, in *Two Tudor Interludes*

How complete his coverage ought to be is a moot point. He mentions *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, of which only four leaves survive, but omits other fragments like *Albion Knight* and *Good Order*, although *Good Order*, which its editors, Frost and Nash,¹⁶ attribute to Skelton, might well have found a mention among the lost plays referred in the section on Skelton's *Magnyfycence*. In it Old Christmas banishes Riot and Gluttony to the New founde land, and the text refers specifically to performance in Lent. Presumably it is too brief to throw light on the presentation of that other Lenten play, *Mankind*.

The omission of Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of The Thrie Estaits*,¹⁷ in quality as well as in bulk the most considerable of the moralities, is disappointing, but inevitable given that it was an outdoor play performed in a Round (p. 374). It is more surprising that Southern should have passed over *Everyman* in silence. Cawley in his edition¹⁸ envisages a setting like that of *The Castle of Perseverance*, with an unlocalised acting area dominated by a possibly two-tiered structure (in this case representing the House of Salvation), but whether the performance was out of doors or indoors he is not certain. God speaks without any entrance direction, and evidently occupies a 'hye sete celestyall'; Death looks (down from God's raised scaffold?) and sees Everyman walking 'yonder'; Goods and Good Deeds are lying somewhere, unable to rise, when they first speak. Was the setting that of a Round somehow adapted to indoor use, as Southern suggests seems to be the case for *The World and the Child*?

(Manchester, 1980), in which he demonstrates that *Hyckescorner* is the first morality to contain a political allegory, unguessed by earlier critics. The eponymous protagonist, Rick the Scorne, a comic character who makes a bafflingly fleeting appearance in the play, is apparently intended to lampoon the Yorkist pretender to Henry VIII's throne, nephew and designated heir of Richard III, and incidentally a descendant of Geoffrey Chaucer, who called himself Richard IV, and attempted an abortive invasion of England.

¹⁶ G. L. Frost and Thomas Nash (eds), 'Good Order: a Morality Fragment', *Studies in Philology* 41 (1944): 483–91. See also *Old Christmas, or, Good Order*, ed. W. W. Greg, Malone Society Collections 4 (Oxford, 1956), pp. 33–39.

¹⁷ Sir David Lindsay, *Ane Satyre of The Thrie Estaits* (c.1552), ed. James Kinsley (London, 1954).

¹⁸ A. C. Cawley (ed.), *Everyman* (Manchester, 1961).

An omission of a different kind is only indirectly concerned with presentation. One would not expect to hear much in this book of the improving message or polemical issues that it was the main business of the moralities and later secular interludes to present. The bad children in *Nice Wanton* end badly, Ismael on the gallows, and Dalila 'stuffed with diseases'. After quoting three lines of the homily in which their good brother Barnabas points the moral to their indulgent mother, Southern breaks off with 'and so on and so forth' (p. 358). He dismisses the ending of *Mankind* with 'All that now remains after the dispersal of the knaves is ninety-two lines of religious dialogue between Mercy and repentant Mankind' (p. 43). Evidently he assumes that the instruction can safely be neglected, since it is less dramatic than action. For he says of George Wapull, who wrote *The Tyde Taryeth No Man* about 1576, 'The playwright like propagandists in the theatre rather overlooks the particular characteristic of his medium, which should be the effect gained from the atmosphere of the events he presents and the linking of them together; instead he relies on the rather less subtle medium of the facts put into the words themselves. That is, he says what he wants to say; he doesn't leave it to say itself through the action' (p. 534). A flaw indeed—unless Prospero is allowed to get away with it near the beginning of *The Tempest*!—but a flaw too readily discerned when the message is unpalatable or has ceased to interest. For in fact the last ninety-two lines of *Mankind* are dramatic in the way the soliloquies of Hamlet or Macbeth are dramatic, where the action is psychological rather than physical. In assuring his convert of salvation, Mercy leads him from the brink of suicide to wonder, hope, confidence and joy. But for dramatic critics, it would seem, preaching *must* be dull. 'A cuckowe for Conscience, he is but a dawel!' cries Folly in *The World and the Child*: 'He can not elles but preche.' But the Tudor audience would know that to agree with Folly is to stand self-condemned, and to know it was a significant part of their theatre experience. The Instruction involved them inescapably in the action: to watch a play that points at the failings of Mankind and then shouts at the audience 'Thou art the man!' is to find oneself not so much a spectator as the protagonist.

A controversial aspect of Southern's work is likely to be the fact that, following Craik, he does not trouble much to distinguish between the acting traditions of courtly and popular drama. There was of course cross-fertilization. But David Bevington makes a point of contrasting the popular plays, usually acted on booth-stages in

inn-yards, and taken on tour by small professional troupes who were restricted to acting plays so constructed that parts could be doubled, and the aristocratic drama performed in large halls by children or adults without restrictions of cast.¹⁹ How significant is the distinction? What evidence there is for the booth-stage suggests that it had features serving the same purpose as hall-screens, so *Horestes* (1567), a popular play adapted for court performance, may well have developed its siege and scaling operations by being staged in a London inn-yard, as Bevington suggests, or equally well have been performed according to Southern's account in a banqueting hall.

More controversial is Southern's contention that *Mankind* was an indoor play acted before hall-screens like the aristocratic dramas of Medwall. Early editors, Pollard (1904) and Adams (1926), argued for an inn-yard: so did Bevington, but now²⁰ he too inclines to an indoor setting—appropriate, one feels, for a performance in Lent when blood is still likely to be nipped and the ways foul. But Bevington assumes that a simple curtained booth-stage would have been erected indoors, as in country inns one could hardly count on the architectural facilities of a hall like Cardinal Morton's. Unfortunately he argues that the actors would not need a door as none is mentioned in the text, whereas one is (line 159), and the actors who use it cry, 'Make rom, sers!', implying that they come in through a press of spectators round screen-doors rather than through the curtain of a booth-stage.

A word of regret about Southern's occasionally cavalier choice of texts. Normally he uses facsimiles of the earliest editions, unspoilt by the sometimes erroneous stage directions inserted by modern editors. He criticizes such an insertion in Boas and Reed's *Fulgens and Lucre*s (p. 115). But there seems little point in reproducing the line 'Ut magnum magnos, pueros puerilia decus' on the title page of *Nice Wanton* without mentioning Manly's emendation to 'decent'. It is a pity that when he wrote his chapter on *Mankind* Eccles's edition of *The Macro Plays* and Bevington's facsimile with transcript²¹ were apparently

¹⁹ David Bevington, *From 'Mankind' to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA, 1962).

²⁰ David Bevington, 'Popular and Courtly Traditions on the Early Tudor Stage', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. Denny, 90–107.

²¹ *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles, EETS o.s. 262 (London, 1969); David Bevington (ed.), *The Macro Plays*, The Folger Facsimiles (Washington, DC, 1972).

not yet available; the editions of Manly, Brandl, Furnivall and Pollard, and Adams were all based on an often unreliable transcript of the manuscript by Karl Marx's daughter. Southern has perpetuated some of her absurdities, like 'exiant silentio' for 'exiant simul'—the scurrilous rogues in *Mankind* never did anything silently! *Respublica* was re-edited by Greg, but Southern uses the faultier edition of Magnus.²² The differences mainly affect punctuation, but one misquotation results (p. 391): People says 'Shoulde vaine zee my ladie' instead of 'Choulde vaine zee ...' ('I would fain see ...').

Perhaps the chief value of the book is that it encourages speculation. How, for instance, in the light of what Southern has described, would that fascinating indoor theatrical 'The Murder of Gonzago', have been played in the castle hall at Elsinore? Claudius at the high table would be the most conspicuous of the spectators, and in the hubbub far enough removed from the action not to notice its commencement till the dumbshow has finished warning Shakespeare's real audience which climax to watch for. Hamlet refuses to sit beside Gertrude at the high table, finding a lowlier place with Ophelia at the side of the hall, convenient for chiding the actors and observing the King. And when in the dim torch-lit hall Claudius' conscience is caught and he rises, he must call for lights and rush away down the entire length of the players' acting area, past Hamlet, Horatio and the rest, to reach the exit doors in the screens. No wonder the play had to be given o'er. Henry VIII's departure, one feels, would have been far more dignified, but hardly less disruptive.

²² W. W. Greg (ed.), *Respublica: An Interlude for Christmas 1553 attributed to Nicholas Udall*, EETS o.s. 226 (London, 1946); L. A. Magnus (ed.), *Respublica, A.D. 1553: A Play on the Social Condition of England at the Accession of Queen Mary*, EETS e.s. 94 (London, 1905).

‘Well done of rash Virginius’: Renaissance Transformations of Livy’s Account of the Fall of the Decemvirs

The ancient story-type of a father sacrificing his daughter, bequeathed to the West by the Hebrews (Jephthah’s daughter), the Greeks (Iphigenia) and the Romans (Virginia), was taken up generally with a due sense of horror or pathos, and with perhaps less care to understand the religious or political motives involved. William Harris argues that a Roman father’s power of life and death was originally given to legitimize child exposure.¹ Renaissance writers in England inherited the story of Virginia in a variety of forms, but in none that questioned the legality of Virginius’ action, or the heroism of his resolution, and used it to illustrate what had been and could be the extreme consequences of patriarchal government.

Historial Virginia

The fascination of Livy’s elegant version of the story of Appius and Virginia, suggests R.M. Ogilvie, ‘is in large measure due to the skill and poignancy with which L. has constructed what is one of the noblest episodes in his narrative. Verginia was for him a supreme example of the virtue of *pudicitia*, a supreme condemnation of *libido*.’² Already in Livy, therefore, the political fall of the Decemvirs is overshadowed by psychological and emotive aspects of the enormity supposed to have precipitated their expulsion. These aspects even affect redactions not directly derived from Livy. Indeed, Livy writes well enough to convey an illusion of an eyewitness account: since the events occurred—if they

¹ William V. Harris, ‘The Roman Father’s Power of Life and Death’, in *Studies in Roman Law in Memory of A. Arthur Schiller*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall and William V. Harris (Leiden, 1986), pp. 81–95. No ancient writer condemns Virginius’ action as illegal; a father’s killing of a daughter was remarkable only if, as here, she were innocent (p. 87).

² R. M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy Books 1–5* (1965; rpt Oxford, 1970), pp. 476–77. Livy’s *History of Rome*, Book 3, deals with the decemvirate.

occurred—several centuries before his time (he dates them AUC 302: that is, 451 BC), sceptics may be tempted to attribute many of the details to his imagination rather than to history.

Ogilvie roundly declares that Livy's story is 'entirely devoid of historical foundation'.³ He maintains that it is a myth intended to heighten the drama of the second (fictitious) college of Decemvirs; that the legal elaboration of the tale is post-Gracchan; and that earlier strata are preserved in Diodorus' simpler version, in which the participants are anonymous.⁴ Virginia's death, close to the temple of Venus Cloacinae, is the etiological myth of the cult of Cloacina (a deity later merged with Venus) regarded as a purifier especially of the taint implicit in *stuprum*.⁵

No such considerations troubled readers in the Middle Ages or Renaissance, for whom Livy's credentials as a historian were impeccable: in contrast to fable, which is neither true nor lifelike, history, says Martianus Capella, is like what Livy writes.⁶ Chaucer's *Physician's Tale*, 'as telleth Titus Livius', is 'no fable' but a 'historial thyng', and so 'The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute'.⁷ Yet mediæval English versions of the Virginia story did not come from Livy. Chaucer based his *Tale* on Jean de Meun's summary in *Le Roman de*

³ Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy*, 477. It is doubted also in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock and M. P. Charlesworth, 12 vols (Cambridge, 1923–54), VII, 458–62, and in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. M. Cary (Oxford, 1949), s.v. Verginia, p. 492, and s.v. Claudius (3), p. 197. This in spite of Cicero's confirmation, 'Nota scilicet illa res et celebrata monumentis plurimis litterarum' [indeed, the incident is well known, and many literary memorials celebrate it], in *Librorum de Re Publica sex quae supersunt*, ed. C. F. W. Mueller (Leipzig, 1889), p. 327 (II, 63).

⁴ Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy*, 453. Charles Appleton, however, 'Trois Episodes de l'Histoire Ancienne de Rome: chapitre IV: Le procès de Virginie', *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Etranger*, 4th series, 3 (1924): 592–670, argues that the story is not only convincing in itself, but one of the best attested in the early history of Rome. He rejects the contention that Diodorus is, in this instance, more to be trusted than Livy, and that the details of the story are a post-Gracchan fiction.

⁵ Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy*, 487.

⁶ Martianus Capella (5th cent. AD), *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*, ed. A. Dick (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 273–74 (V. 550): 'historia est, ut Liuii. fabula neque uera est neque uerisimilis, ut "Daphnen in arborem uersam"' [History is like what Livy writes. But a fable is neither true nor plausible, like 'Daphne turned into a tree'].

⁷ Chaucer, *The Physician's Tale*, VI.1, and 155–57. All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston, 1987).

la Rose, and possibly referred to Bersuire's translation of Livy;⁸ Gower apparently used Bersuire and Valerius Maximus' epitome; and Lydgate paraphrased Boccaccio.⁹ For them Livy was a name rather than a text. More readily available in the sixteenth century, due to the work of the Florentine humanists, Livy was nevertheless not fully translated into English until Philemon Holland did so in 1600.

Besides this historial Virginia (so-called because taken directly from Livy, but not 'historical' in the modern sense), Renaissance writers inherited or experimented with variants which had deviated in some cases quite considerably from Livy's classic version. These will be the subject of the ensuing sections of this essay. For convenience I will list them as the encyclopedic, the moral, the euphuistic and the satiric Virginias.

In his voluminous *History of the World*, Sir Walter Raleigh devotes a couple of sentences to Appius: 'In the continuance of this *Volscian* War it was, that *Appius Claudius*, one of the ten men, whom they had two years before chosen Governours of the State, and enactors of *Solon's* Laws amongst them, procured from *Athens* (abrogating in the mean while the Consuls, and all other Magistracies) would have ravished *Virginia*, the daughter of *T. [sic] Virginius*, Captain of a Company, and lying then in Camp at *Algidum*. Hereupon the People, in an uproar, took the hill *Aventine*, and after much variance, enforced the ten men to resign up their Authority again to new Consuls'.¹⁰

⁸ *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois, 5 vols (Paris, 1914–1924), 5559–628. See also *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York, 1962), pp. 118–20 (sec. 27). Edgar F. Shannon, 'The Physician's Tale', in W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Chicago, 1941), pp. 398–408, finds a number of parallels with Livy, but William H. Brown, Jr, 'Chaucer, Livy, and Bersuire: the Roman Materials in *The Physician's Tale*', in *On Language: Rhetorica, Phonologica, Syntactica*, ed. Caroline Duncan-Rose and Theo Vennemann (London and New York, 1988), pp. 39–51, argues that Chaucer takes nothing from Livy that he could not more easily have found in Bersuire's translation (completed c.1355). See C. Samaran and J. Monfrin, *Pierre Bersuire: Prieur de Saint-Éloi de Paris* (Paris, 1962).

⁹ *Confessio Amantis* VII.5131–306. For Valerius see n. 19 below. Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, Part 1, EETS e.s. 121 (London, 1924), pp. 237–40, and Part 4, EETS e.s. 124 (London, 1927), p. 175. Boccaccio, *De Mulieribus Claris*, ed. V. Zaccaria (Milan, 1967), pp. 236–43 (LVIII, 'De Virginea virgine Virginii filia'), and *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, ed. P.G. Ricci and V. Zaccaria (Milan, 1983), pp. 234–42 (III, ix).

¹⁰ Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London, 1687), p. 526 (IV, vii). 'T.' should be '[L]ucius]' as in Livy; Gower reads 'Livius'.

War and not domestic tragedy was Raleigh's major interest in his *History*, but even so it is surprising that he should omit all reference to Virginia's fate.¹¹ Thomas Heywood, less interested in foreign policy, notes briefly in the Proeme to *Troia Britanica* (1609): 'And now was Rome gouerned by the *Decemuiri*, a forme of gouernment infamous, in the lust of *Appius*, to the chast *Roman Lady Virginia*.'¹² Heywood was hackwriter, popularizer, and playwright—anything but a historian. Typically, the Decemviri were infamous because Appius lusted after the chaste Virginia, not famous because they codified laws or were ejected by the plebeians.¹³

But according to Livy, Appius took tyrannical advantage of his powerful position to adjudge the beautiful young Virginia to be his henchman's slave, so that her father was forced to stab her to death to save her from violation. Only then were the people sufficiently

¹¹ Similarly Fulke Greville, in *A Treatise of Monarchy* (c.1610) mentions that 'Appius brought from *Athens* rules of life' (stanza 253). He alludes to 'th'ungratefull memorie / Of *Appius Claudius*' (stanza 588), but without elaborating. See *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke: The Remains, being poems of monarchy and religion*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford, 1965), pp. 98 and 182–83.

¹² Thomas Heywood, *Troia Britanica or Great Britaines Troy* (1609; facs. rpt Amsterdam, 1976), Proeme, sig. A6. The fall of this infamous government through lust is alluded to in two Scottish versions of Petrarch's *Triumphs*: William Fowler (1560–1612), *Works*, ed. H. W. Meikle, 3 vols, Scottish Text Society 2nd ser. 6, 3rd ser. 7, 13 (Edinburgh, etc., 1914–40), I, 73, writes:

Than nixt approchte VIRGINIA, with hir father ferse,
armed with disdane and pietie, and with a blaid to perse
And wound his chaistlie dochters breist, which bothe to hir and Rome
brought change of state, and by hir death thair fredomes both did come.

More trenchantly Anna Hume, *The Triumphs of Love: Chastitie: Death* (Edinburgh, 1644), one of the few women, and perhaps the first, to tackle the Virginia legend, writes:

after Virginia
Nere her vext father, arm'd with wrath and hate,
Fury, and ir'n and Love, he freed the state
And her from slavery, with a manly blow.
(*'The Triumph of Chastitie'*, lines 118–21).

¹³ Bacon, 'Of Love' (1625), refers to Appius as 'an Austere, and wise man', a rare example of how 'Love can finde entrance, not only into an open Heart; but also into a Heart well fortified; if watch be not well kept': *Sir Francis Bacon: The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 1985), pp. 31–33, with notes at p. 195. Bacon regards love as an incidental passion that 'Imbaseth' rather than ennobles those who succumb to it; but he commends Appius as a lawgiver.

incensed against the Decemvirs to drive them out.

Livy's description of the killing loses nothing in the graphic and emotion-charged translation of Philemon Holland (1600):

Then *Virginus* seeing all past helpe and no other remedie: Well *Appius* (quoth he) pardon me first I beseech thee, if upon a fatherly affection and grieffe of heart, I have let fall some shrewd and curst words against thee more than was beseeeming: Then, give me leave here before the virgin, to enquire of her nourice the truth of this matter, that if I have fathered her untruly, I may goe hence better apaid & satisfied in my mind. Leave being granted, he led his daughter and the nource apart from the rest, neare to the church of *Venus Cloacina*, hard at the shops, called at this daie *Novae Tabernae*, i.[e.] the new shops or standings: and there having caught a knife from a butcher, he thus spake: My sweete daughter, no other meanes have I but this onely to set thee free: and so he strake the damsell to the heart: and looking presently to the judgment seat, Here with this bloud I sacrifice thee *Appius*, & thy head to the divell. *Appius* with the crie that arose upon so horrible a fact, being much troubled, commanded *Virginus* to be apprehended: but he with bloudie blade in hand, made way where he went, untill with a number that followed him apace to beare him companie, he recovered the gate.¹⁴

'A fatherly affection and grieffe of heart' expands 'patrio dolori'; 'I have let fall some shrewd and curst words against thee more than was beseeeming' enlivens 'inclementius in te sum inuectus'; 'I sacrifice thee *Appius* & thy head to the divell' modernizes 'Te' inquit, 'Appi, tuumque

¹⁴ Philemon Holland (trans.), *The Romane Historie Written by Titus Livius of Padua* (London, 1600), p. 120. The Latin text reads: "Tum Verginius ubi nihil usquam auxilii uidit, "Quaeso" inquit, "Appi, primum ignosce patrio dolori, si quo inclementius in te sum inuectus; deinde sinas hic coram uirgine nutricem percontari quid hoc rei sit, ut si falso pater dictus sum aequiore hinc animo discedam." Data uenia seducit filiam ac nutricem prope Cloacinae ad tabernas, quibus nunc Nouis est nomen, atque ibi ab lanio cultro arrepto, "Hoc te uno quo possum" ait, "modo, filia, in libertatem uindico." Pectus deinde puellae transfigit, respectansque ad tribunal "Te" inquit, "Appi, tuumque caput sanguine hoc consecro." Clamore ad tam atrox facinus orto excitus Appius comprehendi Verginium iubet. Ille ferro quacumque ibat uiam facere, donec multitudine etiam prosequentium tuente ad portam perrexit: *Titi Livi Ab Vrbe Condita*, ed. R.S. Conway, C.E. Walters *et al.*, 6 vols, Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford, 1914–99), I (Book 3, 48).

caput sanguine hoc consecro'; and the alliterative vehemence of 'he with bloudie blade in hand, made way where he went' invigorates 'Ille ferro quacumque ibat uiam facere'.

There follows the exhibiting of the body to the people, the lamentation of the women, and Virginius' justification of his action to his soldiers, calculated to stir them up to a sudden flood of mutiny. The speech that Livy relates in a fine surge of his favourite *oratio obliqua* is dramatically rendered as direct speech by William Painter (1566):

Holding vp his handes towards the heavens, [Virginius] sayd: 'I beseeche you (deare companions) do not impute the wickednesse of Appius Claudius vpon mee, ne yet that I am a paricide and murderer of mine own children: the life of my dear daughter had bene more acceptable to me than mine owne life, if so be shee might haue continued a free woman, and an honest virgine. But when I sawe she was ledde to the rape like a bondwoman, I considered, that better it wer her life to be loste, then suffered to liue in shame: wherefore my naturall pitie was conuerted to a kynde of crueltie. And for myne owne parte, I doe not passe to lyue long after her, if I thought I should not haue your helpe and succour to reuenge her death. Consider that your selues haue doughters, sisters, and wyues, thinke not therefore, that the fleshlye desire of Appius is satisfied with the death of my daughter. And the longer that he doth continue in this securitie, the more vnbrideled is his appetite. Let the calamitie of an other be a sufficient document for you, to beware like iniuries. My wife is dead, by naturall fate and constellation, and bicause my doughter could continewe no longer in honeste and chaste life, death is befallen vnto her: whiche although it be miserable, yet the fame is honourable. There is nowe no place in my house for Appius to satisfie his filthie luste: and I will fayle of my purpose, if I doe not reuenge the death of my daughter with so good will vpon his fleshe, as I did discharge the dishonour and seruitude of her from his violent and cruell handes.' This succlamation and pitifull complainte so stirred the multitude, that they promised all to helpe and relieue his sorowe.¹⁵

¹⁵ William Painter, *The Pallace of Pleasure* (1566, 1575), ed. Joseph Jacobs, 3 vols (London, 1890), I, 35–45. The Latin text reads: 'Supinas deinde tendens manus, commilitones appellans orabat ne quod scelus Ap. Claudii esset sibi attribuerent ne se ut parricidam liberum auersarentur. sibi uitam filiae sua cariorum fuisse, si liberae ac pudicae uiuere licitum fuisset: cum uelut seruam ad stuprum rapi uideret, morte amitti melius ratum quam contumelia liberos, misericordia se in speciem crudelitatis lapsam; nec superstitem filiae futurum fuisse, nisi spem ulciscendae mortis eius in

'Succlamabat multitudo' means 'the crowd responded loudly': Painter pairs 'succlamation', glossed 'outcry, applause' in *OED* and cited only from Painter and Holland, with 'pitifull complainte', either because he thought it equivalent, or to express the feelings he missed in Livy, whose 'Verginio vociferanti' makes no reference to pity.

In the end, says Livy, with bland approval, the guilty are punished, and then the ghost of Virginia is able to rest in peace:

manesque Verginiae, mortuae quam uiuae felicioris, per tot domos
ad petendas poenas uagati, nullo relicto sonte tandem quieuerunt.

[and the shade of Virginia, more fortunate after death than when living, after having roamed through so many families in quest of vengeance, at length rested in peace, no guilty person being left unpunished.]¹⁶

This vengeful ghost that overlooks the father who delivered the blow

auxilio commilitonum habuisset. illis quoque filias sorores coniugesque esse, nec cum filia sua libidinem Ap. Claudii exstinctam esse, sed quo impunitior sit eo effrenatiorem fore. aliena calamitate documentum datum illis cauendae similis iniuriae. quod ad se attineat, uxorem sibi fato ereptam, filiam, quia non ultra pudica uictura fuerit, miseram sed honestam mortem occubuisse; non esse iam Appi libidini locum in domo sua: ab alia uiolentia eius eodem se animo suum corpus uindicaturum quo uindicauerit filiae: ceteri sibi ac liberis suis consulerent. Haec Verginio uociferanti succlamabat multitudo nec illius dolori nec suae libertati se defuturos' (Livy, *De Vrbe Condita*, Book 3, 50).

¹⁶ *The History of Rome by Titus Livius*, trans. D. Spillan (London, 1899), p. 231 (Bk 3, 58). Virginia's ghost was well avenged ('ultique tuos sunt bene manes, / virgo'), recalls the Chorus in the pseudo-Senecan drama *Octavia*; the ensuing description,

dextra caesa parentis
ne servitium paterere grave et
improba ferret praemia victrix
dira libido. (296–300)

is translated, and feelingly augmented, by Thomas Nuce (d. 1617), in *The Ninthe Tragedy of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, called Octauia, translated out of latine into Englishe by T. N.* (London, 1581):

O virgin chast, VIRGINIA pure,
Depriude by syre of vitall breath,
That bondage thou mightst not endure:
And that his shameless brutish lust
So good a meede might not enioy:
Although by filthy force uniust
Thy chastity he would annoy.
(5th scene, lines 34–40)

is Livy's sense of justice rather than the freed spirit of Virginia; 'nullo relicto sonte' implies that Virginius acted rightly, and leaves to later authors a legacy of suclamation and pity rather than a test-case for the termination of violence against women.

It is not her subchthonic ancestors, however, but her symbolic counterpart Lucretia with whom she is associated in the underworld by Silius Italicus, the epic poet who in the first century AD actually portrays the ghost of Virginia. In Book XIII of Silius' *Punica*, Scipio pays the visit to Hades that is mandatory for an epic hero, where he is shown ghosts of women, including Lucretia, with Virginia beside her:

Virginia iuxta,
cerne, cruentato vulnus sub pectore servat,
tristia defensi ferro monumenta pudoris,
et patriam laudat miserando in vulnere dextram¹⁷

[See Virginia next to her, nursing the wound beneath her bleeding breast, sad mark of chastity preserved by the sword. Even while she laments her deathblow she praises the father's hand that dealt it.]

Thomas Heywood's version of this passage resembles the popular genre of emblem verses:

Virginia iuxta
Cerne, cruentato vulnus sub pectore servat.

Behold before thee where *Virginia's* plac't,
Her white breast with a griesly wound defac't .
The bloudie knife doth witnesse the sad stroke,
Which freed her body from lusts servile yoke:
Whose modest innocence so farre extends,
Her father act she in her death commends.¹⁸

¹⁷ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, ed. and trans. J. D. Duff, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1968), II, 264–65 (XIII, 824–27).

¹⁸ Thomas Heywood, *A curtaine lecture* (London, 1637), p. 69. For emblem verses, see A. Henkel and A. Schone, *Emblemata* (Stuttgart, 1967). The translation of Thomas Ross (d. 1675), in *Of the Second Punick War Between Hannibal and the Romanes, the Whole Seventeen Books, Englished from the Latine of Silius Italicus* (London, 1661), makes up in industry what it lacks in clarity:

near her, Virginia see; who, yet

For Heywood, Virginia's good behaviour is attested by her preserved innocence. There is nothing vengeful about this ghost, who is but an emblem of her story: a paradoxical picture of misery and filial gratitude combined.

Encyclopedic Virginia

Abbreviated allusions to the Virginia story gave rise to misunderstandings which caused the tradition of a deflowered Virginia to develop: a nice illustration of the dangers of relying exclusively on encyclopedias for information.

With few exceptions, the story of Virginia was known in the Middle Ages not from Livy but from various later epitomes of Roman history. One of the most popular accounts was that of Valerius Maximus, in the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* (c.AD 26):

Verginius plebei generis, sed patricii uir spiritus, ne probro contaminaretur domus sua, proprio sanguini non pepercit: nam cum App. Claudius decemuir filiae eius uirginis stuprum potestatis uiribus fretus pertinacius expeteret, deductam in forum puellam occidit pudicaeque interemptor quam corruptae pater esse maluit.¹⁹

[Virginius, a plebian, but a man with the spirit of a patrician, to save his family from disgrace did not spare his own kindred blood: for when the decemvir Appius Claudius exerted all the force of his authority to make a harlot of his virgin daughter, he brought the girl into the marketplace and killed her, preferring to be the slayer of a virgin rather than the father of a strumpet.]

Other epitomizers are Florus (c.AD 140),²⁰ Africanus (c.220),

The Wound retaining in her bleeding Breast
(Sad Monument, that Chastity exprest
Defended by the Sword!) her Father's hand
Applauds, in that dire stroke. (XIII, 1114–18)

¹⁹ *Valerii Maximi Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri Novem*, ed. C. Kempf (Leipzig, 1888), p. 271 (VI, i, 2).

²⁰ *L. Annaei Flori Epitomae Libri II*, ed. Otto Rossbach (Leipzig, 1896), p. 39 (I, 17). Florus describes Appius as 'oblitus et Lucretiae et regum et iuris quod ipse composuerat' [forgetful of Lucretia and the kings, and the law which he himself had drawn up].

Eusebius (c.300),²¹ and pseudo-Victor (fourth century), who adds the piquant but implausible detail 'corpus eius humeris gerens ad exercitum profugit et milites ad vindicandum facinus accendit' [carrying her body on his shoulders, he fled to the army and stirred up the soldiers to avenge the crime];²² as well as Eutropius (c.375),²³ Orosius (c.410),²⁴ and, in Greek, Zonaras (twelfth century).²⁵ Orosius, a Christian writer, was struck by the righteousness of Virginius' motives:

quamobrem adactus Verginius pater dolore libertatis et pudore dedecoris protractam ad seruitutem filiam in conspectu populi pius parricida prostravit.

[Driven therefore by despair of her liberty and shame of her disgrace, her father Virginius, a dutiful parricide, struck his daughter down in the sight of the people, while she was being haled forth into slavery.]

The oxymoron 'pius parricida' at once affirms and, for modern readers at least, casts doubt upon the justice of Virginius' action. But Orosius is orthodox and extols him.

When the king of mediæval compilers, Vincent de Beauvais (d. 1264), collects allusions to the Decemviri and Appius Claudius in Book III, chapter 45, of his vast *Speculum Historiale*,²⁶ he does not quote Livy. The chapter is (oddly, it seems to us) sandwiched between chapter 44, dealing with the philosophers Empedocles and

²¹ Sextus Julius Africanus about 220 AD synchronized sacred and profane history in five books of *Chronographies*. Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260–c.340) based his *Chronica* (PL 27, 223–508) on this work; for Appius Claudius, see PL 27, 451–52. Eusebius says only that the Decemviri were expelled because Appius wanted to carry off Virginius' daughter, and nothing of the resultant tragedy.

²² *Incerti Auctoris Liber de Viris Illustribus Urbis Romae*, 21, in Sextus Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus*, ed. Francis Pichlmayr (Leipzig, 1911), p. 38.

²³ Eutropius, *Breviarium Historiae Romanae*, ed. R. Dietsch (Leipzig, 1877), p. 8 (I, 18).

²⁴ Orosius, *Pauli Orosii Historiae Adversum Paganos*, ed. C. Zangemeister (Leipzig, 1889), p. 51 (II, 13).

²⁵ Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae Epitome Historiarum*, ed. L. Dindorf, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1868–1875), II, 141 (VII, 18).

²⁶ Vincent of Beauvais, *Bibliotheca Mundi seu Speculum Majus Vincentii Burgundi*, 4 vols (Douai, 1624; rpt. 1965), IV, 101 (*Speculum Historiale*, III, xiv). I am grateful to Francis Cairns, who located this reference.

Parmenides, and chapter 46, describing how Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem. This is an accident of chronology, not classification. The connection is simply that these events happened, and these philosophers lived, during the reign of Artaxerxes. But the reason why Vincent mentions them is that they are all alluded to within a few lines in Eusebius' *Chronica*.

Vincent begins by quoting Eusebius' brief notice of the abduction of Virginia, merely adding that it occurred in the twelfth year of Artaxerxes. He then applies to Isidore for the names of the Decemviri, with Apius [sic] Claudius at the head of the list.²⁷ Next, he quotes the whole of Orosius' version of the story, with only minor verbal discrepancies, and then gives presumably his own version of the crucial sentence from Valerius (quoted perhaps from memory):

Valerius. Virginius filiam suam in medio foro occidit, malens esse occisor virginis quam corruptae pater.

[Valerius: Virginius killed his own daughter right there in the marketplace, because he would rather kill her while a virgin than be the father of a strumpet.]

Finally, Vincent adds from Eusebius a list of famous and not so famous people who were flourishing at the time. They have nothing to do with the story of Virginia. The chapter provides a good illustration of the uncritical way the mediæval encyclopedist reconstructed ancient history by simply quoting in an apparently random order excerpts from the sources available to him.

But, significantly, the word 'virgin' (used for example by Valerius) is not enough to make absolutely clear in any of the versions Vincent offers that the poor girl was killed before Appius was able to accomplish his nefarious purpose. And as a result, when the story resurfaces at the beginning of Arnold of Liège's *Alphabetum Narrationum*, it is badly mangled.

No. DCCLXXIV in the Middle English version, *An Alphabet of Tales*, is headed (whether by Arnold or an untutored scribe) 'Virginitatem in filia amissam pater aliquando crudeliter punit' [How

²⁷ Isidore, *Etymologiae* 5.1, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911). Writing on the origin of the laws, Isidore mentions the twelve tables which the Decemviri were appointed to translate from the books of Solon, but says nothing of Virginius or Virginia.

a father once cruelly punished his daughter for losing her virginity], as if Virginia had earned her punishment, and continues: 'Valerius tellis how Virgilius [!] slew his awn doghter in þe markett, to þe entent þat hym had lere be called þe slaer of a virgyn þan þe fadur of a strompett.'²⁸ This sentence is clearly derived from Vincent, and not directly from Valerius. The miscarriage of Roman justice has been suppressed, and all that remains is an *exemplum* of chastity. Yet Arnold might have quoted from Vincent the fuller version of Orosius. But he had a large field to till, and no doubt the oxen in his plough were weak.

Shakespeare mentions the story of Virginia only once and, to the embarrassment of all his editors except the most recent, gets it wrong. 'Was it well done of rash Virginius / To slay his daughter with his own right hand, / Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered?' (*Titus Andronicus* 5.3.36–38).²⁹ In Shakespeare's usage 'rash' seems to mean 'active, violent' rather than 'without due thought taken'.³⁰ If Virginius' response was 'rash', it was to be commended, not condemned. The brutal Titus Andronicus is offering a precedent to justify him in killing his own ravished and mutilated daughter. Obviously Shakespeare's allusion is to an encyclopedic version of the anecdote rather than to the story in Livy, for it was the encyclopedias that provided an appropriate illustration for Titus' behaviour in this most gruesome of plays.³¹

If Chaucer's Virginius killed his daughter for love and not for hate,³² Shakespeare's Titus kills his for sorrow and not for love. When Saturninus exclaims, 'What hast thou done, unnatural and unkind?' Titus replies,

²⁸ Arnold of Liège, *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mary M. Banks, 2 vols, EETS o.s. 126–27 (London, 1905), II, 517.

²⁹ *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Eugene M. Waith, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, 1984), p. 187.

³⁰ Cf. quotations from Shakespeare under such senses in *OED*, s.v. rash.

³¹ See the note in the Arden edition (3rd edn, paperback), ed. J.C. Maxwell (1961; rpt London, 1968), p. 119; also Waith, p. 187: both editors refer to Holger Nørgaard, 'Never Wrong But With Just Cause', *English Studies* 45 (1964): 137–41.

³² 'For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed; / My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed. Here Chaucer (VI [C] 225–26) translates Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, 5605: 'par amor sans haïne' (see n. 8 above).

Killed her for whom my tears have made me blind.
 I am as woeful as Virginius was,
 And have a thousand times more cause than he
 To do this outrage, and it now is done.

Saturninus understands the allusion to Virginius. He asks, 'What, was she ravished? Tell who did the deed' (5.3.47–52).

The Parisian encyclopedist Ravisius Textor (Jean Tixier, Seigneur de Ravisi, c.1470–1524), made a collection of treatises by various hands on the subject of famous women. One paragraph reads

Virginea, filia Virginij: ab Appio decemuiro amata: quae vt decus suum seruaret: a patre interempta fuit.³³

[Virginia, daughter of Virginius, was loved by Appius. To save her honour, her father killed her.]

Here Textor does not indicate whether Appius' designs were successful or not. But in his *Officina* he is quite clear that Appius killed himself after violating Virginia. The passage occurs in a section devoted to people who, like Cleopatra, had 'pursued conclusions infinite / Of easy ways to die' (the section is headed 'Mortem qui sibi variis modis consciverunt, aut se aliis commiserunt occidentes').

App. Claudius Regillianus, stuprata Virginia Virginij Centurionis filia, in carcerem a populo crimen ulciscente coniectus, sibi manus intulit.³⁴

[Appius Claudius Regillianus ravished Virginia the daughter of the Centurion Virginius. The people threw him into prison to punish the crime, and he killed himself]

Anyone who gave Painter only a cursory glance might be mistaken

³³ Ravisius Textor, *De Memorabilibus et Claris Mulieribus: Aliquot Diversorum Scriptorum Opera* (Paris, 1521), fol. 182. On Textor, see Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1977), pp. 151–60 and 166–70.

³⁴ *Officina Ioan. Ravisii Textoris* (Venice, 1574), sig. 2^r. T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana, IL, 1944), I, 421 notices among the books at Merchant Taylors' in 1599 'Textoris officina in 4to all rent'—obviously much used. On Shakespeare's literary education, see also Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1977), chapter 1, although he does not mention Textor.

about Virginia's fate, since Painter alludes at the beginning of "The fiftē nouell" to 'Appius Claudius, who committed no lesse filthy facte, then was done by Tarquinius, for the rape of Lucrece'. Although Painter's 'nouell' follows Livy closely enough to show that Appius wasn't successful, someone who read no further would probably not realize that in writing of Appius' 'libidinous desire, to raiſhe a yong virgine, the doughter of one Lucius Virginius', Painter was prepared to take the will for the deed.³⁵

But the clearest example of the misunderstanding is provided by Lodewyk Lloyd. His version is probably the one most readily available to Shakespeare when he was writing *Titus Andronicus*. In *The Pilgrimage of Princes* (1573), a repetitious collection in the *exempla* tradition of anecdotes from classical history and mythology, Lloyd alludes to Virginia's death several times. Not having read Livy, Lloyd shows no knowledge of Icilius, and fails to realize that Virginius killed his daughter to protect her chastity, not to punish her for losing it. For example, in a chapter entitled 'Of sober and temperate Princes, and where temperance and sobrietie were most vsed', he writes, 'This hath made Rome famous: how well was temperancie regarded in Rome when Virginius slue his daughter Virginia, for that shee was defloured of Appius Claudius?'³⁶ Lloyd has an astonishing idea of the temperance that made Rome famous.

Among anecdotes 'of the maners of sundrie people, and of their strange life', Lloyd includes the story of Virginia, set in a political context. His account is clearly based on Florus.³⁷ He explains that the Roman monarchy was followed by 250 war-torn years of aristocratic rule:

Then Appius Claudius forgetting the law he himselfe made in Rome against fornication, forgetting the rauishment of Lucrecia and the banishment of Tarquinius for breaking of the same, against all right and reason willingly and wilfully rauished Virginia, the daughter of Virginius, which after that her owne father slue hir in

³⁵ Painter, *Pallace of Pleasure*, I, 35.

³⁶ I quote from the third edition of *The Pilgrimage of Princes*. Newly published: by Lodowicke Lloid Esquire, one of her Maiesties Sergeants at Armes (London, 1607), fol. 47. Subsequent quotations are also from this edition.

³⁷ See n. 20 above.

the open sight of *Rome*, the cause being knowne vnto all the Citie, the power of *Virginus*, and the populer state which alwaies had the gouernement of *Rome* vnder them, were straight in armes to reuenge the wronges and iniuries against lawes committed, and to defend likewise the lawes. (fol. 68)

The phrase 'in the open sight of *Rome*' is evidently borrowed from Orosius ('in conspectu populi'). Not anticipating the obtuseness of readers like Lloyd, neither Florus nor Orosius thought it necessary to state specifically that Virginia was a virgin when her father killed her.

In the section entitled 'Of lust', Lloyd regards that vice as the prime cause of the political degeneracy of ancient Rome from the 'golden worlde', the 'happie age' of ignorance when people either could not or would not speak:

For before *Aruntius* proude *Tarquinius* sonne, was by luste moued toward *Collatinus* wife, there was no alteration of states, nor chaunge of common wealthes, no banishment of Princes in *Rome*; and beeing chaunged for that purpose onely, from a *Monarchie*, vnto an other state called *Aristocratia*, it continued so long in that forme; which was the first change, vntill *Appius* rauished *Virginus* Daughter, which banished the order called *Decemuiuri*, which was the second change. And thus the popular State, which had chiefe rule alwayes of *Rome*, changed States of the Citie diuers times, for that Lust so raigned (fol. 140^v).

Lloyd's view of history is naive: he posits a golden age of speechless ignorance that is corrupted by knowledge acquired through lust, the decline accelerating through what Aristotle and the Elizabethans regarded as the worsening stages of monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic rule.³⁸ In *The Consent of Time* (1590), Lloyd repeats his ill-considered interpretation of the epitomes: 'When *Appius Claudius* ... had defloured *Virginia*, the onely daughter of *Virginus*, he ... chose to slay his daughter rather then to suffer the shame'.³⁹

³⁸ James Emerson Phillips, Jr, *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays* (1940; rpt New York, 1972), p. 104.

³⁹ Quoted by Nørgaard, 'Never Wrong But With Just Cause', 140. Two writers with perhaps less just cause were E.L. (fl.1596), who in *Rome's Monarchie* (London, 1596) writes 'But this new change [from consuls to decemvirs], was altered soone agen: / *Appius Claude*, one of that number tho / Committing rape, that gouernment

The bloodthirsty melodrama *Alphonsus Emperor of Germany*,⁴⁰ which is probably to be assigned to George Peele, and which may well have influenced or been influenced by *Titus Andronicus*, contains a bizarre scene of parental fury derived from the tradition of a deflowered Virginia. The play describes the Machiavellian intrigues of the murderous Spaniard Alphonsus to retain the throne of Germany against his rival Richard Earl of Cornwall. Alphonsus begins by poisoning his tutor in Machiavellianism, Lorenzo, and then tricks Lorenzo's vengeful son Alexander into helping him murder as many as possible of the seven electors of the German Empire. The intrigue is played amid scenes of revelry, when the aristocrats adopt the roles of peasants and celebrate the nuptials of Richard's nephew Edward (later Edward I of England). Edward, unhistorically, marries Hedewick, daughter of one of the electors, the Duke of Saxon. But by German custom she hides herself from her husband on their wedding night. Between murders, Alphonsus sends Alexander to her bed in place of the Prince. When she asserts and Edward denies that the marriage has been consummated, the frantic Duke imprisons him, and there he languishes in irons until her son is born. Meanwhile Richard escapes, raises an army, and returns to besiege the Emperor and Duke in the castle where Edward is a prisoner.

In Act 4 Scene 3 the Duke, beside himself because Edward will not admit paternity, appears as a suppliant, with his daughter and grandson, before his chained son-in-law:

To pierce thine eyes and heart, behold this spectacle:
Three generations of the Saxon blood,
[*Kneeling*] Descended lineally from forth my loins,
Kneeling and crying to thy mightiness.

(4.3.29–32)

did orethrow' (110–12), and William Harbert (*fl.* 1604), in *A Prophecie of Cadwallader* (London, 1604): among deeds of violence said not (yet) to have happened during the Golden Age of Saturn, '*Claudius* as then did not *Virginia* stayne' (1334).

⁴⁰ *The Tragedy of Alphonsus Emperor of Germany* was printed in 1654 and credited to Chapman; but a tradition gives it to Peele, and internal evidence, such as the reference at 2.2.47–49 to Ambidexter, the Vice in *Cambyeses* (1569), points to a sixteenth-century origin. See *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Thomas Marc Parrott, 2 vols (1910–14; rpt New York, 1961), II, 401–71, with notes at pp. 683–711.

This attitude seems absurd when Edward's mightiness is so far to seek, but Saxon wishes to sound the entire diplomatic range from pleading to coercion. He pities Hedewick less than he minds the insult to his family line; he wants his grandson acknowledged as ultimate heir to the English throne. If not, he has no use for either his daughter or his grandson, except to punish Edward. Assuming that they will mean more to Edward than they do to him, he threatens to inflict on him

The speedy tragedy of thee and thine.
 Like Athamas first will I seize upon
 Thy young unchristen'd and despised son
 And with his guiltless brains bepaint the stones;
 Then, like Virginius, will I kill my child,
 Unto thine eyes a pleasing spectacle.

(lines 60–65)

Athamas, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (IV, 416–562), went mad and brained his infant son: Saxon's threat is worse, since the child has not yet been christened. Moved to pity, Edward is tempted 'To save her honour and belie myself' (4.3.110), but he is too high a Prince, 'And bastards have no sceptre-bearing hands' (line 112). Furiously, Saxon dashes out the child's brains, blaming Edward as the murderer, and bidding him bury the flesh in his bowels or die for hunger.

The reference to Virginius suggests that Peele has in mind a version of the story like that of Lloyd's, for Hedewick has after all been violated, although she believes otherwise. Out of pity, Edward offers to live with her, since she is his wife: but 'now ist too late, unser arme Kind is kilt', she cries. Edward insists he 'would not nurse a bastard for a son' (4.3.137), from which she conceives he means her to be his whore, and like a true Virginia begs her father rather to let her die: 'mein Vater, ich begehre upon meine knee, lass mich lieber sterben' (lines 139–40). Saxon takes her at her word, denouncing Edward before he stabs her:

Is't not enough that thou has sham'd her once,
 And seen the bastard torn before thy face;
 But thou wouldst get more brats for butchery?
 No, Hedewick, thou shalt not live the day.

(lines 143–46)

All this makes for exciting theatre and has a kind of ducal logic, where succession matters most and human life is cheap, but it makes Virginius seem mild and reasonable by comparison. Hedewick, after all, is a beloved wife; it is her husband's fatal refusal to acknowledge her son that nominally turns her into a whore, and so to a victim whose father will not allow her to survive her shame.

Like Virginius, Saxon lives on to help put an end to tyranny. Alexander tricks Alphonsus first into revealing his crimes and then into willing his soul to the devil before he kills him, thus rescuing Edward, whom he was about to kill. Saxon captures Alexander and learns that Edward is innocent. Not only is Saxon determined that nothing shall save the 'murtherous, adulterous slave' (5.1.459), but Edward, too, condemns him: 'Hadst thou not been author of my Hedewick's death, / I would have certainly sav'd thee from death' (lines 467–68). He has no words of blame for Saxon. Just as Appius and Claudius, rather than Virginius who struck the blow, were guilty of Virginia's death, so Alphonsus and Alexander are to blame for Hedewick's. Peace is restored when Saxon and Edward join in persuading Richard to assume the imperial crown. Peele would not spoil so fit an ending by punishing Saxon merely because he could not let his daughter 'by her presence still renew his sorrows'.

The encyclopedic Thomas Heywood established himself as a champion of women (in the anti-feminist controversy sparked by Joseph Swetnam's abusive pamphlet in 1615)⁴¹ with *Gunaiketon, or The History of Women* (1624), 466 folios of miscellaneous anecdotes inevitably including that of Virginia. But like the epitomes that misled Lodewyk Lloyd, his summary is less than explicit, especially since it occurs in a subsection dealing with several degrees of 'Inchastities' and their punishments.⁴² In surprising fashion Virginius disposes of the corpse bodily: he 'slew her with his owne hand: then taking vp her

⁴¹ On Swetnam, see Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540–1620* (Brighton, 1984), chapter 12, 'Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women' (pp. 300–22).

⁴² Thomas Heywood, *Gunaiketon: Or, Nine Bookes of Various History Concerning Women* (London, 1624), pp. 442–43. Heywood claims to have completed this massive tome in only a few months, without noting that most of it is simply lifted out of the encyclopedia of Ravius Textor. Cf. F. S. Boas, *Thomas Heywood* (London, 1950), pp. 105–20. See also Arthur Melville Clark, *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist* (1931; rpt New York, 1967), pp. 91–98.

bodie and lifting it vpon his shoulders, posted with that lamentable burden to the campe, and incited the souldiers to reuenge'. This interesting or absurd detail is not in Livy; it derives ultimately from the anonymous *De Viris Illustribus Urbis Romae*,⁴³ which survived because it became attached to its obvious sequel, *The Caesars*, an imperial biography written by the African governor Sextus Aurelius Victor.

However, Heywood probably read of Virginius' object-lesson in *Theatrum Humanae Vitae*, the mammoth encyclopedia of the Swiss polymath Theodore Zwinger. Zwinger attributes pseudo-Victor's silly version to Livy, and quotes it with insignificant variations to illustrate the banal conclusion that freedom can be one good result of harshness (the general heading 'Severitatis Fructus' has two subheadings: 'Bonus Puta' and 'Libertas', a typical example of Zwinger's zeal for classification).⁴⁴

Elsewhere, in a section devoted to Death, Zwinger cites 'Liuius, & Syllius lib. 13'; but in this instance the anecdote probably owes more to Orosius:

Virginius filiam VIRGINIAM, Icilio desponsatam spectante populo palam interfecit, ut Appium decemuirum (qui eam stuprare uelut seruam tentauerat) in odium & inuidiam populi traheret.⁴⁵

[Virginius killed his daughter Virginia, who was betrothed to Icilius, in the sight of the people, so that they would regard the decemvir Appius, who had tried to violate her as if she were a slave, with hatred and abhorrence.]

⁴³ See n. 22 above.

⁴⁴ Theodore Zwinger, *Theatrum Humanae Vitae*, 29 vols in 4 (Basle, 1586–1587), XII, Liber II, p. 2724. There was a copy, 'in fowre volumes in folio', at Merchant Taylors' in 1599: see Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, I, 421. Heywood may have seen the posthumous 1604 edition, enlarged by Zwinger's son Jacob. On Zwinger (1533–1588) see Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca, 1977), pp. 171–81.

⁴⁵ Zwinger, II, Liber VII, p. 469.

Zwinger's unflagging desire to compartmentalize knowledge finds room also for Valerius' account of the death of Virginia.⁴⁶ He includes it, together with a story from another source of a noble citizen who killed his beautiful wife to save her from the invading soldiers of Manuel Comnenus, under the heading 'Alienam Pudicitiam Inhoneste conseruare' [Saving someone else's honour dishonourably].

Heywood's admiration for Virginius finds its most enthusiastic expression in *A curtaine lecture* (1637): 'Famous unto all ages, even to the perpetuities of memory, shall be that great Arch-champion of virginities, *Virginius*, that brave Roman knight, whose name was given him in his childhood as a good *omen*, presaging what a defender of chastity he would after prove.'⁴⁷ Praise of Virginius' action may seem uncalled for in a chapter devoted to encouraging 'young Virgins and Damosells to behave themselves well in their single estate, that they may become eminent Wives & Matrons'; but Heywood describes how Virginius 'slew her with his owne hands, to vindicate her innocence; desirous rather (as *Valerius* reports of him) of an innocuous child to be the deathsman, than the father of a defiled daughter'.

Although of course Virginia is not one of the bellicose females whom he celebrates in *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World* (1640), Heywood alludes to her in the section on Elpheda, in a list of women 'who have been the occasion of much combustion and trouble'.⁴⁸ But surprisingly, he omits her and Virginius from the lists in *The Hierarchie of the blessed Angells* (1649) of women remarkable for chastity and of fathers that slew their daughters. However, his comment on the purpose of these and similar lists seems pertinent: 'to shew, that Atheisme, and want of the true knowledge of God, hath bin the cause of so many Murthers and Incests; & hath made so many Parracides and Fratricides, and indeed hath beene the ground of all prodigious acts and inhumanities whatsoever'.⁴⁹ The arch-champion of virginity is still a prodigious parricide.

⁴⁶ Zwinger, IX, Liber III, p. 2329.

⁴⁷ Heywood, *A curtaine lecture*, 69.

⁴⁸ Thomas Heywood, *The Exemplary Lives* (London, 1640), p. 134. See Eugene M. Waith, 'Heywood's Women Worthies', in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. N. T. Burns and C. Reagan (London, 1976), pp. 222–38.

⁴⁹ Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the blessed Angells* (1649; facs. rpt Amsterdam, 1973), pp. 35–39.

It seems clear that neither Vincent, Textor, Lloyd, Zwinger nor Heywood cared much where they got their information, as long as they classified and recorded it. If a large part of Webster's *Appius and Virginia* (c.1622),⁵⁰ which is extensively based on Livy, was indeed written by Thomas Heywood, it seems strange that he should have restricted his numerous other allusions to scraps derived from the epitomes. Either we should question his co-authorship of Webster's play,⁵¹ or these other inconsistent references testify to the uncritical acceptance of textual authority that, as we have seen, affects many compilations in the encyclopedic tradition.

Morality Virginia

*A new Tragickall Comedie of Apius and Virginia, Wherein is liuely expressed a rare example of the vertue of Chastitie, by Virginias constancy, in wishing rather to be slaine at her owne Fathers handes, then to be deflowred of the wicked Judge Apius. By R. B.*⁵² was printed in 1575. Whoever R. B. was—possibly Richard Bower, Master of the Chapel Royal from 1561–1566—he based his play on Chaucer's *Physician's Tale*, adding a Vice and some other allegorical abstractions, and a couple of quarrelsome servants.

R. B. greatly extends the role of Virginia's mother, in order to illustrate the importance of happy family relationships. *Apius and Virginia*, in fact, amalgamates two themes commonly found in Tudor and Elizabethan morality plays: sin and possible repentance, and the moral education of the young. Apius is the focus of the first, the family of Virginius of the second.

Conscience and Justice are aspects of Apius' personality who

⁵⁰ Date and authorship have been much disputed. See *The Complete Works of John Webster*, ed. F. L. Lucas, 4 vols (London, 1927), III, 134–45, for a discussion of the dual authorship. Muriel Bradbrook, *John Webster, Citizen and Dramatist* (New York, 1980), pp. 178–79, argues for 1622 as the most likely date.

⁵¹ Rupert Brooke, *John Webster & the Elizabethan Drama* (London, 1916), pp. 160–205, gives the whole play to Heywood, allowing only some revision of 1. 1 and 4.1 (the crucial trial scene) by Webster; cf. Clark, *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist*, 252–75 (Appendix I). G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols (Oxford, 1941–68), V, 1247, thinks the evidence insufficient to discount the publisher's attribution to Webster.

⁵² Quotations are from the edition in *Tudor Interludes*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 271–317.

allegorically oppose his lascivious intentions, but tempted by the Vice Haphazard he decides 'To hap or to hazard what thing shall invade me' (line 410). This eloquent Vice who eggs Apius on seems rather surprised at the end to find himself playing the part of Chaucer's 'remenant'. who 'were anhangd, moore and lesse' (*The Canterbury Tales*, VI [C] 275), but hanging is often the fate of morality Vices. Apius' moral dilemma represents the rudiments of a psychological conflict he is not subject to in Chaucer, where his only problems concern ways and means. Figures of mankind in the earlier moralities always repent in time,⁵³ but Apius, like, for example, Worldly Man in Wager's *Enough Is As Good As a Feast* (c.1564)⁵⁴ or Greediness in Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (1576),⁵⁵ dies unrepentant.

Family solidarity is illustrated by a scene in which her parents express their delight in Virginia, tempered by foreboding; in the next scene, for comic contrast, a quarrelsome couple, the servants Mansipulus and Mansipula, come to blows. Virginia's mother's lugubrious character is illustrated by the way she invites the gods to destroy her if she is ungrateful for her dear spouse and the fruit of her womb. In view of her absence from the beheading scene it looks as if they may have taken her at her word, deservedly or not.⁵⁶ Virginius replies that he would rather die than that she or their daughter 'ought wo should sustaine' (line 126). In view of his survival these words prove dramatically ironic. Virginia then tries to dispel the parental gloom with a remarkable display of verbal ballet:

Oh father, my comfort, oh mother, my ioy,
O deare, and O sufferaigne, do cease to employ
Such dolorous talking where dangers are none.
Where ioyes are attendant what needeth this mone?
You matron, you spouse, you nurse, and you wife,

⁵³ Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley, CA, 1936), p. 209, speaks of 'the merciful nullification of tragic catastrophe through spiritual salvation'.

⁵⁴ W. Wager, *Enough Is As Good As a Feast*, ed. R. Mark Benbow (London, 1968).

⁵⁵ G. Wapull, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, in *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, ed. E. T. Schell and J. D. Shuchter (New York, 1969), pp. 309–66.

⁵⁶ She disappears as mysteriously as her counterpart in *The Physician's Tale*. Jean de Meun does not mention her at all; in Livy she is already dead: 'uxorem sibi fato ereptam' (n. 15 above).

You comfort, you only the some of his lyfe:
 You housband, you harte, you ioye, and you pleasure,
 You king and you keyser, to her only treasure:
 You father, you mother, my lyfe doth sustaine,
 I babe and I blisse your health am againe.
 Forbeare then your dolor, let mirth be frequented,
 Let sorow departe, and be not attempted.

(lines 127–38)

In the death scene R. B.'s Virginia, unlike Chaucer's, does not swoon. But flinching at her father's proffered blow she requests a blindfold (after all, she is not Gawain), and then the actors get this stage-direction to cope with: 'Here tye a handcarcher aboute hir eyes, and then strike of hir heade' (line 834a). They would in fact have coped very well, as Reginald Scot's and Thomas Ady's exposés of stage illusions indicate.⁵⁷ Ady attests that severed heads produced from under handkerchiefs were sometimes so realistically moulded that members of the audience fainted.

Virgin martyrs in saints' lives were traditionally beheaded, in view no doubt of Revelation 20: 4, and this may be the reason why Jean de Meun, and following him Chaucer, preferred to have virtuous Virginia beheaded rather than stabbed with a butcher's knife as in Livy. R. B. found the change theatrically appropriate. The portable head was a manageable and ironically dramatic prop for Virginius to hand over to the wicked judge who had claimed his daughter's body, and a gruesome sign of Apius' injustice.

R. B.'s attempts to suggest paternal emotion are somewhat crude. Virginius frequently protests he is willing to die: since we know he will not, such protests are always unconvincing. He actually invites Virginia to 'dispatch' him (line 807), but then reflects that when he is gone nobody can protect her from Apius: since he can't either, he has to comfort himself with the further reflection that he need not long

⁵⁷ Pertinent excerpts from Reginald Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), Bk 13, ch. 33, and Thomas Ady, *A Candle in the Dark* (London, 1656), explaining how the beheading tricks were done, are cited in Louis B. Wright, 'Juggling Tricks and Conjury on the English Stage Before 1642', *Modern Philology* 24 (1926–1927): 269–84. Wright's discussion of stage decapitations (pp. 280–82) includes the examples of Isabella in Marston's *The Insatiate Countess* and Dorothea in Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, but omits R. B.'s Virginia.

survive her. It is she who suggests where his duty lies: 'Doe take my head and send it him upon your bloody knife' (line 821). However, he experiences various difficulties in bracing himself to the task, and afterwards still more in turning the knife upon himself: 'Come, fatall blade, make lyke dispatche, come Atropos, come ende, / Strike home' (lines 838–39). This is almost as good as Bottom the weaver in the role of Pyramus. Fortunately Comfort enters and bids him live in order to expose the villainy of the lustful judge.

Euphuistic Virginia

George Pettie's collection of novellas, *A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure* (1576), contains one called *Icilius and Virginia*. The story is based on Livy's rather than Chaucer's version, but belongs in neither tradition, since its inspiration is Petrarchan or courtly love. Pettie's Virginia is more articulate than any of her predecessors, as might be expected in a work containing a foreword addressed 'To the gentle Gentlewomen Readers'.⁵⁸ The foreword is initialled 'R. B.', perhaps the same who wrote *Apius and Virginia*. Pettie tells a love story whose pattern, it so happens, resembles that of Chaucer's *Troilus*: it concerns the double sorrow of Icilius, first afraid that he may not win Virginia, and then having to endure the loss of her. The latter misfortune he seems to find much easier to bear than the former, but only because Pettie's interest is exhausted once Virginia is dead. She is a determined heroine in the Cleopatra mould: bravest at the last, she takes her own way, persuading her father it is his duty to kill her.

After dreaming of Virginia, the lovelorn Icilius complains:

O God, is it not sufficient to vexe mee with vanities in the day time, unlesse thou torment mee with visions also in the night? have I not woe inough awake, but that beesides I must have sorrow in sleepe? What greevous offence have I committed, that deserveth sutch greevous punishment? if this bee the rewarde of them that love, woe, woe bee to them that hate: thou hast commaunded us all to love one another, and if thou thus punishe the fulfillers of thy law, what shall beecome of the transgressors therof? but if

⁵⁸ George Pettie, *A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure* (1576), ed. Herbert Hartman (London, 1938): *Icilius and Virginia*, pp. 103–25. It does not appear that either Pettie or Painter made use of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's version of Livy's story: see *The Pecorone of Ser Giovanni*, trans. W. G. Waters (London, 1897), pp. 223–29.

thou bee disposed to punish mee, and displeased with my deedes,
 never suffer mee hereafter to do any thyng but cast mee into
 sutch a sleepe wherin I was erwhile, and therein let mee continue
 continually. O happy was *Endymion*, who longe time injoyed the
 like sleepe (pp. 108–09).

Gentlewomen whose power in the real world is limited may derive satisfaction from the prospect of wreaking such emotional havoc among the young men who fall in love with them.

There is of course no Icilius in Chaucer, who has no intention that his Virginia should ever compromise the status conferred by her name. Pettie's Gentlewomen are not vestals or anchoresses; he offers them an Icilius who complains with the desperate ardour of an Orlando in Arden or shepherd in Arcadia of his hopeless love, until a friend (not named Pandarus) gives good advice, letters are exchanged, and the lovers are betrothed. Virginia, no replica of R. B.'s dutiful child, denounces her parents who won't let her marry a poor man: 'Ah (*Maister Icilius*) my tounge is not able to tell the hurt which my hart sustayneth by the covetous cruelty of my parentes, who in a greedy desire of goods, go about to stay mee from that whereupon my life doth stay and depende, and were it not that your great curtesie and love towards mee did somewhat moderate and mitigate my martirdome, I should never bee able to beare the unsupportable burthen therof' (pp. 116–17). For her, martyrdom primarily entails separation from Icilius.

When Appius' plot succeeds, she makes a 'ruthles request unto her father', euphuistically demonstrating that he owes her her death since, as her father, he is the author of her 'lucklesse and lothsome life', as a tyrannical parent he has been partly the means whereby she has fallen into this extremity, and as a weak old man his 'force is to feeble to fence mee from the fury of my foes'.

After this triumph of alliteration, she concludes heroically, 'Therefore seeing hee will needes have my body (sweet father) let him have it dead, that I may not feele the filthinesse which hee purposeth to force mee to' (pp. 122–23). Her father melts into tears, carefully (that is, sorrowfully) kisses her, commends her courage and then, seeing her enemies approach, quickly kills her: 'which *Virginus* seeing snatched a butchers knife from the shambels and thrust therewith his daughter to the heart'. Icilius wastes no time in 'triflinge teares', but speedily helps

his father-in-law accomplish the ruin of Appius. The conclusion is as rapid as Icilius' love-pangs were formerly long-winded. Pettie sums the story up with admirable lucidity: 'You see here Gentlewomen, a most lamentable death of a most vertuous virgin, wherein you may note a noble minde in her to desyre it, a stout courage in her father to doe it, and most outrageous tyranny in *Appius* to drive them to it' (p. 124).

From the story the gentlewomen are to learn to avoid old lechers and to persuade their parents to let them marry for love rather than money. Pettie's theme is feminine fortitude rather than justice. He offers a bittersweet story of unfulfilled love, the events of which are less important than the euphuistic style he handles with flair and facility. If the R. B. who was responsible for the metrical gymnastics of *Apus and Virginia* also wrote the foreword to Pettie's *Petite Pallace*, he doubtless appreciated the flamboyant rhetoric of a style more elegant if not more true to life than his own.

Satiric Virginia

If Chaucer's version of the story exemplifies 'fadres pitee' (line 211), the tale lent itself equally well to satiric indignation. Juvenal makes a point about mistaken values in a passing allusion to Virginia in his tenth satire—an allusion which William Kupersmith suggests may have influenced Chaucer's portrayal of her.⁵⁹ Parents set far too much store on qualities like beauty which are not always advantageous: Virginia would have been much better off if she had been as ugly as hump-backed Rutila:

sed uetat optari faciem Lucretia qualem
ipsa habuit, cuperet Rutilae Verginia gibbum
accipere atque suum Rutilae dare. filius autem
corporis egregii miseros trepidosque parentes
semper habet: rara est adeo concordia formae
atque pudicitiae.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ William Kupersmith, 'Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* and the Tenth Satire of Juvenal', *English Language Notes* 24.2 (October 1986): 20–23.

⁶⁰ *Juvenal: The Satires*, ed. John Ferguson (New York, 1979), p. 76 (Satire 10: 293–98). Ferguson prefers 'suum', contrasting, with grim irony, Virginia's bosom and Rutila's hump, to the more usual reading 'suam', which would refer to 'faciem'.

Henry Vaughan's translation (1646) of this passage reads:

But sad *Lucretia* warnes to wish no face
Like hers; *Virginia* would bequeath her grace
To Crooke-back *Rutila* in exchange; for still
The fairest children do their Parents fill
With greatest cares; so seldom chastitie
Is found with beauty.⁶¹

Juvenal acidly suggests that in his day beautiful children are likely to deserve the fate that *Lucretia* and *Virginia* undeservedly suffered.

That fate, or the beauty that caused *Virginia*'s fate, is the theme of an oddity unexpectedly interpolated in an early seventeenth-century translation—or travesty—of Juvenal. William B[arksted] (the attribution is uncertain) inserted in his Englishing of Juvenal's tenth satire (1617) a 500-line version of Livy's story of *Virginia*, to illustrate the two halflines that Dryden was later to render as

And fair *Virginia* wou'd her Fate bestow
On *Rutila*; and change her Faultless Make
For the foul rumple of Her Camel back ...⁶²

Following Juvenal's hint, Barksted attributes *Virginia*'s fate to the beauty she did not share with 'foule *Rutila*' (sig. B5, 10) who was 'a

⁶¹ Henry Vaughan, 'Juvenals Tenth Satyre Translated' (1646), in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1957), p. 29 (lines 454–59). William Kupersmith, *Roman Satirists in Seventeenth-Century England* (Lincoln and London, 1985), pp. 69–78, discusses Vaughan's translation but does not refer to this passage.

⁶² *Translations from Juvenal: The Tenth Satyr*, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. John Sargeant (1910; rpt London, 1952), pp. 569 (lines 453–55) and 571 n.22. Dryden's note reads: '*Virginia* was kill'd by her own Father, to prevent her being expos'd to the Lust of *Appius Claudius*, who had Ill Designs upon her. The Story at large is in *Livy's Third Book*; and 'tis a remarkable one, as it gave occasion to the putting down the Power of the *Decemviri*, of whom *Appius* was one.' A tamer version by Sir John Beaumont (1583–1627), in *Poems* (London, 1629), reads: '*Virginia* her sweet feature would forsake / And *Rutila*es crook'd backe would gladly take' (*Juvenal. Sat. 10*, 411–12). Henry Higden, *A Modern Essay on the Tenth Satyr of Juvenal* (London, 1687), apes the satiric style of Butler:

*Virginia's chance may well confute you;
Good luck don't always wait on beauty:
Th'unhappy Fair's in worse estate,
Than a Crump rich and fortunate* (655–58).

cromp-backt monster' (sig. B5, 5).⁶³ Barksted seems to agree with Chaucer's Host that 'Hire beautee was hire deth, I dar wel sayn' (*The Canterbury Tales*, VI [C] 297), for he mentions her fatal beauty several times. It is the cause of Appius' infatuation: he even tries at one point to induce Numitorius to act as 'pandor' (sig. 7v, 6)—although Barksted insists six times, 'Who sayes that Appius loues Virginia, lies' (sig. B5, 24; sig. B6, 8; sig. B6, 18; sig. B6v, 26; sig. B7, 28; sig. B8, 4).⁶⁴ In the tearful anguish of steeling himself to kill her, Virginius cries,

Looke in her face, how sai'st? is she not faire?
Yes, too too faire, I would she were not so,
Her beautie is the cause of all my woe
(sig. C5v, 6–8).

This in spite of galloping anorexia, from which she has already been wasting away during the brief period between her arrest and his return from the battlefield. As a result she

Now looks like death, she's nought but skin & bone
Her meate and sleep she doth forgoe, and why?
Because she will not liue, but faine would dy
(sig. C2, 26–28).

⁶³ W.B[arksted?], *That Which Seemes Best is Worst. Exprest in a Paraphrastical Transcript of Iuuenals Tenth Satyre. Together with the Tragicall Narration of Virginias Death Interserted* (London, 1617).

⁶⁴ An early reader, the prolific Richard Brathwait (1588?–1673)—on whom see Matthew Wilson Black, *Richard Brathwait, an Account of his Life and Works* (Philadelphia, PA, 1928)—recalled the line in *The honest ghost, or a voice from the vault* (London, 1658):

Appius has silent tongue, but speaking eyes
Yet who saith Appius loves Virginia lyes
(‘The Judiciall Ape’, 76–77).

One who said so was Capt. Walter Scot (1614?–1694?), in *A True History of Several Honourable Families of the Right Honourable Name of Scot* (Edinburgh, 1688), pp. 122–23:

A Roman Appius did in Goal abide
For love of fair Virginia, where he dyed

—but the lines occur in a passage plagiarized from John Taylor (The Water-Poet, 1580–1653), *A Whore*, 295–96, in *All the Workes of Iohn Taylor the water-poet* (London, 1630).

After her death the populace lament, blame Appius, and conclude that her 'hard fate' is the result of her 'admired face': 'Thy beauty t'was which did thee so commend, / And t'was thy beauty brought thee to thy end' (sig. C6v, 1–2). Barksted's 'interserted' narration ends, appropriately enough, with a discourse on beauty, of which these two lines are a specimen. But if beauty rather than wickedness caused the tragedy, Appius is the less to blame: he could not help falling for Virginia. Barksted offers, in effect, the Host's Tale of Virginia; and Chaucer shows that the Host's view is superficial, for it does not take into account the moral warning at the end of *The Physician's Tale*: forsake sin, for you never know how suddenly God may smite you.

Writing on seventeenth-century versions of the Roman satirists, Kupersmith observes, 'Both as a representation of the tenth satire and as an original poem ... *That Which Seemes Best* is indeed one of the worst'. His subject enables him to pass thankfully over the interpolated poem on Appius and Virginia, merely quoting Brodersen's *bon mot* that it 'might have produced a good script for Bottom to present, if Theseus had rejected Pyramus and Thisbe'.⁶⁵

Certainly Barksted is anything but a poet of the first rank, but he can on occasion express a very moving pathos:

But sad *Virginius* like a man forlorne,
With many Matrons which with him did mourne,
In sordide and neglected weedes doth bring
His lambe-like daughter to the butchering.
(sig. C2v, 21–24)

Virginia is too frightened to speak, but Barksted makes her actions speak louder than words:

The silent girle with feare doth trembling stand,
And still doth eye her fathers busie hand.
She answeres not a word, but sighes and gaspes,
And in her griping armes her father clasps.
Into his bosome she with teares doth flie,

⁶⁵ Kupersmith, *Roman Satirists in Seventeenth-Century England*, 18–23. Kupersmith refers to G.L. Brodersen, 'Seventeenth-century Translations of Juvenal', *Phoenix* 7 (1953): 57–76 (p. 64).

As if, she said, good father, let me die,
 Rather then liue with *Claudius* as his slaue,
 And loose *Icilius* which to me you gaue.
 (sig. C5, 9–16)

The second line (sig. C5, 10) is particularly impressive, but Barksted overdoes his dramatization. A weeping girl who flies into her father's bosom is probably asking for comfort rather than killing. If she had spoken, she might well not have said what Virginius conveniently supposes she meant. Her too articulate actions make the frightened girl a willing accomplice in the murder, and so relieve Virginius of some of the responsibility. But he has already taken his decision: 'Sooner I'll murder her while she is chaste, / Then be the father of a whore at last' (sig. C4, 19–20). Barksted does not mince words. This version of Valerius, more euphemistically rendered by Boccaccio and enfeebled by Lydgate,⁶⁶ makes up in directness what it lacks in tactfulness.

Virginius' intense emotion is represented by the staccato phrases, rhetorical questions, and violent outbursts of his speeches, his rage ranging from banality to colourful exclamation:

Shee's the best daughter father euer had,
 She is so pretty: O I shall be mad.
Appius and *Claudius*, out you stinking goates!
 (sig. C5v, 17–19).

In contrast to Virginius' distraction, Barksted's description of the actual stabbing is perfunctory. Rather than let her 'sate' the 'lust' of the 'letchers', Virginius says,

I'll kill her first; O doe not! but I must.
 And with that word, he snatcheth from the stall,
 The butchers knife, and stabs her therewithall
 (sig. C5v, 22–24).

⁶⁶ Boccaccio has 'Dicar potius volo severus virginis interfector, quam indulgens impudice pater', and Lydgate 'Dempte it bettere to slen hir in clenness, / Than the tirant hir beute sholde oppresse'. See n. 9 above.

Conclusion

If the ghost of Virginia still seeks vengeance, modern critics have tended to exact it by condemning Livy's successors for complicity in Virginius' 'sentence'. Generally, the versions agree with Orosius that Virginius was a 'pius parricida', and with Heywood that he was an 'archchampion of virginity'. Nevertheless, like Titus Andronicus, we are constrained to ask, 'Was it well done of rash Virginius?' Not, we may answer, if taken as a precedent for the patriarchal repression of the feminine so grimly dramatized by Shakespeare in the silencing of Lavinia.⁶⁷

Since Virginia's is a harrowing and barbarous story, and one which, considered rationally, seems hardly plausible, it is pertinent to wonder why it has fascinated so many generations, and in particular why it should have enjoyed so many different kinds of redaction in the Renaissance period.

Later redactors had to attempt to rationalize three main problems. First, why the codifier of the Roman laws should have allowed an insane passion to put his position and career at risk. Second, why Virginius, a military commander who loved his daughter as most versions insist he did, should have been unable to find any alternative to his desperate expedient. Third, why Virginia, in versions where she is allowed to speak, should always encourage her father to kill her, however understandably frightened she may be of the weapon he is to use.

Such questions are scarcely answered by the phrases Livy uses to account for the tragedy: 'scelus Appi, puellae infelicem formam, necessitatem patris' [Appius' crime, the girl's fatal beauty, and her father's compulsion].⁶⁸ Here all blame falls squarely on Appius; he alone

⁶⁷ On the effect of Lavinia's enforced silence, and on Shakespeare's portrayal of the masculine suppression of women, see Gillian Murray Kendall, "Lend me thy hand": Metaphor and Mayhem in *Titus Andronicus*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 299–316, and Douglas E. Green, 'Interpreting "her martyr'd signs": Gender and Tragedy in *Titus Andronicus*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 317–26. Of Lavinia's earlier attempts to communicate, Green remarks, 'Titus confronts its audience with the devastating portrait of a woman's attempt to articulate her experience in a society that ignores and prohibits her self-expression' (p. 325). In the death scene she has become merely an object that facilitates Titus' self-expression.

⁶⁸ Livy, *History of Rome*, Book 3, 48.

is morally at fault. Yet for him to be driven by a passion so intense that he could forget his own just laws argues diminished responsibility. Virginia is portrayed as entirely passive. The men at least are motivated, but she is allowed no point of view, being simply the object of desire or sacrifice, and it is left to later authors to explain why she should accept her death so meekly. Nor does Livy satisfactorily explain why Virginius should feel impelled by so irresistible a necessity. And even if he was, what praise does he deserve?

The work of Anne Wilson,⁶⁹ finding in the recurrent plot-structures of certain folk tales and romances resemblances to dreams which seem to serve the purpose of resolving unconscious mental conflicts, suggests that we may usefully ask whether the irreducible details of this tale represent some more or less universal mindset; if they do, it would help to account for the perennial popularity of so apparently unpalatable a story. Anne Wilson is careful not to claim special privileges for the 'meaning' she discovers in the 'magical narratives' she investigates: other readers using her methods may reach different conclusions. With a similar proviso, we might interpret Livy's story along the following lines. I would also add that this is probably not quite a 'magical narrative' in Anne Wilson's sense, for it seems to lack the 'moves' necessary for the progressive resolution of the conflict the narrative addresses.

One may start with the observation that the story is a family tragedy within a larger political context. But it stresses family, not social, relationships; Appius is a member of this extended family. Next, one must consider whose story this is: with whose consciousness are we to identify? The protagonist in dreams is always the dreamer; in ways that usually seem crazy to the waking mind, events in dreams exorcise terrors or satisfy desires. So considered, Appius cannot be regarded as the protagonist of this story: he is the exorcised terror; he fails to satisfy his desire.

As the wielder of the knife, Virginius is equally or even more terrible, yet he alone fulfils the task he has allocated to himself. As the only effective actor, he must be seen as the hero of his own story. But characters in dreams are often disguised representations of one another. Virginius is commended for doing something arguably

⁶⁹ Anne D. Wilson, *The Magical Quest* (Manchester, 1988); eadem, 'The Critic and the Use of Magic in Narrative', *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 81–94.

worse than Appius attempted; both are aspects, one guilty, the other praiseworthy, of the same person. The conflict within the mind, then, that the story represents involves eliminating guilt and justifying as innocent the preferred course of action. Hence in so many versions Virginia's readiness to commend her father's deed: she relieves the anxiety caused by the possibility that he may really be an Appius.

What, then, is the reason for his anxiety? The story has to do with his responsibilities as a father and with her chastity, which is threatened by his alter ego, Appius. He is bound to protect and preserve the chastity which, as he is guiltily aware, he also desires to violate. The outcome of the story is a way of both calming his fears and attaining his desires: a way of course that would not satisfy the rational mind, but which brings relief on the unconscious level. The stabbing and the bloodshed, lauded as legitimate because thereby Virginius preserves his daughter inviolate from Appius, achieve by a patent symbolic transfer the purpose that cannot be acknowledged.

Virginia is betrothed to Icilius, a curiously ineffective youth, who not only fails to preserve Virginia but in many versions dies, either of a broken heart or at the hands of Appius' lictors. Icilius is another projection of Virginius, this time youthful and entitled to Virginia but unable to secure her, just as Virginius himself is unable to retain her. As a father, Virginius is bound to relinquish his daughter eventually to a husband; by killing her he delays the transfer indefinitely; by killing him he punishes himself for his unacceptable desires—which may in this case include his inability to save her life.

Read like this, on the subrational level that seems to be appropriate to the implausible story as we have it, the action of Virginius becomes intelligible. Fatherhood imposes a burden of possession and protection: he will hold himself responsible for whatever happens to his daughter. He needs to ease the burden while exercising the responsibility: symbolically, stabbing her enables him to do both. Not only must he kill the daughter he loves, but she must assist him in doing so. Only thus can he exorcise his guilty desires and attain the mental relief from tension that is represented by the consequent ending of political disturbance in the state of Rome.

But if such a reading helps to account for the frequent recurrence of the tale at a level of unawareness, the versions discussed in the foregoing pages have to be studied as conscious literary artifacts. Their authors had more reasonable, if not necessarily more acceptable, ways

of justifying their work, attempting, for example, to do so in terms of morality, patriotism, or pathos. But in addition they usually felt constrained to attempt what today would seem hardly possible: to justify Virginius. As a result they appear to be champions of virginity rather than of women. Today the story seems to demand a feminist reinterpretation, for it so well portrays the patriarchal assumption that women should be passive and may be exploited which we have learned, lately but fully, one would hope, to repudiate.

Queen Margaret's Curse on Richard of Gloucester

A modern audience may easily fail to appreciate the strength of Margaret's curse on Richard of Gloucester. Although obviously energetic, it sounds unspecific and abstract after the violent deaths she has invoked upon his companions:

If heaven have any grievous plague in store
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,
O let them keep it till thy sins be ripe,
And then hurl down their indignation
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace.
The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul,
Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv'st,
And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends.
No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,
Unless it be while some tormenting dream
Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils.¹

Margaret's prophetic curses alert the audience to the future course of the drama. Most of those who wronged her in their violent grasping of political power will die violently, as victims of Richard, but her climactic curse on Richard himself seems vaguer: for him she predicts some unimagined disaster, remorse, suspicion and nightmares. It is true that he suffers mental anguish before the battle at Bosworth, and dreams of the ghosts of his victims, but it is Clarence, not he, who has a vision of devils (1.4.58–60). However, it should not be thought that Margaret's curse is restricted to Richard's lifetime; in fact, it prophesies his damnation, and so forms a powerful climax to the curses on her other enemies, which stop short at their physical destruction.

¹ *Richard III*, 1.3.214–24. Quotations from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, The Oxford Shakespeare, Compact Edition (Oxford, 1988).

The words 'while thou liv'st' imply that the preceding lines have been concerned with Richard's death, and even his life is to be tormented by anticipation of the hell to which she has already consigned him (3.1.43–44). It is necessary to realise how fully Margaret's curse is informed by the vivid imagery of damnation popularised during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Antony Hammond remarks, apropos of line 216, that 'Margaret's theology, as usual, is sub-Christian',² and it is true that her speech is utterly devoid of any sign of Christian mercy or forgiveness. Also, the plural pronouns used with 'heaven' suggest that it is some pagan pantheon, rather than the Christian God, which is to strike Richard down as with a Jovian thunderbolt. Nevertheless, the ideas and imagery used are all either Biblical or well attested in mediæval Christian theology.

The terrifying vindictive wish that punishment be delayed to enable the sinner's misdeeds to accumulate and so attract the maximum penalty is reminiscent of Hamlet's words which so dismayed Dr Johnson, when Hamlet refrained from killing Claudius while he was praying in order to ensure his damnation later on.³ For audiences who could be counted on to accept that such considerations mattered, no more powerful demonstration of hatred and the desire for a complete revenge could be given.

Yet the idea is Biblical. In Genesis 15: 13–16 Abraham is told that his descendants will serve a nation yet to be judged, 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' (AV). In Matthew 23: 30–33 Christ Himself bids the Pharisees fill up the measure of their fathers who killed the prophets, since they cannot escape the judgment of hell; and in I Thessalonians 2: 16 Paul explains that the persecutors of Christians are filling up their sins in order to incur the utmost wrath. The implication of these passages is that the offenders have misused or will misuse the time available to them for repentance, only to bring a heavier doom upon themselves. In each case the result is a deserved, and therefore just, divine judgment. But Margaret's imprecation includes the vindictive hope that Richard will be given time to incur

² Antony Hammond (ed.), *King Richard III*, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1981), p. 163, note to line 219.

³ See Harold Jenkins (ed.), *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1982), pp. 513–15 (note to V. iii. 89–95).

as merciless a final judgment as he can possibly deserve.

The astrological image that portrays heaven's indignation as a plague hurled down on the troubler of the poor world's peace is a typically mediæval way of representing God's judgment in action. God uses the planets, now named after Roman gods and accorded the generally baleful characteristics of those discarded deities, to strike those who have incurred His wrath: 'plague' (from Latin *plaga*, a blow) retains its etymological significance in this context. It would be specially appropriate for a troubler of the poor world's peace like Richard, for God hates the violent (Psalm 11: 5) and blesses peacemakers (Matthew 5: 9); Noah's flood was a judgment on violent sinners (Genesis 6: 13), and troublemakers of Israel like Ahab and his family brought wrath on themselves and their people (I Kings 18: 17–18). The last ten lines of the play express Richmond's desire to restore peace to a war-torn England, and the Elizabethans' desire to avoid a return to anarchy.

Shirley Carr Mason has recently pointed out that the worm of conscience alluded to in line 219 is commonplace in Christian discourse.⁴ She quotes relevant extracts from sixteenth-century versions of Chrysostom, which Shakespeare may or may not have known. If a single source is required for so ubiquitous an image, I shall shortly suggest that we look in a work which we may be sure he did read rather closely, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Although the worm of conscience is not a Biblical phrase, the undying worm of Mark 9: 43 (Vulgate, quoting Isaiah 66: 24) was from early times regarded as a reference to the remorseful consciences of the damned. Augustine says that their spirits are in some fashion gnawed by the worm of sorrow ('animus autem rodi quodammodo uerme maeroris'), and that this implies that they are tortured by hopeless remorse ('animus quoque sterili paenitentia crucietur').⁵ Bede's commentary on Mark 9: 43 runs:

in uerme putredinem gehennae sicut in igne ardorem designat
siue uermem dicit seram scelerum paenitudinem quae numquam
in tormentis conscientiam afflictorum mordere cessabit ut ignis
sit poena extrinsecus saeviens uermis dolor interius accusans

⁴ Shirley Carr Mason, 'Queen Margaret's Christian Worm of Conscience', *Notes & Queries* 239, n.s. 41 (1994): 32–33.

⁵ St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 2 vols, Corpus Christiani Series Latina 47–48 (Turnhout, 1955), XLVIII: 774–75 (21.9).

[The worm represents the corruption and the fire the burning intensity of hell, or else the worm represents the fact that sorrow for sins has come too late and will never cease biting the consciences of the sufferers who are being tormented: the fire is pain raging from without while the worm is remorse accusing from within.]⁶

The notion is repeated in the still popular eighteenth-century commentary of Matthew Henry: 'The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the *worm that dieth not*. The wrath of God fastening upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the *fire that is not quenched*.'⁷

Alan of Lille, in a chapter on spiritual joy in his *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, contrasts the delights of a pure conscience in heaven with the horrors of a guilty one in hell: 'O felix purae conscientiae jucunditas! quae vermem interiore excludit.' The inward worm has no access to a clear conscience, but in the case of a guilty one destroys the soul: 'ubi vermis conscientiae mentem assidue demolitur.'⁸ This phrase almost exactly translates Margaret's 'The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul', except of course that Margaret's is not indicative but imprecatory.

But how is the metaphor to be understood? Primarily, no doubt, Shakespeare is more interested in the dramatic force of his concrete depiction of mental torture than in the theology behind the metaphor: but since it is clear that Margaret is referring to the torments of the damned it would be advisable to listen to the views of theologians.

As Alan Bernstein has shown, mediæval theologians were ambivalent about how literally these torments were to be interpreted.⁹ Augustine, in the passage quoted above, is anxious to ensure that a psychological interpretation will not weaken the notion of the reality or severity of the pains of hell. Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) explains that 'the evil person in hell is tormented, even for venial sins, in a

⁶ The Venerable Bede, *In Marci Evangelio expositio*, Corpus Christiani Series Latina 120 (Turnhout, 1960), p. 554 (translation mine).

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume: Genesis to Revelation* (London, 1960), p. 185.

⁸ *Alani de Insulis Doctoris Universalis Opera Omnia*, PL 210, 139 A and C.

⁹ Alan E. Bernstein, 'Esoteric Theology: William of Auvergne on the Fires of Hell and Purgatory', *Speculum* 57 (1982): 509–31.

double way, that is, both by a material punishment and by the worm of conscience'. The problem, however, is to understand how souls can be directly affected by material fires. Alexander of Hales (1186–1243) mentions 'vermis conscientiae et poena actualis' [the worm of conscience and actual pain]¹⁰ as the seventeenth of nineteen consequences of mortal sin that he lists: whether this actual pain is physically distinct from that inflicted by the worm of conscience he hardly makes clear. Bernstein concludes that holders of a psychological or metaphorical interpretation of the pains of hell were reluctant to abandon the notion of literal torment for fear of weakening its deterrent effect on the ignorant.

There seems little question that vernacular popularisation of the idea depended on its being taken literally: *The Pricke of Conscience*, which judging from the number of extant manuscripts must have been one of the most read poems in Middle English as it is one of the least read today, has

ffor with-in þam salle þe worme of conscience frete . . .
 þarfor it es gud, ryght and skylle,
 þat þe worme of conscience with-in
 Ever-mare in helle þam gnaw for þair syn.¹¹

Richard Alkerton, alluding to hell in a sermon preached in 1406, warns 'and the worm of conscience, that is grutching [grumbling, complaining] in her [their] conscience, shal gnawe the soule'.¹² For most of his audience, having seen depictions of the Last Judgment in iconography and church art, to say nothing of mystery plays, the corporality of the soul should hardly be in doubt.

Preachers were saying the same things in the sixteenth century; *OED* quotes, from Brecon's homily *Agaynst Whoredome* (1547): 'The worme, that shall there gnawe the conscience of the dampned, shall neuer dye' (*OED*, s.v. worm, sb, 6b). And Dalila, the prostitute in the morality play *Nice Wanton*, laments

¹⁰ Quoted by Bernstein, 'Esoteric Theology', 523.

¹¹ *The Pricke of Conscience*, ed. R. Morris (London, 1863), lines 7051, 7094–96.

¹² Quoted by G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 552.

The worme of my conscience, that shall neuer dye,
 Accuseth me dayly more and more.
 So oft haue I sinned wilfully
 That I feare to be damned for-euermore.¹³

Here the worm has become a cliché that can refer to the conscience of a living person who still has time to repent; by the eighteenth century it could become a joke, as in Pope's humorous satire 'To Mr. John Moore, Author of the Celebrated Worm-Powder':

That statesmen have the worm, is seen
 By all their winding play;
 Their conscience is a worm within,
 That gnaws them night and day.
Ah Moore! thy skill were well employ'd
 And greater gain would rise,
 If thou couldst make the courtier void
 The worm that never dies!
 (lines 25–32)¹⁴

Chaucer did not share Pope's frivolity when he wrote, in the concluding lines of *The Physician's Tale*,

Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte
 In no degree, ne in which manere wyse;
 The worm of conscience may agryse
 Of wikked lyf ...

(VI.278–81)

As in Margaret's curse, the worm of conscience appears here in a context of divine judgment: a 'plague', or smiting, by God. Marta Powell Harley explains lines 280–81 actively (rather than passively as erroneously by some recent editors), as 'the worm of conscience may terrify on account of wicked life'.¹⁵ It is more significant that these lines

¹³ *Nice Wanton*, ed. John M. Manly, in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama* (New York, 1897), lines 281–84.

¹⁴ *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London, 1963).

¹⁵ Marta Powell Harley, 'Last Things First in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale*: Final Judgement and the Worm of Conscience', *JEGP* 91 (1992): 1–16 (p. 6).

are addressed to a contemporary Christian audience, than that they follow the suicide of the lustful pagan Apius.

A more elaborate account of the pains of hell occurs in *The Parson's Tale*, lines 158–230. Chaucer's source quotes Anselm:

Ful greet angwyssh shul the synful folk have at that tyme; ther shal the stierne and wrothe juge sitte above, and under hym the horrible pit of helle open to destroyen hym that moot biknowen his synnes, whyche synnes openly been shewed biforn God and biforn every creature; and in the left syde mo develes than herte may bithynke, for to harye and draw the synful soules to the peyne of helle; and withinne the hertes of folk shal be the bitynge conscience, and withouteforth shal be the world al brennyng (lines 169–72).

If the worm of conscience is to begnaw Richard's soul, Margaret can be sure that he will also experience, as Anselm says, a vision of innumerable devils. Equally inevitable is the lack of friends that Margaret alludes to:

And forther over, hir myseyse shal been in defaute of freendes. For he nys nat povre that hath good freendes; but there is no frend, for neither God ne no creature shal been freend to hem, and everich of hem shal haten oother with deedly hate (lines 199–200).

Margaret's curse, then, is in essence, if not in language, a collection of commonplaces from the ubiquitous moral discourse of the pains of hell, and derives its power from the torments Richard's soul is to suffer after he has been violently struck down by the indignation of heaven. In the ensuing lines (1.3.225–30), Margaret's curse degenerates *into* abuse, before Richard interrupts with her own name, in an attempt to turn her curse back upon herself. The abuse insists upon his misshapen birth, as 'the son of hell', representing the punishments prophesied in her curse as inevitable from birth: he will merely return where he has always belonged. Remorse he will feel, but like Faustus repentance for him is unthinkable; he does not merely 'play the devil', as he informs the audience he does (line 336), but, in Margaret's view at least, is one:

Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave this world,
Thou cacodemon; there thy kingdom is.

(lines 143–44)

A question arises whether Margaret's curse could be effective in sending him there. Buckingham is sceptical, 'for curses never pass / The lips of those that breathe them in the air' (lines 283–84); Margaret, of course, thinks otherwise, that 'they ascend the sky, / And there awake God's gentle sleeping peace' (lines 285–86).

So touching a plea for so nefarious a purpose may simultaneously evoke sympathy for Margaret's sufferings and revulsion at the vindictiveness of her intentions; she seems to have misapplied Augustine's exhortation that sinners forgetful of Christ should awaken him with their prayers, as the frightened disciples did when He was steeping in the storm-tossed boat.¹⁶

However, since God is just as well as merciful, it was believed, as Lester K. Little observes, that not only hermits or ecclesiastics officially invested with spiritual power but also those with a temporary aura conferred by suffering or age could effectively call down misfortune, including death or destruction, on oppressors who were otherwise beyond their power to punish.¹⁷

Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, for example, a period when juridical institutions functioned poorly, people made use of the liturgical Clamor or Malediction, a litany of curses from Deuteronomy or the Psalms, as a plea for divine justice on malefactors who disturbed the peace. Cursing by book, bell, and candle would include a symbolic extinguishing of candlelight. From thirteenth-century Ely comes a fierce curse on the perpetrators of a range of misdemeanours, including 'those who disturb the peace of the realm' and 'those who have by treachery brought about the death or disinheritance of their superiors or inferiors.' They are to be cursed by God, angels, patriarchs, and all the saints: 'May they remain excommunicated, damned, accursed. As these lamps are extinguished, so may their souls be extinguished in hell with the devil and his angels—unless they repent and come to make worthy penance and restitution.'¹⁸ By the sixteenth century such

¹⁶ Mk 4: 35–41. See, for example, Augustine, sermon 63: 'periclitatur navis, periclitatur cor tuum . . . oblitus es Christum; excita ergo Christum, recordare Christum, evigilet in te Christus' (PL 38, 424–25).

¹⁷ Lester K. Little, 'Cursing', in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Mercia Eliade et al., 16 vols (London, c.1987), IV, 182–85.

¹⁸ Quoted by Edith Rickert, 'Vetus liber archidiaconi Eliensis', in *Chaucer's World*, ed. Clair C. Olson and Martin M. Crow (London and New York, 1948), pp. 393–94..

ecclesiastical imprecations had been attenuated to the Ash Wednesday service of Commination in the Book of Common Prayer.

The mediæval church's official attitude to cursing was enunciated by Aquinas. He argues that malediction, imperative or optative, is legitimate when a judge or ecclesiastic condemns a guilty party, or when it is invoked with the good intention of restoring the guilty or preventing him doing further harm; it is illegitimate when the intention is evil.¹⁹

By these rules Margaret's curses are neither blameless nor without justification. On the one hand John Wilders argues that Margaret, and other characters in Shakespeare's history plays, are not agents of providence so much as examples of persons who portray God in their own imperfect image.²⁰ On the other, nevertheless, it seems that she has some reason to expect that God will turn her maledictory wishes into fulfilled prophecy.

As Keith Thomas writes, 'But the real source of the continuing belief in the efficacy of cursing lay, not in theology but in popular sentiment ... [T]he more justified the curser's anger, the more likely that his imprecation would take effect.' Thomas points out that curses may be regarded as speech-acts used as instruments of justice or revenge by the politically powerless: 'Yet substitute action though it was, the formal imprecation could be a powerful weapon. It exploited the universally held belief in the possibility of divine vengeance upon human evil-doers, and it could strike terror into the hearts of the credulous and the guilty.'²¹

And so it does indeed to the auditors of Margaret's curses. Shakespeare dramatises a variety of reactions. Buckingham doubts the efficacy of curses, but then he can afford to be sceptical, since Margaret is not cursing him. But she makes Hastings's scalp tingle, and frightens Elizabeth into denying guilt, although, as Richard maliciously points

¹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II.ii, Quaestio 76, 'De Maledictione': 'Si enim aliquis imperet vel optet malum alterius in quantum est malum, quasi ipsum malum intendens, sic maledicere utroque modo erit illicitum' [If someone commands or desires evil, as evil, for another, with the intention to do that person evil, such cursing will be unlawful in both ways (i.e. by command and desire)].

²⁰ John Wilders, *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (London, 1978), p. 58.

²¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), pp. 505, 510.

out, the advantages Elizabeth enjoys are hers as a result of Margaret's wrong (1.3.307–08). Rivers thinks Margaret should be locked up. Richard himself is credulous, and takes care not to call down a curse upon himself (lines 316–17). He does not attempt to enforce the terms of Margaret's banishment, because she lacks political power, but he is evidently anxious to deflect the power of her curses. He belittles her spiritual authority, suggesting that the curse York pronounced against her before she killed him was the just cause of her distress, so that 'God, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed' (line 178). Richard then tries to turn her curse on him against herself. Later he pretends to repent (lines 305–06), and hopefully implies that he has sufficiently paid for the wrongs done her in that Edward has scarcely rewarded him for his efforts on his behalf (lines 309–10). All this is hypocrisy intended to deceive those who are to become his victims. 'And thus I clothe my naked villainy', he gloats, 'And seem a saint when most I play the devil' (lines 334 and 336). Belief in the probable efficacy of Margaret's curse has no effect on his villainous behaviour, any more than the prospect of damnation can have on the Vice or a devil in a morality play.

Shakespeare would have recognised a precedent in Chancer's Summoners. The pilgrim Chaucer, unlike the pilgrim Summoner, believes in the efficacy of the archdeacon's curse (*General Prologue*, lines 654–62), while the Summoner in *The Friar's Tale* takes no notice of the widow's curse even with the self-confessed devil beside him. As the widow's heart-felt curse empowers the devil to take the Summoner away with him to hell, so there need be no doubt in the minds of Shakespeare's audience that Margaret's curse effectively predicts Richard's damnation.

The 'Grosse Villanies' of Captain John Brookes

The first English ship to sail within sight of the west coast of Australia, the East India merchant vessel *Trial*, was wrecked off North West Cape on the evening of 25 May 1622. Trial Rocks (20° 16' S., 115° 23' E.) are nine nautical miles west northwest of Monte Bello Islands near North West Cape. A wreck site identified as that of the *Trial* was discovered by divers in 1969, and investigated in 1971.¹ Virtually the only artefacts remaining are some dozen large anchors and six or seven cannon. A cannon raised in 1985 seems to confirm that the wreck was that of a seventeenth-century English ship.²

The Portuguese voyages of Bartholomew Diaz (1487) and Vasco da Gama (1497) opened up the sea route to India. By the early seventeenth century a trade rivalry had developed between the Dutch and English East India Companies.³ In 1620 Captains Fitzherbert and Shilling, fearing the Dutch might restrict watering facilities at the Cape of Good Hope, claimed the entire country for James I.⁴ They raised a cairn of stones in honour of the Cape's first Christian prince, and presented a small flag to the local Khoisan people. Both the Netherlands and England remained indifferent, and eventually it was the Dutch who in 1652 established the first European settlement at the Cape.

¹ Jeremy N. Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck: The Historical Background and Archaeological Analysis of the Wreck of the English East India Company's Ship Trial, Lost off the Coast of Western Australia in 1622*, British Archaeological Reports supplementary series 27 (Oxford, 1977).

² Jeremy N. Green, 'The Survey and Identification of the English East India Company Ship *Trial* (1622)', *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 15.3 (1986): 195–204.

³ On this trade rivalry, see Albert Hyma, *A History of the Dutch in the Far East* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1953), pp. 83–127. For a facsimile reprint of five contemporary essays justifying the English East Indian trade, see *East Indian Trade: Selected Works, 17th Century* (Farnborough, 1968).

⁴ Described by George McCall Theal, *History of South Africa*, 11 vols (Cape Town, 1964), II, 369–71. See also Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 15–16.

Milton's description of the remote return journey from the Indies to the Cape of Good Hope is accurate as well as euphonious:

As when farr off at Sea a Fleet descri'd
 Hangs in the Clouds, by *Æquinoctial* Winds
 Close sailing from *Bengala*, or the Iles
 Of *Ternate* or *Tidore*, whence Merchants bring
 Thir spicie Drugs: they on the trading Flood
 Through the wide *Ethiopian* to the Cape
 Ply stemming nightly toward the Pole.

(*Paradise Lost*, II 636–42)

Trade winds blowing near the equator would carry the ships from India or the spice islands southeast of the Bay of Bengal toward the East African coast, and then the Mozambique current would bring them southward to the Cape of Good Hope. But to attempt the same route on the outward journey, as the early Portuguese navigators did, was both dangerous and uneconomic, for it involved a long tedious battle against contrary winds and currents, while crews sickened and perishable cargo rotted in the subequatorial doldrums. The Dutch discovered that they could save several months by utilizing the westerly gales south of the Cape, where, as Brookes writes, 'the currant setts strong to the eastwards.' Inevitably, some of their ships came unexpectedly upon the west coast of Australia.

Fitzherbert learned of this fast southern route from an over-communicative Dutch skipper who was present when he annexed the Cape. He went south to thirty-eight and a half degrees, and turned northeast when he encountered shoals in the vicinity of Saint Paul Island. It was under the guidance, such as it was, of Fitzherbert's journal that Captain John Brookes attempted the hazardous Dutch route. Never having sailed from the Cape to Jakarta before, he sought help from Captain Bickley, who was then homeward bound from the Indies; but being unable (or unwilling) to pay enough to persuade any of Bickley's mates to return to the Indies with him, Brookes was forced to sail without an experienced navigator on board.

In thirty-nine degrees latitude, Brookes missed Saint Paul Island, and turned northward too late. Seventeenth-century sailors had no reliable means of computing longitude, and Brookes underestimated his progress. (See Figure 1)

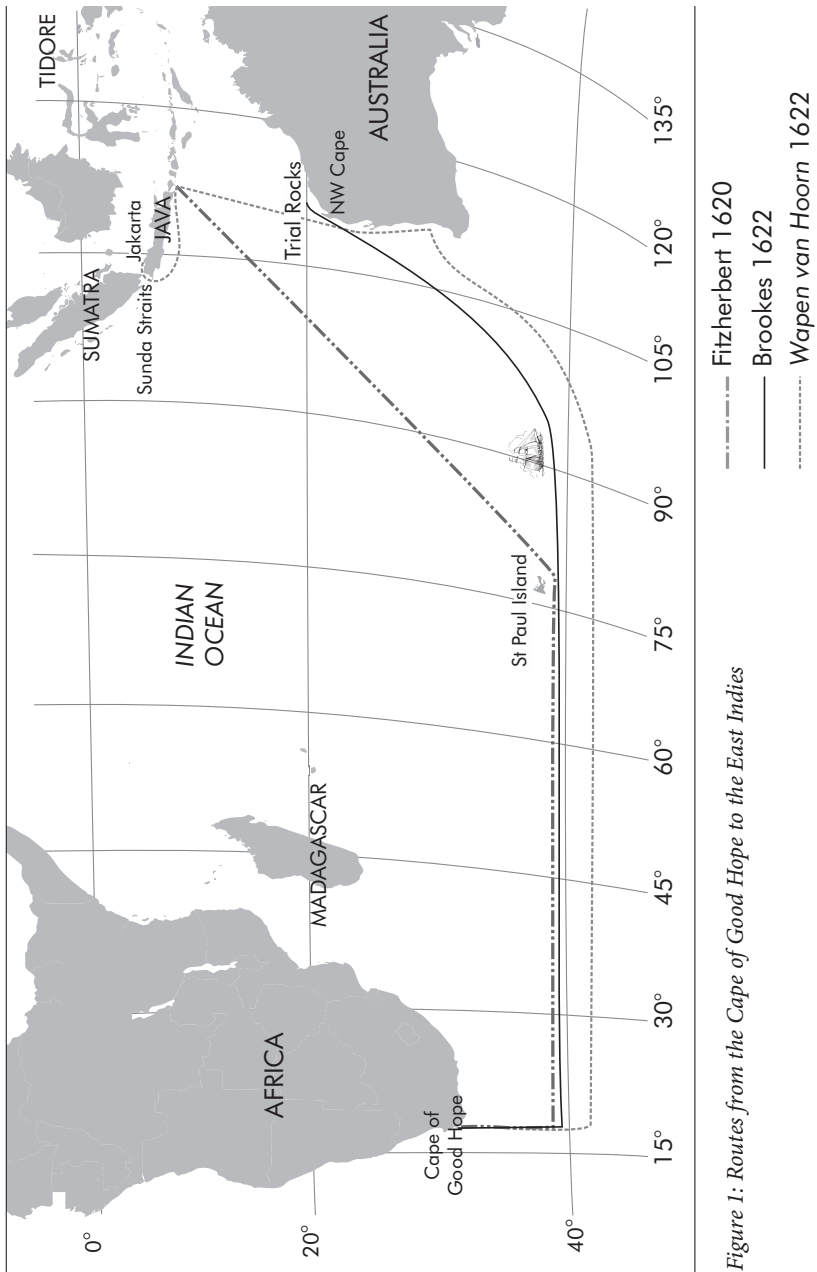


Figure 1: Routes from the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies

When Brookes reached 'longitude 80 degrees nerest' from the Cape of Good Hope, he was in fact seventeen degrees further east than he thought, and mistook the mainland coast of Australia near North West Cape for Fitzherbert's island. So he continued on Fitzherbert's northeastward course, expecting to reach the straits of Sunda: but they lay in a northwesterly direction, and the *Trial* split on an uncharted reef. [See Figure 1.] Fitzherbert, he claimed, must have narrowly missed the same danger, and for emphasis he cited the case of the *Wapen van Hoorn*, although her difficulties occurred much farther south. She braved the Roaring Forties in forty-two degrees latitude, and was nearly blown on shore close to modern Perth. 'This remote passidge the Dutch generall doth not like, such ouer falles, weeds, & riplins which I & this Dutchman haue passed,' Brookes comments feelingly.

Forty-six survivors, about a third of the ship's complement, reached Jakarta, from where Brookes and probably Thomas Bright, the English East India Company's factor, wrote the disparate accounts that are edited below.⁵ Brief extracts from these letters are transcribed, not always reliably, in articles by Ida Lee and Jeremy N. Green.⁶ Ida Lee's interest is geographical, Green's historical and archeological; mine, in what follows, is chiefly literary.

Brookes's letter is a clear, orderly, factual report; but in order to exculpate himself he falsified the position of the rocks by claiming that the Dutch charts were wrong: 'this iland lieth falce in his longitud 200 leagues'. As a result, Trial Rocks were not identified until the nineteenth century. Green decided that 'Brookes' story is completely consistent, but entirely false.'⁷

That, however, does not make him the consummate villain the author of the other letter would have his correspondent, Mr Andrew Elam, believe Brookes to be. This letter is as muddled, disorderly, and subjective as Brookes's is the opposite. It seems to have reached some sort of conclusion when it breaks off in the middle of a line at the foot of the fourth page, but is unsigned, as we have it, and there may once

⁵ The originals are in the India Office Records, 'Original Correspondence' vol. 9, nos. 1072 and 1070, respectively.

⁶ Ida Lee, 'The First Sighting of Australia by the English', *The Geographical Journal* 83 (1934): 317–21; and Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 18–22.

⁷ Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 21.

have been more. Lee and Green assume that Thomas Bright was the author, as the supercargo who had charge of the longboat—though the letter writer did not 'professe marriners Art', and apparently had no say in the lowering and departure of the boat.

There seems no reason to doubt that Brookes's letter is autograph, and Bright's holograph. That is to say, Brookes's, though possibly a fair copy, was surely written and signed by him; Bright's, for whatever reason, is not signed, but bears every indication of being a first draft, set down, therefore, by the author as he composed it. As might be expected, Brookes's penmanship is much more skilful and handsome, Bright's being untidier, with letters of varying thickness and contrary slopes. His style, however, is yet wilder than his handwriting. Editing his discrete phrases into something approximating sentences makes one sympathize with Shakespeare's Peter Quince, who got all his stops wrong. Some passages remain almost bafflingly obscure. Bright cheerfully omits verbs, subjects, and connectives, either unaware that his meaning would not be readily apparent to his reader, or too emotionally upset by his bitter dislike for his captain to care about clarity of expression.

Bright begins and ends with the shipwreck, jumbling together events that occurred before and afterwards. He throws out his complaints in the order in which they come to mind. One of the first, that Brookes deserted him like a Judas as he turned his back to go into the great cabin, inadvertently matches the disclosure at the end—that the boat he was in left his friend Jackson behind as he and the fellow looking after Bright's valuables made their last fatal foray into the great cabin. Brookes explains his hurried departure, but readers may judge for themselves whether his desertion was deliberately perfidious and Bright's merely accidental. Brookes was no friend of Bright's and Jackson's, yet they fully expected him to take them with him in the skiff, when it must have been obvious that most of those on board had no hope of getting off the ship. Kempe and Danby, accused as dishonest assistants of his, were allocated to the longboat, and if Edward Brocke in the skiff was related to the boy Henry Brock in the longboat, it seems that Brookes's claim that he took what care he could of both boats is more reasonable than Bright's charge that he was interested only in escaping with the Company's money in the skiff.

Of the journey to Java we hear enough from Brookes, and too little, at greater length, from Bright. The skiff, usually a third full of water,

had to be rowed a long way by ten persons (some of whom almost certainly were above rowing) on plenty of alcohol and an average of four pounds of bread per person for a fortnight. Brookes's picture of their 'great distresse' is not detailed, but succinct. But an explicit word or two from Bright would have been more interesting than a promise to leave to 'processe of tyme' his account of the fitting of the boat during those seven days on the island—the first English ever in Australia, but petty jealousies on board a doomed vessel concerned him more nearly!—and the other days spent cruising about the area where the ship foundered. Why did the hungry sailors spend so long on an inadequately watered, uninhabited island, or were they stocking up with fish and kangaroos? Defoe's detailed attention to the way Crusoe survives in a paradise where money does not count is not anticipated by Bright, whose major concern, once back in civilization, is his missing seventy pieces of eight.

The charge against Brookes of most interest to historians, that he falsified his position, is certainly justified, as the survivors, including Bright, seem to have realized, when rowing north brought them to the east of Java instead of to Sumatra: but Bright was not especially interested in blaming Brookes for the disaster. 'Had itt pleased God,' they would have 'gone clere of all.' Navigational incompetence was only another of this smooth-tongued captain's shortcomings.

Bright guessed, but could hardly have known unless he had written some of them himself, that the letters Brookes read and then discarded as too wet to be read contained matter to his disadvantage. Such conduct was only to be expected of a man so devious as to concoct not one but several plans, worthy of Chesterton's Flambeau himself, to ensure that Bright, 'for want of being a knave', should suffer and endure much wrong.

Apparently Brookes was in some way responsible for the gunner and boatswain planning to 'speek' certain guns, and then to swear that the mate and carpenter had done it at the instigation of Bright and Jackson. (David Arnold, mate, and John Baylle, carpenter, survived, but the fate of gunner and boatswain is unknown, since Bright does not name them.) Fortunately the gunner, whether caught out or consciencestricken, confessed, for if he had brazened it out Brookes admitted that he would have punished (flogged? put on short rations?) the supposed instigators most severely. Quite what the crime was is not apparent, since fastening the guns to stop them moving when

the ship rolled was a necessary precaution, and spiking them (with ragged nails in the touch-hole to render them unserviceable)⁸ would have been a peculiarly pointless prank, but it is hard to believe that Brookes had so little reason for his warning. It is even harder to accept Bright's claim that Brookes was so keen to pin some misdemeanour on him and Jackson that he was prepared to suborn false witnesses to testify that they had feloniously planned a punishable speaking. At all events, Bright and Jackson were not punished, whether the guns were actually speeked or not. Nevertheless, Bright offers this incident as a particularly 'odious' specimen of Brookes's 'grosse villanies'. Moreover, he hints darkly (and with suspicious vagueness) that he could enumerate many more such villainies, if he were not afraid that his correspondent would find them wearisome.

They must, after all, pale into insignificance beside the lengths Brookes went to in order to relieve Bright of custody of the Company's money. Knowing that Jackson had invested most of his money in the commodities he intended to trade with in the Indies, Brookes encouraged Andrew Fisher to pester Jackson to pay Fisher twenty pounds that Jackson owed him, so that Jackson would have to borrow from Bright, and Bright could then be shown to be an inefficient custodian of the Company's money. Bright's syntax is less than luminous, but apparently Brookes instructed Mr. Cletherow and Mr Man (evidently the Edward Man who survived in the longboat) to take charge of a hundred pounds belonging to the Company, which they threatened to seize by force when Bright objected. So Bright yielded, and Brookes, 'fayling of his desire, seemed much displeased': an astounding conclusion, but his desire, believe it or not, was to find the money short by fourteen pounds which Bright had lent Jackson. Judging by what he consigned to the fellow better able to shift than he after the shipwreck, Bright had no need to dip into the Company's funds in order to come to the rescue of his friend. Thus, he easily foiled what he represents as Brookes's nefarious plot to disgrace him.

Conrad, one feels, or Somerset Maugham would have been pleased to imagine such a scenario; but they would probably have wished their readers to conclude that Brookes was motivated not by malice toward Bright but rather by anxiety over Jackson's improvidence. Bright lets slip a clue: Kempe's hostility to Jackson, which had lasted since they

⁸ See *OED*, s.v. 'speek,' and s.v. 'spike,' v'.

left Plymouth, had influenced Brookes, who was still denouncing Jackson in Jakarta, after he had 'left his life' in the shipwreck. Why Jackson made enemies is not clear, but he does seem to have been good at getting into debt: it was no more than policy to ensure that Bright's friendship did not prove costly to the Company. Brookes gave Bright his receipt for the Company's hundred pounds, that is, the five hundred pieces of eight Cletherow and Man had forced Bright to surrender, and later acknowledged receiving the money from him: he could not deny it, since two of the witnesses, the otherwise dishonest Kempe and Danby, survived and could testify. Brookes also mentions in his report how he tried to save the money ('your worships' 500 pieces') with other valuables in the longboat, though Bright implies that Brookes kept it with him, since he did not reach Java destitute.

Or was Bright's request to be repaid fourteen pounds from Jackson's two hundred pound venture in the second joint stock based on a desperate fiction? After all, Brookes found the Company's five hundred pieces intact. Admittedly, the shipwreck cost Bright dear, but he does not seem to have been as destitute as he pretends. He had several hours to get into something more substantial than the linen suit in which he started from his bed, and he recovered some of his pillaged belongings. He may have hoped by complaints against Brookes to win sympathy and compensation. And his friend Jackson who would have been rich was dead. He says John Norden could corroborate that he lent Jackson those seventy royals; but whether the Company invited Norden to testify does not appear. One may doubt it.

The very scope and wildness of Bright's accusations possibly did more to exonerate Brookes and to make Bright's 'laments disagreeing' to Mr Elam and Mr Lanman than he anticipated. Though not always truthful, Brookes was clearly a more honest man than Bright maintained. It may well be that, as Brookes says, the Company's valuables went overboard during the dissension at the loading of the longboat (the wonder is that anything got in, with so many lives at stake), and are somewhere among the coral down below, though washed well away from the wreck site now, with the commodities George Jackson was 'wonderfull prouident in saueing', to say nothing of Mr Jackson himself, and the man he called from the bridge into the cabin as the longboat was leaving, and Mr Johnson the purser, and Andrew Fisher and Mr Cletherow, and John Willobie who helped load the boat, and numerous unnamed others: what happened to them, says the Dutch report, is known to God.

Letters relating to the Shipwreck of the *Triall* in 1622, en route from the Cape of Good Hope to Java⁹

I. Brookes's Letter

John Brookes master of the Triall
(cast awaie). dated at Jaquatra
25 August 1622¹⁰

To the honourable and Right worshipful
the Governor and Committies
of the English East India
Companie all att Croasby
Houes¹¹
yn
London

Honourable & right worshipfull,

May it please you to vnderstand that; at the Cape of Bona Sperance, I fell with one of your worships' Shipps, the Charles, the commander Captaine John Bickle,¹² of whom I aduised your worships of all what had passed fformely in my voyadge, & also referr my selfe vnto his relation. I would faine haue had one of his maisters matts, Mr Carter, or anie other, in regard I my selfe, nor anie of my maitts, had runn this daingerous course, nor euer bene from the Cape to Jacatra, & Captaine Bickle was willing, but none of his matts would goe backe with me, in regard neyther he nor my selfe could inlarge ther wadgs.

⁹I am grateful to the late Mr Peter Philip for inviting me to transcribe the following letters, from photocopies made available to him by the India Office when he was planning a book on early maritime links between the Cape of Good Hope and Australia. Punctuation, and the paragraphing of Brookes's letter, are editorial; Bright's paragraph breaks possibly mean something, and have not been tampered with. A slash [/] indicates a page break in his letter; Brookes uses catchwords. Abbreviations have been silently expanded, and deletions in Bright's letter enclosed in pointed brackets.

¹⁰ Note in a different (italic) hand.

¹¹ In 1621 the Company had moved their office from Fenchurch Street to Crosby House in Bishopsgate, where they remained until 1638, when the earl of Northampton raised the rent too high.

¹² Bickley's first voyage to the East Indies was in 1613 in the *Gift*.

I departing from the Cape of Good Hope the 19th daye of Marche & ranne into the latitude of 39 degrees according to Captaine ffitzharbert his jurnall, which your worships gaue me order to followe, & also Captaine Bickley gaue me counsell to doe the like, the 6th daye of May I sawe land, being in the latitude of 22 degrees, which land had bene formerlie seene by the Flemings, & is layd in the cardes¹³ N.E. by N. & South E. by S. from the Straits of Sunday. This iland¹⁴ is 18 leagues long, & we were all verie joyfull at the sight therof, but finding 8 degrees variation, found by our judgment & Captaine ffitzharbert's jurnall that he went 10 leagues to the southwards of this iland, & being in this variation he stered N.E. & by E. & fell with the East end of Jaua.¹⁵ I tooke the opinion & counsell of my people; when the winde came faire but hauing contrarie wind betwene the N. & the N.E. which held vs from the 5th daye Maie vntill the 24th of the same month, the great Iland with his 3 smale ilands at the Easter end bearing S.E. 20 leags of vs, the winde vearing to the S.E. & faire weather, we steared N.E., thinking to falle with the wester part of Jaua.

The 25th daye at 11 of the clocke in the night, faire weather & smoth water, the Shipp strocke. I ran to the poope & houe the leade, & found but 3 ffaudome water. 60 men being vpon the decke, 5 of them would not beleaue that she strooke, I criinge to them to beare vp & tacke to the westwards; they did ther beste, but the rocks being sharpe, the shipp was presentlie full of

¹³ Because of inaccurate means of measuring distance, charts put the coast of western Australia much too far westward. Even so, Brookes sailed too far east before turning northeast.

¹⁴ Actually the coastline between North West Cape and Point Cloates, easily mistaken for an island.

¹⁵ Fitzherbert will have been rounding St Paul Island in the mid-South Indian Ocean: 38° 43' S., 77° 30' E. His sighting of shoals near this island is described in a letter quoted by Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 16; but he may not have made their position so clear in his journal, otherwise Brookes, who at least knew his own latitude, must have realized he was nowhere near the same place. Longitude was always problematic. Brookes need not be lying when he says both he and Fitzherbert found the same variation (the compass deviation from true north), given the difficulty of knowing where true north was. A century later a variation of 18° W. was recorded at St Paul Island, and only 2° 30' W. in the area where the *Tnal* foundered (Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 30), but until John Harrison invented a chronometer accurate enough to enable longitude to be determined by comparing home and local time (1735; an improved model was successfully tested on a long voyage in 1762), 'experience of variation', as Brookes says below, 'is the greatest helpe to anie man'. It was not much help to him: he misunderstood Fitzherbert's latitude, miscalculated his own variation, and mistook a remote peninsula for the island Fitzherbert had seen.

watter, for the most part of these rocks lie 2 fadom vnder watter. It stricke my men in such a mayze when I said the shipp strooke, & they could se neyther breach, land, rocks, chainge of watter nor signe of dainger.¹⁶ The shipp sitting a good while after that I had houe the lead; whilst I had brought my sayles abackstaies before she strocke the second strocke, the wind began suddenly to ffreshe & blowe. I strooke doune my sayles & gott out my skiffe & bid them sound about the shipp. They found sharpe suncken rockes 1/2 a cable lenth astarne; noe ground. These rocks are steepe-to. So I made all the waye I could to gett out my long boate, & by two of the clocke I had gotten her out & hanged her in the tackles ouer the side. Soe, seing the shipp full of watter & the winde to increase, made all the meanes I could to saue my life, & as manie of my companie as I could.

I put your worships' 500 Pieces & the Gould spangles with my owne money in a case of bottles & sent it by John Norden, William Hicckie [*catchwords*: & John Willobie] and John Willobie to put in the long boate; my man with my commission & letters, my merchants & purser did the like, euerie man to saue what they could. These men carried these things to the boate starne, & being in discention would not suffer the boate to be lowerd into the watter, nor suffer the things to be put into hir, but what one put in the other throwe ouer bord, so that neyther money, commission, nor anie account or letters, eyther of your worships or anie other mens, were sau'd. My people crying out, out of the skiffe, vnto me to come in & saue my life, the shipp begining to open I ran doune by a rope ouer the pup, & we weare like to haue brocken the skiffe in taking me in, being at 3 of the clocke in the morning. The boate put of at 4 in the morning, & halfe an hower after, the fore part of the shipp fell in peeces. 10 men were sau'd in the skiffe & 36 in the long boate: 46 persons, men & boyes, of 139 are sau'd,¹⁷ as per ther names heer vnto subscribed doth appeare.

I came awaie, with my boate, for the Straights. My boate stood backe for the great iland,¹⁸ which is 7 leags to the S.E. wards of the place where

¹⁶ The coral reef and the anchors and cannon that remain from the wreck, are described by Green.

¹⁷ 143 left Plymouth on 4 September 1621; 4 may therefore have died during the voyage. But Bright's tally is only 138; whereas the Dutch report says, 'the 46 aforesaid persons left the ship with the skiff and the boat separately in disorder, leaving 97 persons there': quoted by Andrew Sharp, *The Discovery of Australia* (Oxford 1963), p. 43. See also Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 27.

¹⁸ Barrow Island; see n. 23 below, and Figure 2.

the shipp was cast awaie. The boate found a little lowe iland. These rocks & ilands, with ther latituds, longituds, variations, courses & distances, I haue giuen 2 drafts to your worships' president, which his worshipful doth intend to send you per the first conueyance.¹⁹

I fell with the Easter end of Jaua the 8th daie of Jun, 1622, at Bantam the 21 ditto, & at Jaccatra the 25th of the same month. I had one barrecoe of watter, 2 casses of bottles, 2 runlets of aquauite, 40 lbs bread, & for 4 daies together so much raine & sea that our skiffe was allwaies 1/3 full of watter. The boate had 2 runletts wine, 6 barrecoes of watter, 2 casses of bottles, & 1 cwt of bread. Our distresse was great, as the worshipful the president²⁰ & his counsell, hauing examined my selfe & all my people that were saued, hath trulie bene informed.

This iland lieth falce in his longitud 200 leagues, which I haue found by wofull experience, as also these suncken rockes, as by my draught will appeare vnto your worships. A Dutch shipp, the *Armes of Horne*,²¹ which came some month after me, fell with the land in 31 degrees 10 minuts at 3 of the clocke in the morning, & weere in the breach of the shore in 6 ffadome. The shipp stayed, & the winde blewe in at E.S.E. right vpon the shore. They came to an anchor in 15 ffadom, & wound vp in 6, & ridde 3 daies at the mercie of God. The which land, being vpon the maine, I haue also put doune in your worships' draught. He ran into 42 degrees latitude: this remote passidge the Dutch generall doth not like, such ouer falles, weeds, & riplins which I & this Dutchman haue passed, & 2 or 3 other Dutch shippes which came last, & noe ground at 100 faudoms, but in stormie weather in the night in some places the sea is all in a breach. I pray God blesse all your worships' shippes that are to com aftar me by Captaine ffitzharbart's jurnall, for he missed this dainger narrowlie. If I were worthy to giue your worships aduise, not anie shipp should passe 37 degrees, & so to rune 1000 leagues in that paralell; from thence to steere right with the Straits of Sundaye. Let anie man presume vpon that when he finds 10 degrees variacion, hauing runne 1300 leagues,

¹⁹ The charts Brookes made for President Brockendon do not seem to be extant.

²⁰ President Brockendon, who returned with Brookes in the *Moone* in 1625, but died on the voyage and was buried at the Cape. Brookes subsequently wrecked the *Moone* off Dover and was imprisoned, but eventually acquitted. He blamed the violence of the weather, the foulness of the ship, and the rottenness of the sails and tackle. Brookes's son was even paid his £10 wages, although he had been caught stealing diamonds out of Brockendon's chest after the wreck: Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 23–25.

²¹ *'t Wapen van Hoorn* reached Batavia (Jakarta) on 22 July 1622.

[*catchwords*: being in the] Being in the latitud of 18 or 19, longitud 74 or 75,²² the Straights of Sunday will beare of him N.N.E. The currant setts strong to the eastwards. Allwaies in that course experience of variation is the greatest helpe to anie man.

Thus ceasing, giueing God praise for his great mercies to me, my child, & these men that are presarued from these great daingers which we haue passed, & also in trubling your worships anie further with this ill, vncomfortable, & vnwelcome news, I rest:

Saued in the skiffe:

1. John Broock
2. John Barnes
3. Dauid Arnold
4. Michael Sims
5. Edward Brocke
6. Thomas Ceead
7. Stewart Prest
8. Lewis Elidon
9. Lanclott Barnett
10. John Broocke the
master his Sonne

In the long boate saued:

1. Richard Larter
2. John Norden
3. John Gunter
4. John Baylle
5. Edward Burditt

6. William Daus

7. Andrew Derrie
8. Jeames Leeg
9. Robin Hollicum
10. Jeames Saie
11. George Kempe
12. Thomas Bright
13. William Danbyht
14. Edward Man
15. John Williams
16. Daniall Williamson
17. ffredrick Clarke
18. Thomas Doues
19. William Galle
20. Edward Tompson
21. Robin Stanburie
22. John Armestrong
23. William Tiller
24. Nathan Wells

25. Anthony Atkinson

26. Henry Brock: boy
27. Edward Powell: boy
28. Robin Cuningam
29. John Gaye
30. Thomas Boyle
31. William Hickie
32. Humphrey Sweet
33. John Browne
34. Garret ffranson
35. John Baptista
36. John Peterson

ffrom Battavia the
25th daye of August, 1622

Your worships' Servant,
most humboll at command,
John Broocks.

²² 93° E.: Brookes measures from the Cape of Good Hope, 18° E. His estimate here is only a little short; but wrong by a good 17° at the wreck site, assuming that he is responsible for Bright's placing it in 'longitude 80° nerest' (i.e., 98° E.).

II. Bright's Letter

Mr Andrew Elam

Laus deo Jacatraye. August the 22th 1622.

Sir,

My last per shippe Charles from Cape Bona Esperansa bearing date the 14th March. Our depature from thence 19th ditto with a faire wind, and so continued for the most partt till this dissasterous and untymly misfortune happned: May the 25th about x of clock night fayre weather and little wind in lattitud 20°-3' longitude 80° nerest, 300 leagues from the straights of Sundaye, shipp Tryall, by carelesnes for want of looking out struck uppon the rocks as soone or beffore any Breach disscouered, billidged hur hould full of watter in an instant. The skiffe hoysted out, the master Electing his crew and fellowe and consorts, prouiding prouisions and safeing his things, bearing mr Jackkson and my selfe with fayre words promising us faythfully to take us a long, butt lyke a Judasse, turning my back into greatt cabbin, lowerd himselfe pryually into the skiffe, only with 9 men and his Boye, stood for the straights of Sunday that instant, without care and seeinge the lamentable end of shipp, the tyme shee splitt, or respect of any mans life. The long Boate with greatt difficultie wee gott out being 128 soules left to Gods mercye, wherof 36 saued. Wee keeping till day some 1/4 mile or more from the shipp, ther uppon a sudayne shee splitte in many plaices, the sea then so high wee durst not for feare of indaingering our selues aduentur to them, and for thatt wee so slenderly prouided with prouisions that imposcable without Gods greatt prouidence we should Aryue att our wished port. Also uppon sight of day wee espied a Iland bearing south East some fiue leagues att most from us, by all likelyhoods. Land could not be farr by the fowle and weeds all that day driuinge from the Iland and rocks, to which sayd Iland wee went, stayed theron seauen dayes for the fittinge of our Boate and supplie of watter, haueing when wee left the shipp but one Barecoe full, the rest emptie, being none but what the lord send per rayne, not any inhabitants theron. Wee trauelled ouer all the Iland seeing nothing but Ilands, some small some greatt, breaches and shoules euery way as farr as we could see, very daingerous on the N W. syde. To the S. W. of this Ile ther lyeth a greatt Iland neere nyne leags <long> off.²³ The full descripcion of these Ilands I would haue sent you, butt many things I want to laye them downe truly as I could wish,

²³ If these directions are accurate, it appears the longboat reached one of the small Monte Bello islands to the south-east of the wreck site, and could see the much larger Barrow Island to the south-west. See Figure 2.

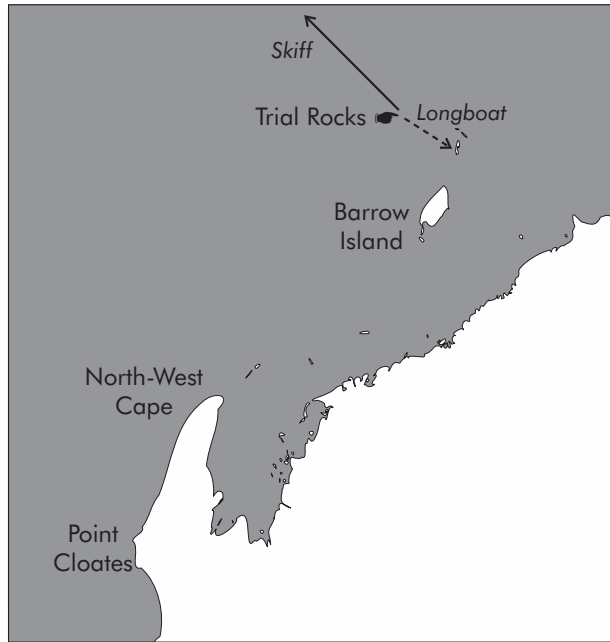


Figure 2: The wreck of the Trial, showing the directions taken by Brookes in the skiff and Bright in the longboat

reffer you to processe of tyme. / This from mee, howsoever I am not one that professe marriners Art or any skill therin worth the notting, yett thus much I understand by relation of Journalls, and platts: that these Ilands weer neuer discovered by any although he would excuse itt to say he followed directly Captin Humphrie Fitz harbotts Journall. Had our Journalls bin compared with his, should haue found Broocks 400 leagus in the lattitud of 38° to 34° more to the Eastward than he or euer shippe was againe: wee allwayes feared the shipp to be beyound his recknoing <well nigh uppon 120 leagus>. The wind that present wee strucke SSE. he directing his course north East and north East and be East when the straights of Sunday bore north westerly of us; had itt pleased God our course but 2 points or one point more notherly, we had gone clere of all. June the 7th steered for the place we lefte our shipp, sayling betwixt the Breches had 10 fathom, nothing wee could see of shipp or any thing apertayning therto. 26th ditto Broocks with the skiffe Aryued heere, 28th ditto our long Boate, for which the lord make us thankfull. Itt dyd seeme straing to mee that Broock had so cunningly Excused the neglect

of the Companys letters, spangls, and monys; the monys he confessed to the president and mr Brokendon to haue Received of mee. He for a matter nigh 2 howers nothing butt conuaying from his cabin to his <chest> skiffe, to my knowledg both letters, monys, spangls were layd in his trunke, whereof many of this things, apparell, and other trifels he haue by him this present, per report of of²⁴ his matts that came a long with him in the skiffe. The Blacke Boxe wherin the Companys letters weere, weer seen, presently after thay left the shippe; also per his owne confesion letters my selfe conuayed into the skiffe, some for the President and some for mr Brokendon, and others were heaued ouer board, his excuse herein answering thay weer wett, and yett not so wett butt he perused the contents therof, which he well knew would haue donne him noe good if he had honestly deliuered them.

Amongst the many unkind and uild practises of Broocks by his owne deuclish inuencions, his consorts uppon any occasion he could procure to sweare or to be wittneses, although niuer so odiousse apparantly produced. / His cheife consorts, Gunor and Bottswaine, should haue putt in practise to haue speeked 6 or 8 greatt peeces, thay to haue taken ther othes Arnold master mate and Balley carpenter had Accted itt, and instigated on by mr Jacckson and my selfe. This confessed per the Gunor and was recorded, in the pursers Booke, the master nott free, butt haue had a hand therin: per his owne speeches to mr Jacckson and my selfe, if this had bin donne, and thay ther othes taken, he would haue punist us in the higest degree. The fact was so odious I giue you but a touch of this and many more grosse villanies, because I know itt dissagreing to you heer of laments. For the succession Boxe wherin he so wronged us, ther can be nothing proued therin, God preuenting many by this untymly crosse who haue left ther liues, butt soon he dyd break it oppen, after that, he striueing per all surest mens to forge his villanies uppon us. My good ffrind George Jacckson being wonderfull prouident in saueing his goods left his life, to my great greife. For any thing heere of his that is come to knowledg, only a sword sould for his use I am Ignorant, Broocks not shewing the partt of an honest man, he being deceassed, ceaseth not but with bitter rayling agaynst him, by his fflattering tounge and desembling hart worketh pryuatly to doe as much mischeeif as in him lyeth. Per his hiprocritical shew of honesty, haue gayned fauour, butt the Lord deliuer mee from such a caytiffe for euer going to sea with him, or the lyke. Without greatt repentance, fearfull I am that God will not giue a Blessing to that he take in hand. Mr Kempe and Danby hath proued very dishonest in assisting him.

²⁴ The dittography was assisted by a line break after the first 'of'.

The difference betwixt mr Jacksion and Kempe att Plymoth grew strainingly to a greatt heate of malice, he animating the master against mr Jacksion. Soone after I was requested to sett my hand against him, which I saw was dishonest, denied, and for want of being a knaue I haue suffered and Endured much wrong.

Allso I lent mr Jacksion seauenty Pieces of Eight by his receipt, butt with the rest of my things lost. John Norden then being in the greatt cabbín, called in for a wittnes, haue approued Before wittnesse and under his hand to showe that I lent this money to mr Jacksion, besides my good frind. Mr Brooks²⁵ haue some knowledge therof in the lending this money, per whom this Andrew ffisher was instigatt on. The sayd ffisher per / per tesstimoney of many lent mr Jacksion <100> 20 li sterling to be payd 100 Pieces of Eight att Jaccatray or elsewher att demand, mr Jacksion inuesting both his owne and that money in comoditie, which if itt had pleased God to haue sent him hither, he would haue made 3 and 4 of one. Brooks knowing mee to haue the companys money, dyd Earnestly instigate this ffisher to call for his of Jacksion, who had formerly often in Brooks heering reported, he brought little or noe money to sea, but all comoditie. This ffisher wonderfull importuant with him for his money, mr Jacksion, much perplexed, was loth to pawane any thing. For his credit sake intreating mee to lend him seauenty Royals of Eight, presently I performed, offering as much more iff he needed. Not long after, Brooks demanding the Companys monys of mee, I denyed him, being the 100 li mr Cletherow and mr Man order to keepe, who would haue staued my chest: yelded, tooke his receipt in wittnes of mr Jacksion, mr Johnson purser, both dyed, mr Kempe and mr Danby, yett liueing. Uppon the full content of this 500 Pieces the master, fayling of his desire, seemed much displeased, who thought to haue dissgressed mee to my principalls for lending of ther money. Thus haueing made Bould to make so large a relacion, if any offence, craue pardon. These once more are to intreate you to take notise therin, which if ther be any doubt, that I should proue dishonest in demanding that is not Just, speake not, nor make no fforce to doe mee that curtisie with mr Lanman, to whome I pray remember my best loue and kind commendacions, intreating you both if I may stand so farr Bound in your

²⁵ Either this is the only occasion when Bright dignifies Brookes with the title 'Mr', or the sentence should be punctuated 'Besides, my good frind Mr Brooks haue some knowledge therof', the friend being, perhaps, the Edward Brocke who survived in the skiff. In this case, 'per whom' should be taken to introduce not a relative clause, but the object of 'haue knowledge'; and the sentence would mean that Brocke knew who had egged Fisher on.

fauours to helpe mee now, for mr Jaccson himselfe often reported to me to haue 200 li Aduenturd in the Second ioynt stocke. Itt would help my pore and distressed estate, I leauing the shipp only with my linning sute, starting from my Bed, yett some small thinges which others made pillegd for coming to my knowledg, partt are restored mee againe. I had packcd together to the ualue, monye and good comoditie 400, in 500 Pieces of Eight, and giuen to him I durst trust and who could better shift then my selfe, being not well, som 1/2 hower beffore the Boate lowerd downe. I then bein in the Boate, this fellow on the Bridg of the shippe, ready uppon all occasion to leape, mr Jaccson, being uppon the halfe deck, called him for to goo with him into the greatt cabbin; in the meane tyme the Boate lowerd and away thay stood from the shippe.

Conclusion: Economic secularism in the two letters and in the early novel

Generic differences between the two documents result in the paradox that the more literate, Brookes's, is the less interesting from a literary point of view. Brookes's report is directed wholly to the single purpose of excusing the disaster; he shows that in spite of every precaution the shipwreck was inevitable. Literary considerations do not affect the credibility of his argument, which can be checked only by external factors, such as Bright's letter, insofar as it deserves credence, and geographical discoveries made after his time. It is a text for the historian rather than for the literary critic.

Where Brookes's careful report is technical and abstruse, Bright's ill-written complaint, an unrevised outpouring of personal spite, has a novelistic immediacy. It displays elements of the novel, as listed by Ian Watt: simple language, realistic description of persons and places, and a *serious* presentation of the *moral* problems of ordinary *individuals* (italics mine).²⁶ Where Brookes's purpose is single, Bright's is complicated by an inadvertent irony. Overshadowing his text is a meta-text that portrays the author as a disgruntled protagonist who condemns himself by the way his interpretations do not square with the facts he reveals—as if a 'novelist' were writing his letter to demonstrate his own flaws quite as much as the 'villanies' he attributes to John Brookes.

Bright's fascinating social panorama of characters and action in

²⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957; rpt London, 1968), p. 83.

the limited space of shipboard cries out for novelistic expansion, as, say, Somerset Maugham's novel of the sea, *The Narrow Corner*, grew out of a deleted passage in *The Moon and Sixpence*. Questions now beyond the scope of a historian to answer invite fictional explanation. Brookes, in contrast, does not portray characters; he only lists names. Moreover, Brookes universalizes: his report is a directive to the Company warning all ships of the danger of sailing by Fitzherbert's journal as he was instructed to do. Bright's egocentric concern, on the other hand, is with the fancied wrongs and real losses suffered by one ordinary individual, himself.

Watt accounts for the rise of the novel in terms of economic individualism. The problems encountered by ordinary people in their efforts to make good (or goods!) typically provide the material of the novel. Two such problems may be the rival claims of love or of religion. Robinson Crusoe finds more fulfilment in acquiring wealth than in the wife he barely mentions. Bright and Jackson seem to have had similar priorities: Bright expected Jackson to make '3 and 4 of one' out of his investments, if it had pleased God to let him reach Jakarta. Certainly a trading voyage in which no women were involved could be expected to anticipate *Robinson Crusoe* in ignoring any love interest, the drawback of which, as far as trade is concerned, is amusingly illustrated by the fact that Mr Newport, the captain to whom command of the *Trial* had originally been offered, had to withdraw because he was unable 'to satisfy his wife' to allow him to undertake so long a journey.²⁷ If a remark by Robert Burton is to be taken seriously, there were brazen women, though not on this voyage, avaricious enough to be willing to follow rich old merchants to the remotest ends of the Indies: 'Many a young lovely Maid will cast away herself upon an old, doting, decrepit dizzard ... If he be rich, he is the man, a fine man, and a proper man, she'll go to *Jacaktres* or *Tidore* with him!'²⁸

Although the Puritan ethic promoted individualism, religion and the pursuit of worldly wealth are likely to prove incompatible, so that, as Watt finds, economic individualism implies an increasing secularization of the novel. That situation seems well advanced in these letters of 1622, although it would be rash to generalize from the

²⁷ Green, *Australia's Oldest Wreck*, 17.

²⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. A. R. Shilleto, 3 vols (London, 1896), III, 114–115 (3.2.2.3).

lukewarm piety displayed by two individuals. Brookes makes three references to God, Bright seven, all conventional, implying that He is simply a name for the way things are, rather than a deity to be sought, proclaimed, or propitiated. Those who escaped experienced God's mercy, those who did not 'left ther liues' because it did not please Him to forestall what happened. There is no suggestion that the shipwreck was a divine judgment for Brookes's 'villanies', still less for the irreligious acquisitiveness of any of his merchants. Bright accuses Brookes of 'deuelish inuencions', particularly in procuring perjurers, but the adjective seems to have no theological implications.

Especially revealing is the way each writer uses the idea of God's blessing to support their contrary arguments. Brookes writes, 'I pray God blesse all your worships' shippes that are to com aftar me by Captaine ffitzharbart's journall, for he missed this dainger narrowlie.' He is prepared to invoke the name of God to attest to what he must have known was not true, since it was his own navigational error and failure to keep to the journal that were mainly responsible for the shipwreck. Perhaps, however, he had deceived himself as much as he was attempting to deceive his superiors, in palliation of an offence the consequences of which even Bright seems to have regarded as divinely ordained rather than brought about by criminal negligence. Bright, convinced (it seems, for personal reasons) that Brookes did not deserve to have God on his side, asserts that 'Without greatt repentance, fearfull I am that God will not giue a Blessing to that he take in hand.' But his unwillingness to sail with Brookes again is clearly inspired by dislike for the way Brookes treated him on board ship, rather than by fear of divine retribution or even by doubts concerning Brookes's seamanship.

Bright's letter anticipates many of the features of the eighteenth-century novel, but it was to be a full century before fictions displaying those features were thought sufficiently interesting to be offered for public entertainment.

Walter Charleton and the Matron of Ephesus: Chaucerian Parody in the Seventeenth-Century Anti-Feminist Controversy

The occurrence of Chaucerian quotations in two ambiguously anti-feminist narratives, *The Ephesian and Cimmerian Matrons*, is a curiosity which suggests that Chaucer had a reputation in the seventeenth century as a controversial writer about questions relating to women. The passages selected are chiefly from *The Book of the Duchess* and *The Legend of Good Women*, and could be construed as favourable; there are also, however, quotations from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, *The Merchant's Tale* and *The Shipman's Tale* which may hint at a different point of view. Chaucer's authority is used to endorse the authors' satire; the irony that it does not always do so is part of the joke.

Walter Charleton (1619–1707) is best remembered today for arguing that Stonehenge was a Danish coronation site, thanks to Dryden's commendation of him in his verse epistle 'To My Honour'd Friend Dr Charleton' (1663).¹ He deserves better than to have his reputation rest on speculations about Stonehenge that are now known to be absurd. The *DNB* lists some 29 works of his (there are 48 items by or referring to him in the British Library catalogue), and comments, 'In religion he was a high Churchman, in philosophy an epicurean, and in politics one of the last of the old royalists.'² (As the author of a work on the immortality of the soul, he in fact refutes the epicurean doctrine of its corporality in a digression in his *Ephesian Matron*.) He was also a physician and a member of the Royal Society. Dryden's panegyric associates him with the leading scientists of his day.

¹ *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. John Sargeaunt (1910; rpt Oxford, 1952), p. 160.

² 'Walter Charleton', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, 66 vols (London, 1885–1901) X, 116–19.

But in 1659, in more diverting mood, he retold, in Euphuistic prose, Petronius' satire on the Matron of Ephesus,³ a high-born widow who yielded typically but too readily to a common soldier who found her mourning over her husband's coffin in his tomb, and soon put an end to her sorrowing. In an ingenious mixture of satire and defence, Charleton pretends to excuse her on the grounds that sex is natural and that women are particularly prone to it. In 1668 a friend, P.M., Gent., published a somewhat new version of Charleton's text, with a commendatory critique, and a rather more grossly anti-feminist sequel, *The Cimmerian Matron*, translated from the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus (Henri Dupuy, 1574–1646).⁴ Both narratives contain apposite quotations from Chaucer; but those in *The Ephesian Matron* may have been inserted by P.M., since there are none in Charleton's first edition. It is therefore possible that Chaucer's relevance to his satire never occurred to Charleton; he may, on the other hand, have approved or even suggested the insertions for P.M.'s reprint.

Achsa Guibbory, in the introduction to the Augustan Reprint Society's reprint of Charleton's *Ephesian Matron* (without P.M.'s sequel), concentrates on the author's debt to Hobbes's *Human Nature* (1650) for his view of love as an 'imperious Passion' derived from man's animal rather than 'rational' nature. Guibbory castigates this as a 'totally reductive argument' that 'obliterate[s] the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite'.⁵ The resultant anti-feminism that Guibbory sees as merely one aspect of Charleton's satire on human nature in general was gleefully exaggerated by P.M., in a manner that makes it all the more interesting that he should wish to drag in Chaucer, whom Gavin Douglas called 'all women's friend'.

³ Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, ed. Evan T. Sage, rev. Brady B. Gilleland (New York, 1982), pp. 95–98 (111–12).

⁴ Henri Dupuy (Van de Putte), 1574–1646, who Latinized his name as Erycius Puteanus, lived in Italy and died in Louvain. See J.Fr. Michaud *et al.*, *Biographie universelle*, 85 vols (1811–57), XVIII, 322–24: 'Dupuy était un homme d'une vaste lecture, mais de peu de jugement.'

⁵ Achsa Guibbory (introd.), *The Ephesian Matron*, facsimile, Augustan Reprint Society 172–73 (Los Angeles, 1975). The matron's behaviour is only human and natural, but Charleton's critique suggests a contempt for human nature: 'Charleton could just as easily be describing dogs or horses. He has not only dismissed the differences between all kinds of heterosexual love as non-essential; he has obliterated the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite.'

Both stories are amusingly grotesque examples of the *fabliau* genre in which Chaucer wrote some of his best tales. In Chaucer's *fabliaux* the woman whose husband is deceived escapes unscathed, whereas all the men involved receive more or less painful punishments.⁶ But she is not the chief instigator of the trickery, except perhaps in *The Shipman's Tale*. In both these seventeenth-century versions, however, the woman is actively bent on securing her own sexual satisfaction, at whatever cost to propriety. She is partially exonerated in Charleton's story, and triumphantly and most undeservedly so in P.M.'s. The authors of this combined publication have produced an anti-feminist joke, which in its contemporary context may be considered either innocently diverting, or scandalously malicious.

Antiquity had its heroines, of course, but showed little compunction when it saw fit to denigrate women. Petronius' anecdote is a case in point. Nor were the Middle Ages more charitable. In the mid-twelfth century John of Salisbury needed only to copy Petronius almost verbatim into his *Policraticus* in order to illustrate the fickleness of women: how easily they fall in love, on what trivial grounds they turn to hatred, and how quickly they forget their natural affections even for their own children.⁷

Jacques de Vitry, in the first half of the thirteenth century, summarizes the story in his preachers' manual of *exempla* (illustrative anecdotes), and concludes with the anti-feminist moral: see how quickly this woman changed when another man turned up, so that she didn't only forget her love for her former husband, but even took his body out of his coffin and hung him up on a gibbet. *Varium et mutabile pectus femina semper habet*. A woman's heart is always a changeable and unpredictable thing.⁸

⁶ There is a good account of Chaucer's *fabliaux* in Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London, 1985), pp. 166ff. The defining characteristic, he finds, of Chaucer's comic tales is the assumption, shared by narrator and reader, 'that there are no values, secular or religious, more important than survival or the satisfaction of appetite' (p. 167). A very similar view underlies *The Ephesian and Cimmerian Matrons*.

⁷ John of Salisbury, *Ioannis Saresberiensis episcopi Carnotensis Policratici; sive, De nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum, libri VIII*, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb, 2 vols (Oxford, 1909), II, 301–04 (VIII, xi).

⁸ *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas F. Crane (London, 1890), pp. 96–97 and 228–29 (no. 232).

According to the English version of *The Seven Sages of Rome*,⁹ she was even willing to mutilate the body of her husband so that it would look more like that of the robber stolen from the gibbet which the soldier was supposed to be guarding while he was making love to her in her husband's tomb. When he finds the lengths she's prepared to go to in order to preserve his life, the soldier decides 'Pat sho was cumen of vnkind blode' (line 3008) and wants no more to do with her. There is absolutely no sense of irony in the fact that his incompetence, cowardice and deceit incur no blame, and her generosity receives no praise: in fact, in some versions he cuts her head off in what we are to understand is well-deserved disgust.

By the more respectful seventeenth century, it had become fashionable for misogyny to tease rather than attack the victims of its satire. George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1612) is a comedy illustrating the unfaithfulness of women (following male trickery).¹⁰ Acts IV and V utilize Petronius' story of the Ephesian matron; but here the soldier is the supposedly dead husband returned in disguise to see if his wife's vaunted devotion can be corrupted. He succeeds only too well, and returns next night to 'split her wesand', but by now she's been warned by his brother, who was party to the plot, and pretending she and her maid knew him all the time, she denounces him as 'a transforméd monster, / Who to assure himself of what he knew, / Hath lost the shape of man' (V v 81–83). He gets, in other words, his well-deserved come-uppance. In the end all is forgiven. The comedy therefore concludes with the (moral) punishment of the man for his anti-feminist demonstration of his wife's sexuality: in the end her forgiveness proves her constancy in spite of all his slanders and cruelty.

The play appeared at a time when the joke was wearing thin, and anti-feminism provoked a heated controversy chiefly in response to an anti-feminist treatise by Joseph Swetnam. His *The Arraignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether* (1615), went through ten editions by 1637 and at least six more by 1880. Rebuttals with equally wonderful titles soon appeared: first Rachel Speght (a clergyman's teenaged daughter)

⁹ *The Seven Sages of Rome*, ed. Killis Campbell (Boston, 1907), pp. 96–103 (lines 2811–3028), with over sixty analogues listed at pp. ci–cviii.

¹⁰ George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Ethel M. Smeak (London, 1967).

wrote *A Mouzell for Melastomus* [A Muzzle for Black Mouth], *The cynical Bayter of, and foule mouthed Barker against Evah's Sex; or, An Apologeticall Answere to that Irreligious and Illiterate Pamphlet made by Io. Sw. and by him Intituled 'The Arraignment of Women'* (1617); then Ester Sovernam (whose name may be a male's pseudonym, punning on Swe[e]tnam) extended Speght's defence of women with *Ester hath hang'd Haman; or, An Answere To a lewd Pamphlet, entituled, The Arraignment of Women. With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and vnconstant men, and Husbands* (1617); and thirdly the obviously pseudonymous Constantia Munda lashed out with the vituperative *Worming of a mad Dogge; or, A Soppe for Cerbervs the Taylor of Hell*, also in 1617. All these had to be content with but one edition. Sales did not accord with merit. Women's faults were evidently more popular than men's.

As Linda Woodbridge points out,¹¹ the formal controversy was a genre and a literary exercise, in which defenders looked for historical and literary examples with which to rebut the latest witty slander upon womankind. The forces of fertility were on the side of women; misogyny represents the wintry intruder Sterility who is ultimately driven away with contumely. But centuries of slander must affect women's self-respect, and the response to Swetnam suggests that by the seventeenth century there were women emancipated enough to object that the joke had gone too far.

As might be expected, there is only the faintest implication of satire in Jeremy Taylor's retelling of the story at the end of his extensive religious manual *Holy Dying*. He uses the Ephesian Matron as an *exemplum* of the brevity of immoderate emotion. 'Those greater and stormy passions do so spend the whole stock of grief, that they presently admit a comfort and contrary affection,' he begins; and concludes by remarking that the soldier, having hanged the husband's body, 'escaped the present danger to possess a love which might change as violently as her grief had done'.¹²

¹¹ *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540–1620* (Brighton, 1984); for the formal controversy, see pp. 13–136, for Swetnam, pp. 81–87, and for an anonymous play portraying the controversy Swetnam provoked, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women* (c.1618), see pp. 300–22.

¹² Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), *Holy living and Dying: Together with Prayers Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian* (London, 1851), pp. 516–18.

But in contrast, Charleton, whose dedication 'to a Person of Honour' (his friend P.M.) evinces or pretends a fear of feminist censure, was deliberately playing with fire. He (or P.M. for him) emphasises the sorrows of the mourning widow by quoting three times from the Man in Black's affecting laments in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, but then praises her submission to the soldier, on the grounds that the reader must be anxious for her survival.

It was great wonder that Nature
Might suffer any creature.
To have such sorowe, and she not ded;
Full piteous pale, and nothing red.
She said a lay, a maner songe;
Without note, withouten song;
And was this, for full well I can
Reherse it, right thus it began.
I have of sorrow so great wone,
That joy get I never none;
Nowe that I se my Husband bright,
Whiche I have loved with all my might,
Is fro me deed, and is agone.
And thus in sorowe left me alone,
Alas Dethe, what yeleth the,
That thou noldest have taken me? ¹³

With similar alterations of pronouns, P.M. subsequently inserts lines 509–18, referencing the passage 'As Reverend Chaucer in his Dream', and later the three lines 529–31. The passages add little to Charleton's extended portrayal of the gradual submission of the lady to the blandishments of the Soldier and the enflaming effect of the wine he uses to resuscitate her. Charleton concludes:

And while they are busie at their silent devotions [they're making love on the dead husband's coffin], let us have recourse to the Oracle of Reason, and there consult about the powerful Cause of this great and admirable Change in our Matron, who (you see) is no longer either Mourner, or Widow.¶

To charge this suddain and prodigious Metamorphosis, upon the inherent Mutability and Levity of Womans Nature; though it

¹³ *Book of the Duchess*, 467–82, from Thynne's 1532 edition, with feminine pronouns and 'Husband' for 'Lady'. Thynne's line 480 is spurious.

may have somewhat of Philosophy in it, yet cannot have much of wisdom; as importing more Reason, than Safety. For, albeit, it be well known, that the softness and tenderness of their Constitution is such, as renders them like wax, capable of any impressions, and especially such as correspond with those their inclinations, that Nature hath implanted in them as goads to drive them on toward that principal End, for which it hath made them: yet, who is so rashly prodigal of his life, as to incense that Revengeful sex, by calling in question that Constancy in affection, which every Woman so much boasteth of, and is ready to defend even with her blood, and whereof every day produceth so many notable Examples?

Apparently women are capable of anything, including revenge on men who say women are capable of anything. Charleton argues that neither 'the Levity of Womans nature', nor the wine she drank, accessory to her recovery though that certainly was, can account for the widow's change of heart, which he puts down simply to the power of love. In time-honoured fashion, he adduces classical examples of this power, particularly those of Solomon, Appius Claudius, and Antony. Ironically these are men, and they were all ruined by yielding to a weakness supposedly typical of women. The anti-feminist game seems to boomerang. Charleton may have taken the examples of Appius and Antony from Bacon's essay 'Of Love'; Bacon deplores love as an unworthy passion incompatible with statesmanship. Charleton, however, praises it precisely because it is excessive: 'Being once in love, we believe our desires cannot be noble, untill they are extream; nor generous, unless they be rash.' The widow is to be excused because the soldier's importunity was irresistible, and because the chance he offered her was one she could not afford to miss:

For the Souldier hath ikneled so
 And told her all his love, and all his wo,
 And sworn so depe to her to be true,
 For well or wo, and change for no newe;
 And as a false Lover so well can plain,
 The selie Matron rewed on his pain;
 And toke him for husbond, and became his wife
 For evermore, while that hem last life.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cf. Chaucer, 'The Legend of Dido', *Legend of Good Women*, 1232–39, with 'Souldier' for 'Eneas', and 'Matron' for 'Dido'.

'Why then,' Charleton asks, 'should this Woman be accused of extream Levity, only for taking occasion by the Foretop, and, at first Encontre, making sure of what, perhaps, she otherways might have lost.'

When the soldier realizes that while he was making love to the matron in the tomb, the corpse of the felon he was supposed to be guarding has been stolen, he proceeds to 'vomit out blasphemies against women' (1668 says 'belch out', since 'vomit' comes later): 'Man who otherwise would be more than half-*Divine*; onely by being obnoxious to the corrupt temptations of Woman, is made lesse than half-*Human*'. (Here 'obnoxious' has its now obsolete meaning of 'liable'). Then, since Charleton's satire is not entirely gender specific, the soldier has the grace to vomit accusations against himself. Cleverly the woman proposes that he mutilate her husband's body to make it look like the hanged felon's (she is not so abandoned as in some versions where she does the mutilating herself), and he obeys, remembering the proverb 'Women are always more subtle and ingenious at Evasions, in suddain Exigences, than Men.' P.M.'s 1668 publication inserts at this point 'Here I cannot but cry out with Father, *Chaucer*, in his Ballad of the *praise of Women*, Lo what gentillesse these women have', commencing two rhyme royal stanzas of perhaps ironic praise. The poem, included in early editions of Chaucer, is now recognized as apocryphal.¹⁵ While not obviously ironic itself, its insertion here clearly is. The line 'How busie thei be us to keepe and save' applies well to the matron's concern for her new lover, but says little for her loyalty to the memory of her former husband, whose mutilated body must be publicly suspended for the sake of the object of her changed affections. Finally, as the lovers heave out the husband's corpse, Charleton wryly comments that their ruse provides the first example of the proverb 'A woman's Wit is alwayes best at a Dead-Lift.'¹⁶

¹⁵ See John Edwin Wells, Jonathan Burke Severs, Albert E. Hartung and Peter G. Beidler, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, 11 vols (New Haven, CT, 1967–2005), IV, 1083.

¹⁶ *OED*, s.v. 'dead lift': 'The pull of a horse, etc., exerting his utmost strength at a dead weight beyond his power to move'; hence, figuratively, 'a hopeless exigence' (Johnson's definition). This now archaic phrase was very common in the seventeenth century. For the proverb see M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1950), W669: e.g. 'No wit comparable to a womans at a dead lift' (Brathwaite, 1640), and, from Howell's polyglot collection of proverbs, *Paroemiographia* (1659): 'A Woman's advice is best at a dead

Charleton's satiric vindication of women is a quite brilliant example of condemnation through pretended praise, or, alternatively (for the treatise is nothing if not paradoxical), of praise that condemns not the usual objects of anti-feminist censure, but the unjustified excesses of such censure itself.

"P.M., Gent."s sequel begins with a letter to Charleton, explaining why he has dared to publish *The Ephesian Matron*, which Charleton had sent him, but which, in his 1659 preface addressed 'To a Person of Honour', he had coyly asked him to keep to himself. 'Imprison her in your private Cabinet, so that she may be seen by no eyes but your own ... for fear she meet with *affronts* from the Ladies, who will never be reconciled to a Woman that is so weak, as to betray the *frailties*, and lay open the *secrets* of her own sex. Besides that, she is a professed enemy to their darling, *Platonick Love*.' The supposed female affectation that women may love without sexual desire is a primary target of Charleton's satire. In response, P.M. loses no time in quoting 'our great Moralist, and beloved Author, Chaucer' (perhaps anticipating his own satiric intentions by choosing to refer to the Wife of Bath, who would certainly have given short shrift to the concept of platonic love), though only to show that Charleton would have been too niggardly if he denied his work the freedom of publication.

P.M. argues that to imprison women, as he facetiously calls not publishing *The Ephesian Matron*, is inhumane to them and, especially if they are handsome, uncomfortable for the Men deprived of their society; moreover, it is difficult, and counter-productive, as sure to provoke them to get loose somehow. Though some Ladies may feel slandered, Charleton, he contends, praises feminine virtues, shows that Love is a universal tyrant, and includes the soldier's reproaches of the compliant widow only by way of delineating his rough character; others, accordingly 'will vindicate you from the infamy of a Woman-hater'. In this last phrase, P.M. turns back upon Charleton an accusation he had himself predicted P.M. might incur if he published the tale, smugly confident that both he and Charleton will be able to survive any feminist counterblast.

Determined, indeed, to share any obloquy that Charleton's text may provoke, P.M. promises to tell the story of

lift. Charleton wittily applies the proverb both literally and figuratively, and so brings his treatise to a neat conclusion.

a trick that pass'd for no less than a Miracle. Having found the Novel in the *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria* of that witty and erudite Noble Italian, Erycius Puteanus; and out of his elegant Latin translated into plain English; I now bring it as a Handmaid to wait upon the Ephesian, at least, if you think it worthy of that honour.

In turning this elegant Latin into plain English, however, P.M. allows himself considerable licence of expansion. The anecdote in Puteanus' *Comus* begins:

Matrona quedam, ait, in finibus Cimmeriorum agebat, danistae non ignobilis uxor; si formam spectes, omnibus simulacris luculentior; si famam, pudica. Sed quam multae saepe maculae in occulto latent!¹⁷

This is rendered

On the Confines of *Cimmeria*, there, not long since lived a certain Gentlewoman, of shape more exact than a Statue formed by all the rules of *Leon Battista Alberti*; of features and complexion more sweet and delicate than those of *Venus* her self; of reputation as clear and immaculate as *Diana*. Wife she was to one, whom Usury had made Rich, and Riches eminent; with whom she enjoy'd all the pleasures of conjugal Love and Fidelity; not so much as dreaming of any content but in his indulgence and embraces.

But, ah! how mutable are humane Affections! how many faults doth time discover ... !

The Cimmerian Matron's trick, or miracle, was certainly ingenious, if extremely implausible. Though happily married, she falls for a soldier, and employs a bawd to bring him to her house when she expects her husband to be away. The jealous husband, however, returns before the soldier can get in, angrily strips his wife and ties her to a pillar on the verandah, and goes peacefully to bed. Finding the outer gate locked, the disappointed soldier goes back to the bawd, who has a key. She releases the wife and allows her to tie her up in her place so that the wife can sneak out to meet her lover. P.M.'s admiration is breathtakingly

¹⁷ Erycius Puteanus, *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria de luxu somnium* (Louvain, 1610), pp. 100–118 (quotation from p. 100).

a-moral: 'Twas a bold and adventurous Act this, for a Woman so lately surprized, so cruelly treated, so miraculously delivered; nay, not yet delivered from danger of greater torments, and perhaps of death; thus to throw her self into the Arms of her Adulterer, to force, even destiny it self to give way to the satisfaction of her desires. *But Love inspires Audacity and Contempt of all perils into the Weakest and most timorous hearts.*' Wakening from a dream of his wife's infidelity, the furious husband rushes out with a razor and slashes off what he thinks is his wife's nose, but of course the bawd is now tied up in her place. Then he goes back to resume his slumbers. The wife returns, unties and consoles the bawd (noselessness being as much a badge of honour in her profession as a soldier's wounds would be in his), and is tied up again in her place. The bawd goes off to find a surgeon, and the wife prays loudly to Diana to release her from the tyranny of her jealous husband. He overhears, as he is meant to. Then he hears her thanking Diana for vindicating her by a miracle. He comes down and is terrified to discover that the goddess has indeed restored his wife's nose as if it had never been cut off. Fearing judgment, he begs forgiveness, and all is well. 'Thus, blest be the God of Love! Our witty *Matron*, hath at once recovered three most precious things, her *Nose*, her *Honour*, and her *Husbands Love*.'

In typical *fabliau* fashion, the a-morality of the conclusion helps to remove the characters from the real world of accountability and so reinforces the joke. Literature sometimes enjoins not only a willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, but also a willing suspension of moral responsibility.

P.M. commences the anecdote by quoting lines from Chaucer's *Legend of Dido* that shortly precede those with which Charleton celebrated the Ephesian Matron's marriage. The sight of the soldier bathing naked inflames the Cimmerian Matron exactly as Dido was by Eneas: 'Yet be not too severe in condemning the passion of a frail Woman, You, who know how strong and quick assaults *Cupid* often makes upon Forts so weakly man'd, and with what irresistible Artillery he is provided.' Charleton also justified the Ephesian Matron by referring to the irresistible power of Love. P.M.'s justification, however, is qualified by the emphasis on female frailty. This frailty is more than made up for, however, by skill in repartee, for due acknowledgement whereof P.M. concludes his anecdote by quoting Proserpina's lines from *The Merchant's Tale* in which she promises that

a woman caught *in flagrante delicto* by her husband as May was will always be able to talk her way out of trouble.

In his appended sections entitled 'THE Mysteries and Miracles of LOVE', P.M. uses again *The Legend of Dido*, to prove that, far from languishing, love may grow stronger by the possession of its object: 'and our friend *Chaucer* therefore wisely fixes the *Epoche* of *Æneas* and *Dido's* love on the *Jubile* they celebrated in the Cave'. Subsequently he quotes 'a pertinent Stanza of that incomparable Critique in Love, old *Chaucer*: who in most lively and never-vading colours painting the surprize and astonishment of *Troilus* (till then a Woman-hater), at first sight of the fair *Creseide*, in her mourning habit, sparkling like a Diamond set in Jet; saith thus.

'Lo, he that lete him selven so conning,
And scorned hem that loves paines drien,
Was full unaware that love had his dwelling
Within the subtel streams of her eyen;
That sodainly him thought he felt dien,
Right with her loke, the spirit in his herte.
Blessed be love, that thus can folke converte.'

(*Troilus and Criseyde*, I 302–08)

Thus he disarms adverse criticism, and prepares the way for his conclusion in which he and Charleton, free of the charge of being Woman-haters, enjoy the pleasures of unruffled friendship. Disarmingly he asks for indulgence in the words of 'our dearly beloved Don Geoffrey', quoting again from *Troilus*:

'Beseeching every Lady bright of hewe,
And every gentil woman, what she be,
Albeit that our Matrons were untrue,
That for that gilte ye be not wroth with me.
Ye may in other Bokes their gilte se.
And gladder I would write, if that ye leste,
Penelopes truth, and faith of good Alceste.'¹⁸

He adds also the next stanza, and some lines from *The Legend of Thisbe* (lines 910–11 and 920–21) commending the superiority of women's

¹⁸ Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, V 1772–78, with 'Matrons' for 'Criseyde'.

affections to men's. P.M. ends astutely with the bawdy conclusion of *The Shipman's Tale*:

'Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Taling enough unto our lives ende—'

where the accounting metaphor 'tallying' is also a sexual pun, 'tailing'. There is also an obvious pun on 'taling' in the sense of telling tales. Both 'tallying' and 'tailing' fit *The Shipman's Tale*, which is about a cuckolded Merchant, but only the latter *The Ephesian and Cimmerian Matrons*. The Cimmerian husband is a 'hard-hearted usurer', but Puteanus' anecdote shows little appreciation of the equation of sex and money that underscores Chaucer's tale.

The question remains why, in the later seventeenth century, with all the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline love poets to hand, to say nothing of classical and European authors, Charleton and his friend should have found Chaucer so congenial a love poet that they should wish to appropriate his work in their anti-feminist *jeu desprit*. (I assume that Charleton approved of the insertions, even if he may not originally have been responsible for them.) Though John Fisher says that 'The seventeenth century is the low point in Chaucer's reputation, when knowledge of his language and prosody had been lost, and he was regarded as antiquated and barbarous,'¹⁹ for P.M. he was 'that incomparable Critique in Love' whose poetic descriptions were painted 'in most lively and never-vading colours'. His and Charleton's names should be added to those collected by Caroline Spurgeon in her monumental three-volume work *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357–1900* (Cambridge, 1925). They show considerable familiarity with his work, being able to find apposite quotations in a wide range of poems, including the dream visions, *Troilus*, the lyrics, and certain of *The Canterbury Tales*.

It is true that by placing Chaucer's lines in a satiric context they misrepresent a writer who is not unjustly described, by Gavin Douglas, as 'all womanis frend', and that chiefly because of his pity for Dido, whom Douglas correctly saw Virgil and his Roman audience disapproved of.²⁰ If Chaucer was all women's friend, he

¹⁹ *The Complete Prose and Poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. John H. Fisher (New York and London, 1977), p. 953.

²⁰ Gavin Douglas, prologue to first book of his translation of the *Aeneid* (1553, etc.).

was responding to the widespread idiocies of anti-feminist diatribes in a world that must be peopled. Douglas was thinking primarily of Chaucer's compassion for Dido, deserted by the heartless Aeneas, but we might more readily think of how characters like the Wife of Bath expose the illogicalities inherent in the adoption of militant positions in the conflict between the sexes. Charleton's and P.M.'s chief motive, however, seems to have been to have fun at the expense of the opposite sex.

Chaucer also wrote, of course, some of the cleverest and funniest stories in the language. Even if the seventeenth century in general regarded him as antiquated and barbarous, Charleton and P.M. recognized his authority as an astute commentator on the place of women in home and society. They appreciated his comic verve and were alive to the genuinely affecting pathos of apposite passages of his writing, which they utilized in contexts that mirrored, satirically and jovially, the outrageous fun which the greatest comic writer of the Middle Ages expressed so capably.

On this, see Richard Firth Green, 'Chaucer's Victimized Women', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 10 (1988): 3–21, especially pp. 17–18.

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