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General Editor's Preface

SPELL (Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature) is a publication of SAUTE, the Swiss Association of University Teachers of English. Established in 1984, it first appeared every second year, was published annually from 1994 to 2008 and has since appeared three times within two years. Since 2022, SPELL is published open access as an online journal. A full backlist is available from e-periodica.ch: www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/volumes?UID=spe-001.

Every second year, SPELL publishes a selection of papers given at the biennial symposia organised by SAUTE. Non-symposium volumes usually have as their starting point papers given at other conferences organised by the Swiss network of Anglophone Studies, in particular conferences of SANAS, the Swiss Association for North American Studies and SAMEMES, the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies. Decisions concerning topics and editors of individual issues are made by the Annual General Meeting of SAUTE two years before the year of publication.

SPELL publishes peer-reviewed, original work devoted to the study of the English language as well as Anglophone literatures and cultures. Contributions are usually by participants at the conferences mentioned, but editors are free to consider other proposals or solicit further contributions. SPELL gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW).

Information on all aspects of SPELL, including volumes planned for the future, is available from the General Editor, Professor Ina Habermann, University of Basel, Department of English, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland, ina.habermann@unibas.ch. Information about past volumes of SPELL, the journal's Advisory Board and about SAUTE can be found on www.saute.ch.

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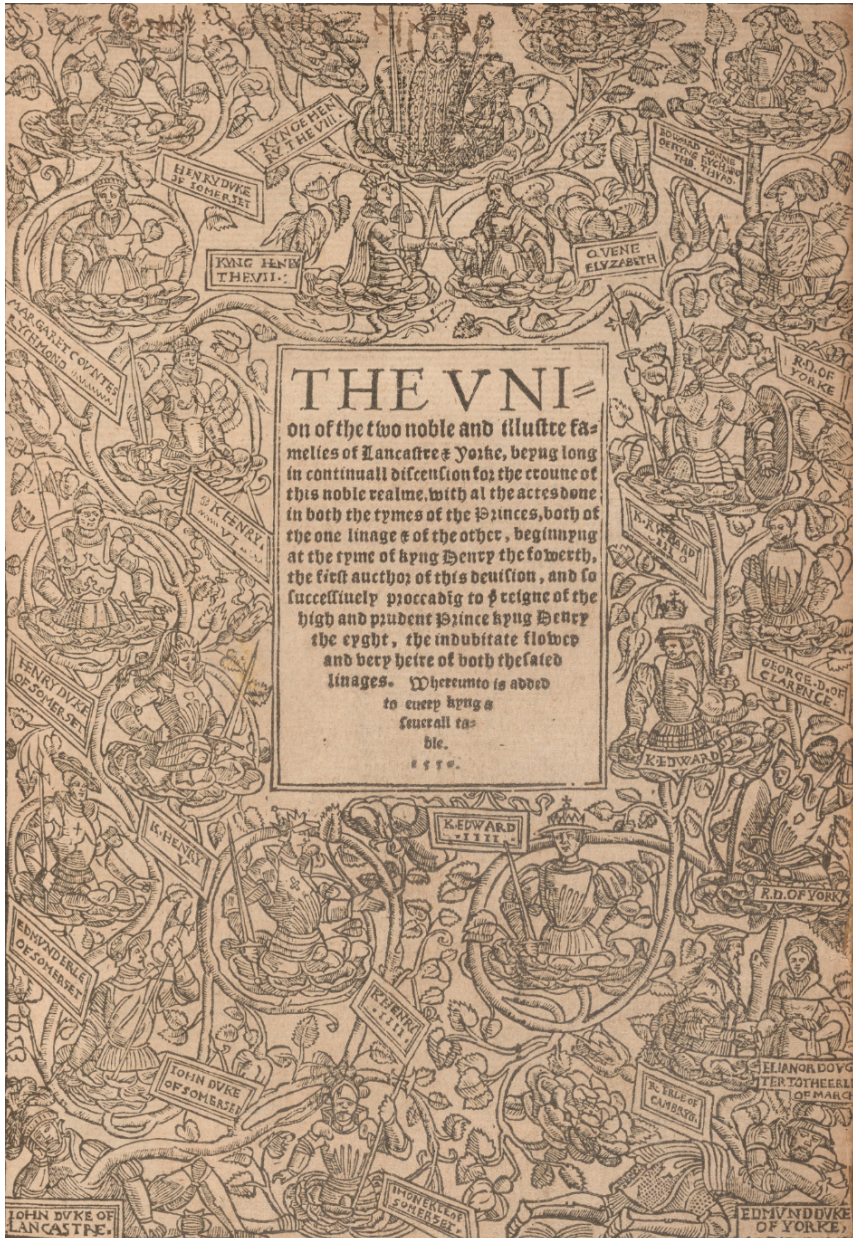
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THE VNI-
on of the two noble and illustre fam-
elies of Lancastre & Yorke, begyn long
in continuall discension for the crowne of
this noble realme, with all the acres done
in both the tymes of the Princes, both of
the one linage & of the other, begynnyng
at the tyme of kyng Henry the fourth,
the first aucthor of this deuision, and so
successiuelly proccadig to the reigne of the
high and prudent Prince kyng Henry
the eighth, the indubitate flower
and very heire of both the said
linages. Whereunto is added
to every kyng a
seuerall ta-
ble.
1550.

Title-Page to Edward Hall, *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre & Yorke*. London: Richard Grafton, 1550. Reproduced courtesy of The Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, George A. Aitken Book Collection, Call number Af H141 +542uc.

EMMA DEPLEDGE AND KATRIN RUPP
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Introduction: Medieval and Early Modern Afterlives¹

This introductory essay engages with the content and argument of the volume's essays, reflects on the language, labels and period boundaries used to define medieval and early modern studies, and analyses the cover image to consider the *longue durée* of books and ways in which editors and the book trade have shaped textual and authorial afterlives.

Keywords: Medieval, Early Modern, Book History, Periodisation.

This volume explores the reception history of medieval and early modern authors, texts, characters and genres as well as medievalisms,² early modern historicisms,³ and ways in which we think and write about periodisation and the spaces in which dramatic performances take place. Important topics under analysis include tyranny, race, disability, gender, adaptation and commonplacing. In its engagement with medieval and early modern afterlives, the collection stresses the communicative nature of all texts

¹ The authors wish to warmly thank Douglas Clark, Indira Ghose and Honor Jackson for commenting on drafts of this essay.

² Some recent studies in the afterlives of medieval cultures and studies include: Alvestad and Houghton; Ashton and Elliott; Davis and Altschul; D'Arcens; Gayk; Heng; Heng and Ramey; Hsy; Karkov, Kłosowska, and van Gerven Oei; Lomuto; Matthews and Sanders; Rambaran-Olm; Rodrigues Da Silva; Turda; Vernon; and Whitaker and Gabriele. Specialist journals addressing the topic include *Studies in Medievalism*, currently edited by Karl Fugelso, and *postmedieval*, currently edited by Shazia Jagot, Julie Orlemanski, and Sara Ritchey; and websites include Heng and Noakes.

³ In 2019, Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie coined the term "early-modernism" as an equivalent of medievalism, i.e. to refer to "the reception, interpretation, or recreation of the early modern period in post-early modern cultures" (4), but the label has gained little traction. Work on early modern afterlives from the last few years includes Aebischer; Britton and Walter; Craig; Depledge, Garrison and Nicosia; Garrison and Stanivukovic; Kingsley-Smith; Loewenstein and Stevens; Starks, and Treharne and Walker.

(broadly understood): authors trace the varied appearances of texts across space and time and analyse how “their meanings (and other, noncognitive, effects)” speak differently at each moment of their genesis.⁴ The essays offer insight into different cultural milieus spanning the classical period to the present day as contributors interrogate linear narratives and identify continuity and discontinuity across the medieval and early modern periods.

The image that prefaces this collection raises important questions about ways in which the past is imagined, fashioned, and fictionalised. It is a woodcut border that frames the title page of the 1550 second edition of Edward Hall’s *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustrate Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke*. The “Tree of Jesse” frame depicts the union of the red and white Tudor roses that is said to have taken place as a result of Henry VII’s marriage to Elizabeth of York. The head and torso of their son, Henry VIII, occupies the most prominent position in the image: he appears top centre, above the hand-holding couple, his presence enacting spatially the “Vnion” of the two families into one body. Henry is flanked by what one assumes to be the roses of Lancaster and York but the division the two emblems (usually red and white) represent is likewise removed as it is a colourless image. Henry, at that point in time recently deceased, sits proud, staring the reader full in the face, in diametrical opposition to his sleeping ancestors in the bottom left and right of the image: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and Edmund Duke of York, respectively. The image thus depicts both the apparent resolution of a key moment in English history and individual historical figures who have served as the inspiration behind fictional characters in multiple literary works.

For David Matthews, the author of the first essay in this volume, the image is “contradictorily doubled.” It is unable, incapable even, of displaying straight forward lineage as “for all its attempts to lead the viewer upwards and *away* from the medieval past, the rosebush image is inescapably medieval in its iconography,” and the lineage cannot be continued as there is simply no space or additional paper extending beyond Henry. Indeed, it might try to depict unity, but it in effect portrays “a tangled mass of genealogical possibility, out of which ultimately emerge what appear to be Yorkist and Lancastrian claims to the throne which are exactly parallel.” The temporal hybridity and polychronicity hinted at by this “rosebush that puts out tendrils, extending itself in all directions and occasionally re-rooting itself in the soil it had previously left” is, Mat-

⁴ Adapted from Willis; also see Littau, and Sontag.

thews argues, an apt representation of the hybrid nature of early modern discourse about the medieval past; and polychronicity is precisely the model he proposes scholars of medieval and early modern studies use when approaching periodisation.

Matthews' essay explores how Tudor writers – such as the conservative Thomas More in the first part of his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532) and the reformer John Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583) – reflect upon writings from the late medieval past. In an attempt to retrieve a time in Christian history when religious debates seemed less virulent, More suggests that his audience resort to readily available medieval texts such as Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (c. 1343) for their orthodox erudition, thus underlining textual continuation rather than supersession across period boundaries. At the same time, this sense of continuation is also hybrid as More is aware that a past without heresy cannot be restored (and probably never existed) and that he cannot combat heresy without also invoking, and thus perpetuating it. For Matthews, More is thus aware that “incompatible things exist, polychronically, alongside one another.” Like More, Foxe too participates in a polychronic narrative. His recourse, via William Tyndale's version, to the allegedly autobiographical testimony of the Lollard William Thorpe about his interrogation by Archbishop Arundel in 1407 is meant to underline the importance, and indeed modernity, of Lollardy to reformers in the sixteenth century. At the same time, Foxe's emphasis on Thorpe's use of “old” English firmly roots the latter in the medieval past. It thus appears that Foxe, as Matthews postulates, “needs the past and present to intermingle,” that is, to exist alongside each other.

In their work on Medievalism,⁵ Matthews and others encourage scholars to rethink received notions of literary transmission and the labels used to describe, define, segment and segregate our field, misconceptions and

⁵ The term “medievalism” was introduced in the nineteenth century. For definitions, see D'Arcens (1) and Perry (2). The adjectives “medieval” and “early modern,” used in the title of the present volume simply refer to time periods but we recognize the fact that, as D'Arcens reminds us, the three main period distinctions “classical,” “medieval” and “modern” do not make much sense beyond Europe and are limiting even within Europe itself (*World Medievalism* 10). Nevertheless, as Heng and Ramey point out, “alternative names for the past ultimately prove impractical” (391). On the need to reject “Anglo-Saxon” in favour of “Early Medieval,” see Vuille's essay in this volume and Rambaran-Olm 2019 and 2021.

negative connotations of the word medieval in contemporary parlance,⁶ as well as ways in which distorted accounts of the past have been and continue to be weaponised.⁷ The need to examine and deconstruct “the deliberate adoption, re-invention, and implementation of the tropes the creator imagines to be ‘medieval’” has become yet more urgent in the climate of rising white supremacy (Perry 2). As the RaceB4Race network community has rightly insisted, the ways in which scholars of premodern literature, history and culture teach and talk about the past has an impact that goes beyond academic circles. Sierra Lomuto writes that

when we refuse to see race in the Middle Ages, the stakes are much greater than etymology or linguistics; we are refusing to see how hierarchical structures of difference operate in all of their nuanced complexities, including within multicultural and transnational contexts. We are allowing the Middle Ages to be seen as a pre-racial space where whiteness can locate its ethnic heritage. (2016)

This is not, however, to suggest that a long history of black or anti-racist medievalisms does not also exist. Indeed, the work of Jonathan Hsy, Matthew X. Vernon, and others highlights how “people of color who do not (exclusively) trace their ancestry to Europe can claim and transform divergent racial, social, and intellectual relationships to the Middle Ages” (Hsy 5). In his study, for example, Vernon “reads against the grain of the predominant narrative of medievalism – as a uniform and clearly-defined means of consolidating white identity” to produce an “anti-genealogy” charting how the Middle Ages were “used among African American writers in conversation with white writers” (Vernon 29).

The power of language, labelling, and appropriation is also a central concern in David Loewenstein’s essay. Loewenstein analyses how

⁶ The valence of the words “medieval” and “early modern” does not appear to be the same. The term “medieval” is often associated in contemporary parlance with violence, cruelty, and backwardness, but “(early) modern” invariably stands for the state of the art. See *OED* “medieval,” 3a and 3b. US President Joe Biden gave us a topical example of the term’s negative sense when he said that “brave law enforcement officers were subject to medieval hell for three hours” during the attack on the US Capitol on 6th January 2021. As Matthews so pointedly remarks, torture and the burning of witches are always medieval, no matter that torture was illegal for much of the Middle Ages and that witch hunts were mainly a feature of the Tudor period (*Medievalism* 13–14).

⁷ See, for example, Livingston; Rambaran-Olm and Gabriele; and essays such as Diebold’s in A. Albin, et al. eds.

tyranny has been represented across time, noting both change and continuity. In a detailed account of the afterlife of classical, biblical and humanist theories and discourses of tyranny, Loewenstein explores how it was represented in John Milton's writings, particularly in his revolutionary prose and in his early modern epic, *Paradise Lost*. He argues that, in his polemical writings on tyranny, "Milton draws upon and reshapes the discourses [...] he inherits so that tyranny becomes a more multifaceted concept including not only regal tyranny and tyranny of ecclesiastical institutions, but also tyranny over the private realm, especially over consciences and freedom of thought, with the latter comprising intellectual and mental tyranny." *Paradise Lost*, he writes, encourages readers to "remain alert" to ways in which the label had been weaponised, "to the unstable language that can support the accusation of tyranny and the ambiguous or contradictory political behaviour that reinforces it." Pejorative but without fixed meaning, tyranny was – and continues to be – used (indiscriminately) to demonise or invalidate the views or arguments of those with whom one disagrees.

Juliette Vuille's essay instead focuses on a more complimentary label, the application of which tends to be limited. In her article on heroism in Old English poems, Vuille responds to a scholarly tradition that typically attributes heroic qualities to male (and specifically pagan) characters such as Beowulf. This attribution, she claims, is mainly inherited from a nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarly tradition that defines heroism as Germanic/pagan/male, and thus excludes the possibility of a Christian hero or heroine. By focusing on Judith's heroic performance in the eponymous Old English poem, Vuille shows that it is Judith's Christianity rather than her gender that influences her heroism. Thus, Judith's performance blurs the gender boundaries defined by scholarly tradition (rather than by the texts themselves) to the extent that her gender becomes irrelevant or queer. Vuille therefore proposes a broader definition of heroism in Old English poetry, one that also includes Christian and female figures.

A specific heroic figure is the critical focus of Denis Renevey's chapter on the literary afterlife of the medieval Robin Hood in Anthony Munday's two plays, *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington* (both written between 1597 and 1598). Renevey examines how Robin Hood, a "forester yeoman" in the medieval ballads, becomes a "gentleman in disguise" in Munday's plays. Despite this gentrification, however, Renevey explicates how Munday continues to uphold yeoman values such as a sense of community among

the foresters and independence from the protocols of court officials. These values, Renevey argues, serve as a foil to an increasingly competitive and merciless London society at the turn of the seventeenth century.

Read in conjunction, Vuille's and Renevey's articles remind us that the term "medieval" does not have quite the same connotation for literature produced in early medieval England as it does for texts from late medieval England. Indeed, the English Middle Ages are usually divided into the Old and Middle English, or pre- and post-Conquest period respectively. It is a matter of course that the arrival of the Normans in England in 1066 brought with it fundamental changes on a socio-cultural and linguistic plane. It therefore makes sense to consider that date as a turning point, a transitional moment that is perhaps as "deeply invested in the supersessional," like Matthews observes of the period boundary between the medieval and the early modern. However, just as Foxe and More resort to the medieval past to emphasise its continued prevalence in their own time, the Normans cannot – and do not necessarily want to – supplant the English past of the land they have conquered without making recourse to it. Thus, Norman kings were keen to model themselves onto ideal English kings before them. Edward the Confessor, for example, was appropriated and sanctified by the Normans to legitimise their claim to the throne and to emphasise an allegedly divinely ordained (genealogical) continuity, or indeed polychronicity, with their English predecessor.⁸

Responses to royal figures and claims to the throne are also the topic of Honor Jackson's essay on John Dryden's redaction of the character of Eve found in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Jackson examines the relationship between gender and religious politics of the late seventeenth century as she considers Dryden's Eve in his opera entitled *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*. Jackson reminds us that although Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the better-known work today, Dryden's adaptation was a print bestseller during the Restoration period. It provides important insight into contemporary attitudes to women and Catholicism, with Dryden, as Jackson claims, transforming Eve into a "powerful and manipulative" figure in order to provide commentary on Mary of Modena, the new Catholic wife of the heir apparent, James, Duke of York, and the person to whom the piece was dedicated.

The afterlife of Shakespeare's "veteran" characters is the subject of Kyle Pivetti's chapter in which he analyses a 2012 autobiographical one-man show to demonstrate the important role characters like Richard III

⁸ For a discussion of the repercussions of the Norman Conquest, see Treharne.

and Coriolanus play in the construction of both an individual soldier's identity and national identity. Produced by Gulf War veteran Stephan Wolfert, *Cry Havoc!* contains "aural flashbacks" from Shakespeare plays that serve to link "traumatised veterans across historical eras." In the play, Wolfert wanders into a production of *Richard III* and identifies with the eponymous hero due to their shared experience of physical disability and military service. Drawing on the approaches of disability and trauma studies, Pivetti demonstrates ways in which Wolfert "weaves together his own biography with snippets of Shakespeare, as if the plays interrupt and intrude upon Wolfert's memories," whilst also aligning other real-life soldiers with Shakespearean veterans. For example, Wolfert's recollection of the nightmares he suffered in the wake of the Gulf War see him merge with Lady Hotspur as she voices her worries over her husband going to battle. Henry Lincoln Johnson, the 19-year-old African American who served in World War I and was the first American to win the French Cross of War, but who "died in America at 33, an alcoholic with a metal plate embedded in his foot, estranged from his family, and suffering Post-Traumatic Stress," is described in Wolfert's play as an American Coriolanus: celebrated for his renown on the battlefield but condemned for refusing to perform the role members of the public have prescribed for veterans. Shakespeare's characters are thus revived in Wolfert's play as a means to highlight the conditions of traumatised soldiers across time. These representations find echoes in extratextual afterlives of Shakespeare as, outside of the theatre, Wolfert works with a leading psychologist on a programme that "uses recitations of Shakespeare to treat trauma in veterans, finding that such performance can transform triggering thought patterns."

A crossover between fictional worlds and lived experience is also one focus of Erzsi Kukorelly's essay, which traces the afterlife of lines from Restoration and eighteenth-century literary texts that were extracted for use in a commonplace book, Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* (1702). After reading Bysshe's collection, Kukorelly informs us, Eliza Haywood went on to use many of the same citations in her conduct book, *The Wife* (1756), in which she encouraged her own readers to recite the lines aloud, or else to apply their precepts in their daily lives. The most frequently cited author is Dryden, who is named and also praised in Haywood's text, suggesting that an act of mutual canonization may have taken place whereby Haywood boosted Dryden's posthumous reputation whilst using lines from his popular texts to "bring substance and authority to her conduct advice" and augment her own status.

Greg Walker and Pascale Aebischer's essays encourage us to give serious thought to the language we use to describe performances and the ways in which we conceive of acting spaces. Walker is interested in what made late-medieval British drama distinct from that of other periods and suggests that we think in terms of "a *pre*-dramatic theatre, or rather a *pre*-theatrical drama, existing, not in the tragic theatre of ancient Greece, but in late medieval England and Scotland." Reflecting on how the word "theatre" tends to be used metonymically (and misleadingly) to describe both "the art-form and the structure that characteristically houses it in the modern world," and the implications this has "for our understanding of both dramatic practice and its associated aesthetics," Walker reminds us of the fact that purpose-built acting spaces were not introduced until the sixteenth century. Indeed, even when they were erected, performances continued to take place beyond their walls (also cf. Davies). Having outlined the ways in which early theatre was "self-reflexive," "site specific," and "blurred-boundaries between play-form and real-world events almost as a matter of course," Walker accordingly argues for an "afterlife" for the medieval and early Tudor stage, or at least for parallels between early performances and "the dramaturgy of postmodern performance," where attempts to "*un*theatre theatre" offer a return to the "bare-bones of the unhoused, mobile, porous figures" of the pre-1560 period.

Aebischer by contrast considers contemporary afterlives of early modern plays and acting spaces, focusing on the work of companies who transferred their live theatre performances to digital platforms during theatre closures of the Covid-19 lockdowns, and who continue to make productions of early modern drama that are specifically designed for videoconference platforms. Aebischer is concerned with how the "obscene," which can be defined as a space that is "off, or to one side of the stage" and thus "beyond representation," is depicted or envisaged using digital tools in made-for-digital productions of early modern plays. Her essay focuses on the afterlife of the "offstage," a space within theatres that is traditionally associated with "strange, and disturbing acts," in productions of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and John Ford, Thomas Dekker and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton*. Aebischer suggests that "digital theatre creates an afterlife for the offstage that thrives on the tension between what is included in the fictional frame and the traumatic lived experiences that lie just beyond it." She analyses the use of digital wizardry and the blurring of boundaries between "real" and imagined spaces, and the layering of images of living and dead characters, fictional and historical figures, to argue that both *Macbeth*, directed for Big Telly

by Zoë Seaton in 2020, and Creation Theatre's production of *The Witch of Edmonton*, directed by Laura Wright in 2022, draw attention away from main plotlines and character arcs towards the lived experiences "that underpin the tragic plots of early modern drama." This might take the example of "the pressure-cooker environment of women trapped in locked-down domestic interiors," or the execution of real-life women accused of witchcraft.

Parallels arguably exist between the theatre closures which took place around the world in 2020 and the subsequent move to digital theatre, and the theatre closure of 1642 to 1659 that is frequently used to create a (false) division in early modern theatre history. In both historical periods, dramatic productions were kept alive, despite closures, through the work of innovative practitioners whose determination and innovations continued to shape performance practices long after the theatres re-opened. Equally, in both historical periods some practitioners returned to the traditional acting spaces they used before the closure of the theatres whilst others, for various reasons, continued and continue to perform beyond the walls of traditional, purpose-built acting spaces (cf. Aebischer and Allred, Broadribb and Sullivan). The closure of the public theatres at the outbreak of civil war in 1642 was for a long time depicted as a moment of dramatic hiatus, but as scholars like Dale Randell, Susan Wiseman and others have demonstrated, surreptitious performances continued to take place in these years; new genres – including the beginnings of a native English operatic tradition – flourished, and innovations took place in the publication of playbooks. Theatre companies of the pandemic likewise sought out ways for the show to go on, or to go online, and as Aebischer's essay illustrates, found new, digital acting spaces and used various forms of "digital wizardry" to expand on the capabilities of the dramatic medium.

Whilst misconceptions about theatrical production in the 1640s and 50s have been (re-)addressed, the post-1660 era continues to be misrepresented through use of the label "Restoration," which aligns the return of the monarchy with the reopening of the theatres as if patents Charles II issued to just two men, Charles Killigrew and William Davenant, revived the same kind of varied, multi-theatre market that Londoners had enjoyed in the pre-1642 period. Charles's creation of a theatre duopoly, permitting only two companies to perform legally, left a multitude of actors, playwrights and managers as excluded from the profession as they had been during the 1640s and 50s. The large number of warrants for the arrest of unlicensed players during the period 1660-1700 (Milhous and Hume) suggest that those barred from mainstream, traditional acting spaces con-

tinued to find alternate ways to ply their trade. A rich history of performances beyond the King's Company and the Duke's Company theatres remains to be written and Walker's warning about the danger of collapsing "the long history of performance into a flattened, modern perspective that excludes more than it seeks to describe" is especially applicable to the late seventeenth century. As one of us has argued elsewhere, we need to rethink the ways in which theatre history is categorized and segmented, to expand our definitions of what constitutes dramatic entertainment and/or an acting space so that the wealth of performances that took place beyond purpose-built acting spaces can receive the attention they so thoroughly deserve (Depledge and Willie).

Rahel Orgis likewise revisits a longstanding critical assumption with fresh eyes in her reading of the representation of female writing found in the manuscript continuation of Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Wroth's depiction of Antissia, a character who "goes mad writing inappropriate poetry because an overly ambitious scholar of Ovid supposedly leads her to dabble with literature that is beyond women's mental capacity" has troubled critics due to the apparent attack on female authorship by a female author. Orgis offers an alternate reading of the character that has much to tell us about the ways in which Wroth sought to shape her authorial legacy. She argues that Wroth reflects more generally "on poetic invention and craftsmanship," suggesting ways to "engage with canonical precursors and models." For Orgis, the representation of Antissia and her tutor's uncritical engagement with canonical male authors allows Wroth to valorise her own reworking of Ovidian tales and to set out what she deemed to be worthy literary traditions on which to build.

William Edwards also considers the legacy of literary traditions in his reading of John Keats's *Endymion* as a revival of the genre of Elizabethan minor epic. He claims that in the language and narrative of the long poem one may trace the afterlives, or "family resemblance" of short epics of the 1590s, particularly Michael Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*, Thomas Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla*, and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. More generally, Edwards suggests that famous aspects of Keats' writing, such as his debasement of classical gods and the "conjunction of 'nightingale' and 'eglantine'" could very well come from the Romantic poet's study of Renaissance epyllions. Keats is, however, also innovative in his treatment of the genre: Edwards identifies "a unique fusion of Romantic and Elizabethan styles" in *Endymion*, describing his "metamorphic" style, with "words morph[ing] into other words" through "playful sonic textures," as

akin to the witty, playful style of Elizabethan epyllions, but finds his handling of some themes closer in kind “to Shelley’s *Alastor* than [...] Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*.”

In reflecting on Keats’ indebtedness to earlier poems, Edwards considers occasions when he may have been exposed through the book collections of friends, editions and copies Keats himself may have owned – including an edition of Drayton’s poems published by John Smethwicke and a nineteenth-century edition of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, complete with the ending furnished by George Chapman – or else through consultation of library books. Book history and the *longue durée* of individual copies of books offer an additional lens through which to view the subject of medieval and early modern afterlives,⁹ and we would therefore like to end by returning to the image with which we began this introduction.

The wooden block used to produce the Hall image has much to teach us about material afterlives and ways in which the book trade helped to shape authorial and textual legacies. Passed between stationers, and inked and pressed into damp sheets of paper, the same block was reused in more than one publication, and the meanings it helped to create were innumerable. The title-page border went on to appear in Thomas Marshe’s 1555 edition of John Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, the English roses and dynasties now ‘Englyshing’ through iconography “The auncient historie and onely trewe and syncere cronicle of the warres betwixte the Grecians and the Troyans,” just as Lydgate “Englished” the words within through translation of the Latin original. The border was also used in, and is today most commonly associated with John Stowe’s 1561 edition and Thomas Speght’s 1598 edition of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Workes*,¹⁰ where it adorns interior title pages to *The Canterbury Tales* and the *Romaunt of the Rose*. As Megan L. Cook has argued, the frame “quite literally provides a historical frame for Chaucer’s text,” and arguably promotes Chaucer’s status through association with “the luminaries depicted in the woodcut, most notably Chaucer’s patron, John of Gaunt,” who is located at the bottom of

⁹ Recent studies have shed light on the ways in which books and manuscripts were repurposed during the early modern period, particularly following the dissolution of monasteries, when documents ranging from account books to “service books, theological treatises and historical chronicles” found their way into book bindings, or else were used to wrap loose printed sheets (Coates 37). See, for example, Smyth and Partington; Ker; and Pickwood.

¹⁰ In his chapter in this volume, Matthews writes that “despite its apparent historical specificity, the woodblock survived, was passed down, shared, or sold, among printers and reused in new, specifically literary contexts.”

the image (Cook 30). Used in publications that open with a dedication to Henry VIII,¹¹ the woodcut may also have further associated Chaucer with Henry himself, particularly as the dedication describes Chaucer as if “belonging less to late medieval England” and more to the (then) “Henrician present” (Cook 29).¹² We are left with what Jonathan Gil Harris might term “untimely matter,” or bibliographical polychronicity: an Elizabethan edition of the works of a late medieval writer, wrapped in paratexts that fashion him as Henrician. Collectively, these publications underscore the important ways in which the same image meant differently at different points in time and highlight the important role editors and paratexts play in the invention of early modern authors.

The individual leaves of paper on which the woodcut was printed and the physical books in which they were once housed have also enjoyed afterlives that impact, among other things, the ways in which the warring historical figures are presented. For example, one remediated “reproduction” of a copy of Speght’s edition presents users of Early English Books Online with a Lancastrian victory of sorts as Henry’s closest white-rose relatives have taken on a ghostly appearance and have almost faded from sight.¹³ As a counter strike, damage to the woodblock reflected in multiple copies of the Speght makes it look as if the Lancastrian Duke of Somerset’s body has been gravely injured, with his axe-wielding arm seemingly lopped off.¹⁴ Many of the extant copies of the Hall, Tyndale and Chaucer editions are also listed on the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) as being heavily trimmed and/or repaired. In such copies, the Lancastrians generally find safe haven due to their close proximity to the books’ binding but the Yorkists, perching perilously close to the outer margin, risk having their limbs and/or titles severed or damaged. These examples underline the value of distinguishing not only the role specific editions play in reception but also the impact the material afterlives of individual copies within a print run can have on the legacies of texts, authors, and even

¹¹ First included with William Tynne’s 1532 edition of Chaucer’s *Works*, but reused in subsequent editions, Greg Walker has argued that the preface was designed to encourage Henry to see the edition as worthy of his attention and Devani Singh has suggested that “the visibility of the Preface on booksellers’ stalls also made the King an important symbolic reader of the edition” (485).

¹² Also see Singh 2016.

¹³ See images 24 and 144 of STC 5077, as shown in the linked Early English Books Online copy of ESTC S107208. It is listed as from a Huntington Library copy.

¹⁴ See, for example, the title page for *The Canterbury Tales* in the 1598 Speght edition held at the Newberry Library (Case fY 185 .C4059).

battles. These material and electronic copies re-enact materially the violence of the Wars of the Roses and, cumulatively, seem to echo written accounts of a Red-rose victory.

Texts, books, characters, authors, concepts, imagined spaces and periods of time all enjoy long lives and are reconceived through both conscious and accidental acts of adaptation and re-appropriation. Cumulatively, the essays collected in this volume remind us that the canons of literature that we study and teach – like the language we use to describe, and with which we often seek to police period boundaries and literary forms – are by no means arbitrary: they have been, and to a large extent continue to be, mediated through select institutions, socio-cultural shifts and power struggles across time.

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A Rose both White and Red: Middle English and Tudor Memory

An approach to periodisation emphasising continuity between medieval and early modern has asserted itself in recent years, over the preceding model which viewed the two periods as separated by a profound historical rupture. Here I argue that while this newer model has done important work for literary studies, its usefulness is at an end. I propose instead a messier model (via Jonathan Gil Harris and ultimately Michel Serres) of temporal hybridity and polychronicity. Emblematic of this approach is the Tudor rose imagery found in Hall's chronicle and later more explicitly in literary contexts. I explore polychronicity through an examination of the testimony of the early fifteenth-century Lollard William Thorpe, whose avowedly self-authored testimony circulated in manuscript (in Middle English) after his heresy interrogation by Archbishop Arundel. The testimony was printed in Antwerp in 1530 by an unknown sympathiser with religious reform and enthusiastically taken up by John Foxe in the first edition of his *Acts and Monuments* (1563). Foxe's discussion of it, and particularly its linguistic character, shows how in his hands it becomes a polychronic document. For Foxe, Thorpe is modern (as a precursor of the reformed English church) but preposterously so (as an early fifteenth-century figure). The archaic, medieval character of Thorpe's language (usually for Foxe a marker of a superstitious past) must here be retained (as the guarantor of Thorpe's precocious modernity). The contradictory project of *Acts and Monuments* is to bracket off a past to which there must be no return, while at the same time not only invoking that past, but also pointing to the ways in which it clearly anticipates the present.

Keywords: Lollardy; Middle English; polychronicity; Reformation; William Thorpe

1 The Fair Conjunction of Tudor History

When the Earl of Richmond, victorious at the battle of Bosworth Field in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, concludes the play with his promise to "unite the white rose and the red," his speech comes with a sense of eradicating finality (5.5.19). The earl's accession as Henry VII will put an end to the baronial strife between the houses of York and Lancaster (not yet generally known as the Wars of the Roses) and he will usher in the Tudor dynasty, symbolically clearing the way for the late Tudor world in which Shakespeare's audience lives. Richmond is, technically, a medieval character and at some level, an Elizabethan audience was perhaps aware of that. But his role here is to announce the modernity in which those audience members live.

The historical Henry VII, of course, had no reason to be so confident that anything old had ended or new begun. His immediate predecessor, after all, had lasted just two years. He himself would be at war in defence of his own shaky claim to the throne within a couple of years of the victory at Bosworth. It was not until the accession of his son Henry VIII that writers began to seem a little more confident about the Tudor dynasty. It was probably on the occasion of Henry's coronation that John Skelton sounded the theme of unity in a poem which begins by referring to the twinned symbols of the houses of York and Lancaster. "The rose both white and rede / In one rose now dothe grow [...]" Skelton proclaims, before proceeding to the "kingis line moost streight" ("A Lawde and Prayse," lines 1–2, 10). Lineage and straight lines are the poet's concern here; these are what guarantee Henry VIII's place on the throne.

At the same time, Stephen Hawes similarly if more wordily apostrophised the first Tudor:

Two tytles in one thou dydest well vnyfye
 Whan the rede rose toke the whyte in maryage
 Reygnynge togyder ryght hygh and noblye
 From whose vnyd tytyls and worthy lygnage
 Descended is by ryght excellent courage
 Kynge Henry the .viii. for to reygne doutles
 Unyuersall his fame honour and larges. ("A Ioyfull medytacyon," lines 36–42)

This commonplace imagery is perhaps most associated with Edward Hall's chronicle, *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustrate Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke*, first published by Richard Grafton in 1548, soon after Henry VIII's death. Here Hall wrote that the earlier Henry's marriage to

It is this historical conception, whether we accept it or not, which continues to inform the most basic scholarly assumptions in medieval studies and early modern studies. The very terms we continue to use – medieval, Renaissance, early modern and, of course, the concept of a medieval ‘after-life’ itself – themselves encode the same logic of supersession promoted by Skelton, Hawes, Hall, and ultimately Shakespeare. My chief interest here (reflecting the larger project from which this work is drawn) is in writing in Middle English and its sixteenth-century fates.¹ Like the Middle Ages as a period, Middle English seems to be ineluctably caught up in a linear and supersessional temporal scheme: its ‘middle’ character means that it cannot be thought about without reference to what lies on either side of it, preceding, and following. It is therefore relentlessly linear.

Indeed, there is perhaps no conventional period boundary in English history more invested in the supersessional than this, “the deepest periodic division,” as Brian Cummings and James Simpson call it, a divide which “works less as a historical marker than as a massive value judgment,” as Margreta de Grazia has it (Cummings and Simpson 3; de Grazia 453). Is there any other way of doing time than the supersessional? In this essay I want to explore what might be gained by pushing against the grain of linearity and attempting to explore, in Jonathan Gil Harris’s words, “the past’s untimely power” (20). Harris reminds us of perhaps the best-known alternative to the supersession model. In a conception deriving ultimately from the work of Michel Serres, time can be thought of as pleated and folded rather than smoothly linear. For Serres, we always live alongside both the futuristic and the archaic; a historical circumstance may be “polychronic” and “multi-temporal,” revealing “a time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats” (60). What might result if we try to reimagine the late Middle Ages and the early Tudor period in these kinds of terms?

The rosebush woodblock apparently first used in Grafton’s 1550 edition of Hall’s chronicle offers a way to explore this. The object itself would seem to be designed very specifically to illustrate an account of the Wars of the Roses, using the combined rosebushes to represent a linear, supersessional vision of history. The hierarchical verticality of the image leads the eye up to Henry VIII, who is obviously the dominant figure: awake and staring fixedly at the viewer, unlike his distant, sleeping York and Lancaster progenitors. Henry is a lively presence, though he was in fact already dead when the image made its debut.

¹ Provisionally entitled *Marvellous Darkness: Medieval Presence in Tudor England*.

Despite its apparent historical specificity, the woodblock survived, was passed down, shared, or sold, among printers and reused in new, specifically literary contexts. It appears as a woodcut border on the title page of Thomas Marshe's 1555 printing of John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (McKerrow-Ferguson 75), and is later associated with the *Canterbury Tales* in the complete works of Geoffrey Chaucer edited by John Stow in 1561 and Thomas Speght in 1598.² With each of these appearances, Henry has receded a little further into history, potentially reminding viewers of the history that has elapsed since. There is a sense in which – like any representation of a dynasty – the rosebush image represents linear history. It is a linear history, however, which has stopped. Because of its verticality it cannot be extended by the turning of a page or (in the fashion of a medieval genealogical roll) further unscrolling. It is designed to put an end to a history. Like Skelton's and Hawes's poems, the image is very concerned with the indisputable *directness* of the Tudor lineage.

In fact, of course, the earlier Henry's claim to the throne of England was notoriously weak, his accession owing a great deal to battlefield success and what Mark Greengrass calls a "straightforward coup" (264). In spite of their claims of directness, the poets' words and the rosebush image struggle to portray it. Shakespeare's Richmond refers to the "fair conjunction" he himself represents (5.5.20), a phrase which conceals the fact that there were two rival claims to the throne. Hawes, too, concedes this with his mention of the "vnyd tytyls and worthy lygnage" which necessarily put the two houses and their claims in parallel. Skelton's reference to the "kingis line moost streight" elides the parallel claims altogether. It is not surprising that the rosebushes threaten to, and frequently do, loop back on themselves as if to reverse direction; they are anything but "straight."

At the same time, for all its attempts to lead the viewer upwards and *away* from the medieval past, the rosebush image is inescapably medieval in its iconography. Most mid sixteenth-century viewers would have had little trouble recognising the juxtaposition of the archaic and the futuristic here in this obvious version of the medieval Tree of Jesse, a representation, ubiquitous on church walls and elsewhere, of the lineage of Jesus Christ. But unlike the Jesse Tree with its depiction of the inevitability of biblical prophecy and history, the supersession of the Old Testament by the New, the Tudor rosebush shows *two* lines of history, inevitably competing with one another. The

² Marshe printed *Troy Book* as *The auncient historie and onely trewe and syncere cronicle of the warres betwixte the Grecians and the Troyans*, STC 5580. For the larger context on the Chaucer publications see Megan L. Cook, *The Poet and the Antiquaries*.

Jesse Tree delivers its own futurity in the form of Christ and his promise. But the Tudor rosebush image is contradictorily doubled, showing anything but direct or straight lineage and instead exhibiting a tangled mass of genealogical possibility, out of which ultimately emerge what appear to be Yorkist and Lancastrian claims to the throne which are exactly parallel.³ The unity the image wishes to illustrate must be premised on the dual Yorkist and Lancastrian claims. The only way for this duality to be resolved is for the representative of one claim to kill the other.

Visually referring to the medieval past and its own origins in that past, the rosebush image undermines its own aspiration to depict new departures. The image is an instance of both what Harris calls a “temporality of conjunction” and a “temporality of explosion.” The different aspects of the image speak to one another, indeed depend on one another, exemplifying a conjunctive logic. But at the same time “the apparition of the ‘old’ text shatters the integrity of the ‘new’,” compromising “the illusion of its wholeness or finality” (15). Significantly, the past the rosebushes aim to supersede seems never to have died. The dukes of Lancaster and York are not recumbent on tombs like distant ancestors, but instead relaxed in sleep; like Jesse in the original image, they are dreaming the future. Overall, then, the image of the combined white and red roses, whether in verse or graphic form, never quite manages to suppress the spectral presence of the disunity it claims is extinct, undermining the purposes avowed for it by both chroniclers and poets.

In recent decades – in recognition of the problem I outline here – medievalists and early modernists alike have become used to a model rather different from the longstanding presupposition of explosive rupture between the two periods. In works too numerous to list here, going back to Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars* in 1992 (itself succeeding revisionary accounts of the English Reformation in the 1980s), we find an emphasis on the many continuities between the periods, the lack of a definitive break.⁴ This model of continuity or conjunction has been widely influential and has offered a substantial corrective to the earlier model of rupture. As Cummings and Simpson put it, “To continue to exist politely on either side of the divide is to ignore the way that the works we study, and the way in which we study them, are implicated in the complex history” of the terminology

³ See Bishop, “Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print.” What has been missed, however, is the problem created by the fact that the rosebush image effectively combines *two* Trees of Jesse.

⁴ On the historiography see further Wooding, *Tudor England*, 88–90, 583–584n7.

we use (4). This model of continuity has not been without a backlash.⁵ But the reconceptualisation of periodisation that the continuity model has brought about is profound.

Part of my purpose here, nevertheless, is to suggest that this model has reached the limits of its usefulness. Emphatically, I would not for a moment suggest winding it back. Yet while it has done a great deal to break down the sense of a necessary rupture around 1500, it has also, I suggest, ultimately allowed us to maintain the old divisions. To go a step further, as I think we now need to do, we require a model which allows more back-and-forth, more hybridity, more pleats and folds (like those of Serres's now very well-used handkerchief). Or, to remain with a metaphor closer at hand, a rosebush that puts out tendrils, extending itself in all directions and occasionally re-rooting itself in the soil it had previously left. I am concerned here with what we might call, after Francois Hartog, regimes of historicity: "the way in which a given society approaches its past and reflects upon it" and "the modalities of self-consciousness that each and every society adopts in its constructions of time and its perceptions" (9). I propose that when we sign up to a conjunctive model we necessarily fall in with a narrative of linearity and supersession in the terms of which we still align ourselves with the early modern narrative of convulsive change. I want to argue against that here and I want to do so by suggesting not only that it is a current methodological necessity, but also that early modern discourse itself, in its attitudes to the medieval past, was ineluctably hybrid.

2 Burn Before Reading: Thomas More and Heresy

In the prologue to his *Eneydos* – the *locus classicus* for discussion of the English language and translation in the late fifteenth century – William Caxton notes how he had recently been shown some material written in what he calls "the olde and auntyent englysshe," which at first, he says, baffled him, seeming more like German than English (A.iv). Caxton might be exaggerating: he has an evident commercial interest in asserting that he is doing a far

⁵ Cummings and Simpson's *Cultural Reformations* volume represents a strong attempt to enact the continuist model, with its avowed aim "to initiate new periodic conversations [...] across the standard boundaries of the 'medieval' and the early modern" (5). This aim is, ironically, resisted by a few contributors who persist with the conventional periodisation. One of these, Stephen Greenblatt, published his *The Swerve* the following year, emphatically restating the older position with its subtitle, *How the World Became Modern*.

more sweeping job than simply putting things into printed form. But it seems clear that one option for viewing the literary-linguistic past involves a sense of its opacity, its difference.

This consciousness of linguistic difference extended, by the 1540s at the latest, even to the language of Chaucer. It is, wrote Peter Ashton in 1546, “by reason of antiquitie [...] almost out of vse” (qtd. in Spurgeon 87). By 1589, and George Puttenham’s *Arte of English Poesie*, such terminology is standard. The language of Langland, Chaucer, and Lydgate, Puttenham says, “is now out of vse with vs” (3:120). The expression is a clear synonym for ‘old.’ In Thomas Elyot’s 1538 *Dictionary*, *obsoletus* is glossed as “decayed, olde, oute of vse, worne, as a garment, whan it is bare” (“obsoletus”).

When a Tudor writer appears to dismiss something as ‘old’ English it is usually in order to consign the same old English to a despised pre-Reformation past. However, the converse sometimes applies: when the same writer wishes to retrieve something from that past as being of continuing value, the same quality of oldness is shown to reveal a surprising modernity. A classic instance is in an often-quoted passage in the preface to William Thynne’s complete works of Chaucer in 1532, attributed to Sir Brian Tuke. Tuke marvels at how such an excellent poet as Chaucer arose “whan doutlesse all good letters were layde a slepe throughout ye worlde” (Aii^v). This is to be “marueyled” at because Chaucer belongs to that unenlightened past and is old, yet displays a surprising modernity.

The Thynne Chaucer – the first printed complete works – has often been seen as significant in the fortunes of Middle English writing in the period. Indeed, when it comes to thinking about the contest over what is old, and when it came to be thought of as ‘old,’ with hindsight 1532 looks like a significant moment of rupture with the past. The rise to influence of Thomas Cromwell, Thomas Cranmer and Anne Boleyn began in that year; on the conservative side, Lord Chancellor Thomas More composed the first part of his *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*. In that work, More briefly concerned himself with medieval English texts. Considering the abundance of heretical books which have become available and offering ways to combat them, More imagines a world in which the disputes of the present time might be rendered unnecessary. It would be better, he states, if unlearned readers concerned themselves neither with the books of heretics, *nor* with More’s own work. Instead, he recommends various good reading practices:

For surely the very best waye were neyther to rede thys [i.e. the *Confutation* itself] nor theyrs [the heretics’] / but rather the people vnlearned to occupye them selfe besyde theyr other busynesse in prayour, good medytacyon and

redyng of such englysshe bookes as moste may norysse and encrease deuocyon. (8:37 lines 25–29)

As other medievalists have been, I am interested in the “englysshe books” here:

Of whyche kynde is Bonauenture of the lyfe of Cryste, Gerson of the folowynge of Cryste, and the deuote contemplatyue booke of Scala perfectionis wyth such other lyke / then in the lernynge what may well be answered vnto heretykes. (8:37 lines 30–33)⁶

These works are respectively Nicholas Love’s *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*; Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi* (typically attributed at the time to Jean Gerson and here obviously referred to in its early sixteenth-century English adaptation), and Walter Hilton’s *Scala Perfectionis*. Looking to such works, More “hankers after an age of innocence,” as James Simpson puts it, “in which English lay readers were unbothered either by the works of ‘heretics’ or of their respondents” (450). That “age of innocence” is the medieval past, a world in which *present* writing – whether heretical or orthodox – is rendered unnecessary, precisely by the appeal to a prior state of being. More’s reading list of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century works suggests nostalgia for a less contested time. There were those, as we have just seen, for whom this kind of writing could already be characterised as outmoded, as superseded. But there is no question of that for More. For him, the work of these medieval writers is precisely what his readers in 1532 should be putting to use. More does not say they are old, or ancient; he simply says they are English, and that we should be reading them.

The conservative More, importantly, was not drawing on an obscure archive to make this point. Each of the titles he mentions was widely available and, we must assume, widely read throughout the first half century of print. Love’s *Mirror* was a popular work which was still circulating in manuscript while also being frequently printed: following its first production by Caxton in 1484 it became one of the staples of early English printing. The *Imitatio Christi* was translated into English by William Atkinson and printed by de Worde in 1502 and again in augmented form by Pynson in 1504. Later, it appeared several times in various versions from different presses, including those of de Worde, Robert Redman, and Robert Wyer.

⁶ Other medievalists to have noted the passage include Sargent (196–197) and Connolly (129). See also Thompson (“Love in the 1530s”).

Hence More could be confident that anyone reading *his* work could also get access to these recommended texts.⁷

It is these kinds of texts, far more than the better-known Chaucer and John Gower works, that represented the printed continuity of Middle English written culture in the period and also accounted for a large amount of the ongoing manuscript circulation. We seem then to have in them an indication of the truth of the gnarled and knotted nature of the Tudor rosebushes, their tendency to defeat linearity and supersession in favour of growing back towards an earlier time. Nothing has yet been superseded, much as such figures as William Tyndale or Cromwell might wish that to be the case. To insist on this point and mark the ongoing prevalence of Middle English devotional prose is then to participate in a continuist narrative, one which sees not supersession but continuation across the medieval-early modern divide, much as Duffy and his followers have argued.

And yet, at the same time, continuity itself points to the hybridity with which such figures as More are obliged to engage. Indeed, I argue that More contributes to that cultural hybridity, further complicating a narrative of continuity (just as much as that of rupture). Attempting an unequivocal opposition between the heterodox and orthodox, the desirable past and the disordered present, More effectively proposes that the detection and eradication of heresy is a zero-sum game. One of his favourite metaphors is that of the “poison” of heresy, which leads him to the necessity of the complete extirpation of books in which such poison is found. A heretic might recant. But poisonous books must simply be burned: the *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer* frequently refers to the burning, whether hypothetical or actual, of Tyndale’s translations. But More has already shown himself to be keenly aware of the hybridity of his own culture, in that it is not possible for him to combat heresy in print without also explaining that same heresy and thereby keeping it alive. This means that, ironically, his own work preserves the memory of heresy. Hence More’s otherwise peculiar suggestion in the *Confutation* that it would be best if *his own work*, along with the heretical books, were unread. For him it is the present moment that is untimely rather than the medieval past.

In this imagined scenario, it is entirely logical that if all heretical books were burnt the record of such heresies must also be destroyed. Only then could a previous world without heresy be restored, because such writings as the *Confutation* constitute moments of direct contact between the orthodox and heterodox; to read them is inevitably to touch and touch upon that

⁷ See on this Connolly, *Sixteenth-Century Readers* 130.

which is being confuted, leaving the unlearned reader open to the taint of the heretical knowledge that More must deploy. As More immediately goes on to say that such total oblivion is in truth impossible, he projects the reality, a hybrid or tangled rosebush of a culture, in which incompatible things exist, polychronically, alongside one another.

The theoretical answer to this problem is a return to late medieval textuality. It is the obvious and only solution: to walk religious culture back to where it was before, in the childhood of such men as More and the days of his parents, the world of Chaucer, Love, Mirk and Hilton, which still existed in abundant printed books and circulating manuscripts in More's own day. Yet even that world, as More must surely have realised, is itself an illusion. The 'age of innocence' was of course anything but. Love's *Mirror*, for instance, was an explicit riposte to Lollardy, produced at the height of the 'premature Reformation.' More's solutions to the present crisis are based on a set of unstable oppositions. His own posited absolute difference between the late medieval past and the early modern present collapses. Evangelical reformers appear committed to rupture with the past. In fact, however, what they end up espousing is something quite different; like More, reformers end up with something more hybridised, necessarily revelling in polychronicity. To illustrate this final point, I want to turn to a passage about medieval textuality in the 1570 second edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, commonly known as the *Book of Martyrs*.

3 English Spoken Here: William Thorpe, John Foxe, and Old English

When John Foxe printed the Lollard dialogue *Jack Upland* – routinely but wrongly attributed to Chaucer in the period – he offered it “in the same old English, wherein first it was set forth” (1583 4:285). “Old English” (here as usual meaning Middle English) clearly brings with it the value of antiquity, even for ardent reformers. While such English is, obviously, a marker of Chaucer's medieval character, it is also the key to his recuperation as an adherent, *avant la lettre*, of the Church of England (albeit, in this instance, via a wrong attribution). What is striking about Chaucer's supposed Protestantism is its literally preposterous character.⁸ I want here to use a different moment offered by Foxe to explore a fuller instance of the way in which old

⁸ Chaucer's role as proto-Protestant has been much discussed (e.g. Simpson 41–42; Georgianna).

English served as a guarantor of authenticity and, paradoxically, of modernity.

The Lollard William Thorpe was examined by Archbishop Arundel in 1407 for his suspected heresy. In the supposedly autobiographical testament which resulted, Thorpe makes it clear that he did indeed hold Wycliffite views, and shows himself as outmanoeuvring Arundel in argument. Thorpe was not condemned; the testimony was somehow put into circulation in manuscript and became a valuable record for early sixteenth-century evangelicals of their medieval precursor. The testimony exists today in a single English manuscript and two Latin ones, but was known in the sixteenth century from a print produced in English in Antwerp around 1530, which itself has independent authority. This text was one of several Lollard “revenant texts” to appear in print around this time, as Greg Walker notes, “disrupt[ing] ideas of chronology and periodisation by being of no period and of several simultaneously” (132). As Walker also notes, several of these texts (Thorpe’s among them) then reappeared in the 1560s and 1570s. Foxe used the 1530 printed version of Thorpe’s testimony in producing his own version in the first edition of *Acts and Monuments* (1563); for him, naturally, Thorpe is a heroic precursor of the English church, whose apparent first-hand testimony allows the reader to experience “the maruelous force & strength of the Lordes might, spirit and grace, working and figthing in his Souldiers, and also speaking in their mouthes” (1563 2:195). Thorpe’s existence in 1407 demonstrates the great value of Lollardy for the sixteenth-century reformer, in that it provides a handy answer to the perennial question: Where was your church before Luther?

In the original printed edition of Thorpe’s testimony, produced in Antwerp in 1530, the compiler noted the following:

This I haue corrected and put forth in the english that now is vsed in Englande / for ower sothern men / nothyng thereto addyng ne yet therfrom mynysshing. And I entende hereafter with the helpe of God to put it forthe in his owne olde english which shal well serue / I doute not / bothe for the northern men and the faythfull brothern of scotlande. (A2^v)⁹

The assumptions are quite typical of the period, as we have already seen: medieval English is outdated and difficult to read, because of diachronic linguistic change. Never mind that just two years later, Chaucer’s English is

⁹ Hudson (227–248, esp. 245) suggests that this work – like other early prints of Wycliffite material – shows every sign of being a conservative version of a manuscript original.

thought perfectly acceptable in William Thynne's complete works. Old English is not, however, viewed through a purely diachronic lens: the implication here is that what is spoken in 1530 in northern England and Scotland is something very like this old English. Thorpe's "owne olde english," it turns out, is not utterly out of use.

In 1563, Foxe noted that he was printing from what he thought was a version made by Tyndale (that is, the earlier print) and that Tyndale himself had Thorpe's own manuscript. Echoing the earlier compiler, Foxe said that "To the text of the story we haue neither added nor diminished" (195). In the 1576 edition, he expanded on the nature of the text as follows.

To the text of the story [ie Thorpe's testimony] we haue neyther added nor diminished: But as we haue receyued it, copied out, & corrected by maister William Tindal (who had his owne hand writing [i.e., Thorpe's manuscript]) so we haue here sent it and set it out abroade. Although for the more credite of the matter, I rather wished it in his own naturall speache, wherein it was first written. Notwithstanding, to put away al doubt & scrouple herein, this I thought before to premonishe and testifie to the reader, touchyng the certaintie hereof: that they be yet alyue which haue sene the selfe same copy in his owne old English, resembling the true antiquitie both of the speache, and of the tyme: The name of whom as for recorde of the same to auouche, is M. Whithead, who as he hath seene the true auncient copie in the handes of George Constantine, so hath he geuen credible relation of the same, both to the printer, and to me. Furthermore the said maister Tindall (albeit he dyd somewhat alter and amend the English thereof, and frame it after our manner) yet not fully in all words, but that something doth remayne, sauering of the olde speache of the tyme. (1576 5:535)

What this slightly contorted passage seems designed to negotiate is the fact that Foxe has not actually seen the Thorpe manuscript and Thorpe's own "naturall," that is to say medieval, "speache." Lacking that "hand writing" himself, Foxe must use the 1530 printed rendition of the testimony (here attributed to Tyndale), which was itself already a partial modernisation, while assuring the reader of the existence of the manuscript original on which that print was based, which others "yet alyue" have seen.

The original manuscript operates here as an elusive contact relic of the early Church of England. In its place, Foxe must make do with a secondary copy, the version made and adjusted by "Tyndale," which means that Foxe's readers of a printed work are distanced still further. It is directly for this reason that Foxe assures the reader that in the "Tyndale" copy there remain traces of that same old English which is the guarantor of the antiquity of Thorpe's precocious Protestantism. Foxe's aim in his re-presentation of Tyndale's re-presentation of Thorpe's testimony is to invoke or at least ges-

ture to the existence of what Ulinka Rublack has called a “grapho-relic:” a handwritten document or textual relic of early evangelicalism which stands in, for later reformers, as a contact relic (“Grapho-Relics”). In Foxe’s account there is no talk of a still-existing old English in the north; in 1576, it seems, Foxe sees “old English” as a little further distant in time than it had been for the 1530 printer.

But far from lamenting the rude and old English of the medieval past, Foxe here desperately *seeks* old English as the guarantor of the relic’s authenticity and efficacy. There is nothing remarkable about Thorpe’s religious position without its antiquity; Thorpe is a man who is, preposterously, out of his time. Hence paradoxically, while “old English” clearly places Thorpe in the past, it also has the role of highlighting Thorpe’s precocious *modernity*.

The general thrust of Foxe’s book is a rigidly linear historicism the point of which is to contrast an unenlightened past with the present. “The polemical account of the Middle Ages offered by Foxe and other Protestant reformers,” as Jesse Lander writes, “promoted a perception of historical change that served to confirm their claim that the world was witnessing the dawn of a new age” (“Monkish Middle Ages” 94). It is not a surprise to find that the *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Foxe (in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments*) with the first use of the period term “Middle Ages” in English (“middle age *n.* and *adj.* A.n.2”). But at the same time Foxe enacts a form of nascent philology, acknowledging the difference of the past *not* to condemn it but rather to argue for its utility for the present. Another way of thinking about this is that Foxe *needs* hybridity; he needs an English which is both modern (and therefore readable) *and* ancient (and therefore genuinely indicative of the present in the past, the atemporality of the early ‘reformer’ Thorpe). To misconstrue Skelton only slightly, how can a rose be *both* white and red? How can Thorpe’s testimony be both ancient and modern? The Tudor claim to the throne required the resolution of a paradox, two lines turned into one. Foxe needs Thorpe’s elusive original language, which is decisively absent, to make itself present. He needs the past and present to intermingle.

4 Conclusion: The Future is Rosy

It is scarcely possible to think about Foxe’s version of Thorpe’s testimony without having recourse to a model of temporality more complicated than a simple linear one which would string out in a line Thorpe’s manuscript

testimony, the 1530 print edition, and Foxe's own version. As Walker recognises (following the art historians Christopher S. Wood and Alexander Nagel), the Thorpe text is an "anachronic artefact," "warping productively our sense of the linearity of book history" (131). We know little about the circulation of the manuscript(s); the first print presents the testimony as both of, and out of, its time; Foxe, finally, offers a version in 1563 which partakes of that of 1530 and gestures towards an earlier manuscript he has never seen. It is a performance of polychronicity in which Foxe's attempt to touch the past – avowing that he knows people who saw the manuscript – is explicit. The contradictory project of *Acts and Monuments* is to bracket off a past to which there must be no return, while at the same time not only invoking that past, but also pointing to the ways in which it clearly anticipates the present.

In the same way, I argue *we* scholars need a sense of polychronicity when we think about medieval and early modern, a sense of the way in which the archaic and futuristic were juxtaposed. This clearly goes beyond a model of continuity and is much messier than that model. Our emphasis on the continuity between medieval and early modern has done great work; I propose that we could now do with crumpling the handkerchief, seeing a little more back and forth, tangled like an ancient bush which reaches into our present while remaining firmly rooted in the past.

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Eve, Mary and Female Catholic Threat in John
Dryden's *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*
(1677)

This essay considers the early afterlife of Eve, one of John Milton's best-known characters. Although largely forgotten today, John Dryden's adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*, enjoyed significant print popularity in the seventeenth century. The abiding critical interpretation of Dryden's semi-opera is that it reframes Milton's poetics, politics, philosophy and theology either to provide cynical mockery of Milton or else to create a (poorly executed) Royalist heroic play. Dryden's peculiar depictions of Adam and Eve have received far less attention and yet, as I argue in this essay, the portrayal of Adam as effeminate and Eve as a powerful, manipulative female figure offer the clearest indication of the play's politics. I break from a critical tradition that has tended to polarise Milton and Dryden and instead read Dryden's characters in the context of contemporary, satirical, representations of Charles II, and attacks on what were deemed to be overly-influential female Catholic figures at court, such as Mary of Modena, who married James, Duke of York – the heir presumptive of Charles II – in 1673, and to whom Dryden's opera is dedicated.

Keywords: Milton, Dryden, gender, adaptation, Catholicism

The abiding critical interpretation of John Dryden's *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man* (1677) is that Dryden's adaptation evacuates John Milton's poetics, politics, philosophy, and theology and reframes *Paradise Lost* either as a cynical mockery of Milton or else as a (poorly executed) Royalist heroic play. For example, Diana Traviño Benet accuses Dryden of "cannibalizing the great Christian epic" (263); Anne Ferry calls it an "offensive vulgarization" (21); Lara Dodds states that it is in many ways "a deliberate challenge to Milton's poetic and political commitments" (2); Morris Freedman suggests that "the futility of the project overwhelmed" Dryden and prevented the opera from being staged, and

that the project helped Dryden to recognise the shortcomings of heroic verse (18); and Steven Zwicker calls it “trivializing, domesticating, even ridiculous or comic” (*Milton, Dryden, and the Politics of Literary Controversy* 54). Sharon Achinstein is slightly more sympathetic, considering the adaptation thoughtful rather than mocking, but still suggests that it “sets [Milton’s] original straight, limits ‘licence’” and “makes rational order triumphant” in an act of Royalist rewriting that is antithetical to Milton’s principles (18). Though these readings sometimes acknowledge the contemporary popularity of Dryden’s text, their desire to read Dryden in opposition to Milton – which is arguably shaped by the posthumous afterlives and political reputations of the two writers – has caused them to overlook the analogous criticism of key royal figures found in Dryden’s opera.¹

Negative appraisals of Dryden’s opera often adopt the same tone once reserved for Restoration adaptations of William Shakespeare’s plays, with Milton and Shakespeare’s (now) better-known works revered and rewrites disparaged in ways that overlook the role adaptation often plays in the canonisation of individual texts and authors (Depledge, *Shakespeare’s Rise to Cultural Prominence*, “Shakespeare for Sale;” Dobson). Although it is Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) which has stood the test of time and remained a household name, Dryden’s semi-operatic adaptation was well known in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and it played an important role in the afterlife of Milton’s poem. *The State of Innocence* circulated widely in manuscript from around 1673,² and went through an impressive nine print editions between 1677 and the turn of the century. *Paradise Lost* went through six editions between 1667 and 1700 and, as the table below indicates, new editions of *Paradise Lost* were issued shortly after editions of *The State of Innocence*. *Paradise Lost* was first published in quarto format in 1667. The second edition of *Paradise Lost*, an octavo, was not published until seven years later, in 1674, and its appearance looks to have been influenced by manuscript circulation of *The State of Innocence*. Indeed, the 1674 edition makes reference to Dryden’s adaptation in its paratextual materials; Marvell’s poem, “On Paradise

¹ On Milton’s authorial reputation and the afterlife of tyranny see David Loewenstein’s chapter in this volume.

² A circa 1673 circulation date is indicated by the fact that the text was likely intended to celebrate the marriage feast of James Duke of York and Mary of Modena in late 1673 (see Gabel 188). A late 1673 or early 1674 composition date is also corroborated by the fact that the opera was entered into the Stationers’ Register by Henry Herringman on 17th April 1674.

Lost,” which prefaces the edition, mocks “Town-Bayes” for tagging verses with rhyming bells, a clear reference to Dryden’s nickname and, perhaps, to the now infamous meeting between Dryden and Milton in which Milton is said to have given Dryden leave to “tagge his verses” (Aubrey 7). The same poetic voice fears that “some less skilful hand” would “change [*Paradise Lost*] in Scenes, and show it in a Play,” thus implying awareness (and criticism) of Dryden’s adaptation. The third edition of *Paradise Lost* (1678) appeared within twelve months of *The State of Innocence*’s first print edition. As Emma Depledge has argued, the 1688 edition of *Paradise Lost* – a folio edition which is widely believed to have helped secure the poem’s canonical status – might have been published by Jacob Tonson (and Richard Bentley) as a “consolation prize” when he was unable to obtain the rights in copy to publish *The State of Innocence* (“Repackaging Milton” 50). The 1691 and 1695 editions of *Paradise Lost* likewise followed hot on the heels of new editions of *The State of Innocence*. Thus, Dryden’s adaptation prompted paratextual engagement in one edition of *Paradise Lost* and may well have inspired stationers to invest in new editions of Milton’s poem.

Table 1: Circulation and Publication Dates of *Paradise Lost* and *The State of Innocence*

1667 1st edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i>
c.1673 Manuscript of Dryden’s <i>The State of Innocence</i> in circulation
1674 2nd edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i> , featuring paratextual allusions to <i>The State of Innocence</i>
1677 1st edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i>
1678 2nd edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i> 3rd edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i>
1684 3rd and 4th editions of <i>The State of Innocence</i>
1688 4th edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i> (folio)
1690 5th edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i>

<p>1691 5th edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i></p>
<p>1692 6th edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i></p>
<p>1695 7th and 8th edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i> 6th edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i></p>
<p>“1684” 9th edition of <i>The State of Innocence</i>, with a false date, but must date from later than 1695 (Hamilton 163)</p>

Dryden’s decision to adapt Milton’s poem and thereby participate in the discourse that Alan Roper has described as “the politics of Paradise” was carefully orchestrated (110). Seventeenth-century Royalists, most famously Sir Robert Filmer in his *Patriarcha: or the natural power of kings* (published 1680, but circulated in manuscript much earlier), seized on the character of Adam to argue that divine monarchy and patriarchal power descended directly from the Adamic line (B8r–B8v), but Republicans fiercely rejected this assertion (Almond 107–109). Readers of *The State of Innocence* would have been aware of the political analogue of Adam and the institution of the monarchy and they might have expected Dryden – as Poet Laureate (from 1668) and Historiographer-Royal (from 1670) – to exploit these links to voice support for the reigning monarch and his extended family, but this was not the case.

Dryden’s version of Adam does not defend Adamic authority and patriarchal rights. For Matthew Augustine, Dryden’s weak, lustful, and ineffectual Adam reflects a pessimism about the stability of monarchy under an effeminate monarch like Charles II (239). Indeed, effeminacy – in the seventeenth-century sense of being governed by women (Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* 9) – was something Charles II, and the Stuarts more generally, were frequently accused of in the period. The ideological notion of kingship, as Paul Hammond explains, was travestied by the physical existence of the debauched King (123–124), and Charles’s public, sexualised body was the topic of a number of satirical poems (Weil). Augustine is correct to relate Dryden’s Adam – who “resigns his boasted sovereignty” to Eve (C3r) – with critiques of the King. Indeed, I would echo Augustine’s argument – a necessary antidote to the critical tradition which considers Dryden at odds with Milton – that we should consider Dryden’s decision to adapt Milton’s work not as a repudiation of Milton

and an evacuation of his politics but instead as an “interpellation of Milton’s oppositional view of Stuart monarchy” (239).

The opera’s political cynicism may also help to explain the print success enjoyed by *The State of Innocence*. Dryden’s departure from the more orthodox royalist representation of Adam can be in part explained by the fact that satirical, tongue-in-cheek plays which contained thinly veiled criticisms of political figures were far more popular in the 1670s than the bombastic Royalist heroic works of the 1660s (Owen, “Restoration Drama and Politics”), and Dryden was no stranger to courting both popularity and controversy. In this paper I will offer further evidence for reading *The State of Innocence* as veiled criticism of the Stuart court by focusing less on Adam’s effeminacy and more on Dryden’s representation of Eve as a powerful female figure who manipulates weak men. These tropes were associated with the dangers of Catholic women in the period and, most specifically in the 1670s, with James Duke of York’s new Catholic bride, Mary of Modena. I contend that Dryden’s dedication to Mary, its material representation on the title pages of the editions, as well the parallels he makes between his dedicatee and the depiction of Eve, participate in and reflect contemporary anti-Catholic rhetoric to offer a veiled warning to the Stuart monarchy – that the consequences of their choice of female bedfellows may result in an irreversible fall.

1 Politics and “Popery” in 1673 and 1677

The dates of *The State of Innocence*’s appearance in manuscript and its first print edition – c.1673 and 1677 respectively – both coincide with moments of heightened anti-Catholic feeling. By 1673 it was becoming increasingly clear that James, Duke of York – whose Catholicism was widely suspected and then confirmed by the Test Act issued that year – would succeed his brother as king, as Charles II and his wife, Catherine of Braganza, had yet to produce a legitimate heir.³ Anti-Catholic sentiment reached its height by the late 1670s and early 1680s, with the publication of Andrew Marvell’s *An Account of Popery and Arbitrary Government* (1677), the explosion of printed tracts about a (fabricated) Popish Plot in

³ The 1673 Test Act required anyone occupying any civil, military or religious office to take the oath of supremacy and allegiance and to deny the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, effectively forcing all Catholics out of public office. See Douglas C. Sparks (2016) for further discussion.

1678, and subsequent calls to ban James from the succession (the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-1681).⁴

The threat of a return to Catholic rule loomed large and Adam's declaration that he is "A barren sex, and single, of no use; / But full of forms which I can ne'r produce" will likely have invited comparison with the monarch's childless marriage (*State of Innocence* C1r). Charles II did 'produce' illegitimate offspring, but this was of little use in terms of the succession, and his excessive virility led to attacks on his wife, who was frequently accused of being 'barren.'⁵ Concern over the succession underscored the pivotal importance of women and maternity in politics, and perhaps heightened the tension and suspicion around James's second marriage. James and Mary's union in the same year as the Test Act compounded the public and Parliament's fears surrounding Catholic ascendancy. The match was virulently contested by Parliament on the basis that a foreign, Catholic princess would pose a significant threat to the stability of the monarchy and the religion within the three kingdoms, and Charles II was forced to prorogue parliament and dismiss his Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Shaftesbury to prevent their interference in the proceedings (Hallé 35–40).

Many feared that the state of Rome and the Pope himself were plotting to gain control of England through this match, and fears of the Pope's involvement were not entirely unfounded. Mary, initially resistant to marriage and intending to become a nun, only acquiesced due to the intervention of the Pope, who wrote to convince her that her marriage would be of service to the Catholic church by "preparing for us, in the Kingdom of England an ample harvest of joy" (Hallé 21). In this sense, the fears of Parliament and the public are reflected in the Pope's hopes: the alliance was suspected on both sides of being capable of advancing the counter-Reformation in England. News of this marriage and Mary's arrival were greeted not with parades and street parties, but instead with the revival, for the first time since the reign of Elizabeth I, of bonfires and Pope-burning pageants (Johnson 64; Rustici).

The gendered aspect of the threat which Mary was presumed to pose at her arrival is related not only to the fears of succession and her potential fertility, but also to historical concerns about Catholic women and

⁴ See Jonathan Scott, 7–21.

⁵ For example, Michal is described as "A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care" in Dryden's *Absolom and Achitophel* (1681) in order to justify Absolom's "Promiscuous use of concubine and bride" (l.12, l.6), for discussion see Susan C. Greenfield.

sexuality. These are particularly visible in, for example, the Earl of Rochester's poem "Seigneure Dildoe," circulated circa November 1673 at the time of their wedding feast (Love), which begins by asking the "Ladies of merry England" if they have "been to kisse the Duchesse's hand" and whether they had met in her retinue "A noble Italian called *Signeur Dildoe*" (Wilmot 145). As Sandra Jean Sullivan has argued, this poem constitutes "an attack on [Mary] for bringing unspeakable vices as a Catholic wife of the Catholic heir presumptive to the throne" (112). Associations between Catholic women, vice, and monstrosity were not new, they recycled images of the "poisonous Catholic bride" and the potential "monstrous Catholic mother [...] who would infect the individual conscience, commission the rape of the innocent, and destroy the nation to satisfy her Popish masters," of which Henrietta Maria had been the archetype (Airey, *The Politics of Rape* 18). Mary's arrival in 1673 was thus a catalyst for existing anxiety regarding the figure of the female Catholic.

By 1677 and the publication of the first edition of *The State of Innocence*, anti-Popish sentiments were at an all-time high. Marvell's *An Account of Popery and Arbitrary Government* notably discusses Parliament's earlier objections to the marriage based on the "continual apprehensions of the increase of Popery" and the idea that, through Mary, Catholic plots against "the Realm" might come to fruition (F4v). For Marvell and other opposition writers, these objections were still fresh and current, and remained so in 1678 when the Duchess became embroiled in the so-called "Popish Plot." Mary's secretary, Edward Coleman, was found with incriminating letters which lent weight to Titus Oates' claims of a plot to assassinate Charles II and replace him with James, who would rule – it was suggested – with the help of a standing army furnished by his French, Catholic cousin, Louis XIV. Coleman was hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason (Kishlansky 254) and, by 1679, James and Mary were forced to live in (temporary) exile in Edinburgh.

It is within this climate of anti-Catholic sentiment that Dryden chose to adapt Milton's fiercely anti-Catholic poem and dedicate it to Mary, the Catholic queen presumptive, a figure of intense public vilification. There is evidence to suggest that Dryden was already thinking of associating his text with the arrival of Mary and her marriage to James in 1673. It is likely that *The State of Innocence* was intended for performance at James and Mary's marriage celebrations in 1673 (Gabel 188) – celebrations which were, tellingly, largely cancelled due to the unpopularity of the match – and Dryden may still have presented her with a manuscript copy (Verrall 209). This association is maintained in 1677 as Mary features

prominently as the dedicatee of the first print edition. Stephen Zwicker has suggested that Dryden may have written this exaggerated dedication to antagonize and bait Milton and Marvell, in response to the aforementioned rebukes of his opera in the 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost* (Zwicker, “John Dryden Meets, Rhymes, and Says Farewell” 184–186). I would instead argue that Dryden’s text responds to and participates in the production of fears about Mary, Catholicism, and female influence, and that his praise of Mary in the dedication is disingenuous; the paratext is a means to detract from the criticism of Mary and the monarchy found both in his opera and within the language of the paratext itself.

2 The Material Text and Political Subtext of Dryden’s Dedication

Dedicatees are normally mentioned inside playbooks, but all seventeenth-century editions of *The State of Innocence* name “The Duchess,” i.e. Mary, in large, prominent letters in the centre of the title page. This is very unusual for Dryden publications. Across all of Dryden’s other works, I found only two other examples of dedicatees who make it onto the title page. Both examples occur much later in his career and under a different publisher, Tonson: *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis* (1693) and *Eleonora* (1692). The dedication to the Earl of Dorset in *The Satires* is much less prominent, and is only noticeable if you actively read the title page looking for its dedicatee. *Eleonora*’s title page gives equal if not more prominence to the dedicatee than *The State of Innocence* does to Mary, but this text, as it states on the title page, was a “Panegyric poem,” commissioned by a husband in memory of his late wife. As such, not mentioning the name prominently on the title page would have been more surprising. The dedication to the Duchess in *The State of Innocence* was not commissioned, and though Dryden had arguably more important dedicatees for other texts they never appeared on his title pages. Of course, it could be argued that this was a decision made by the publisher and printer of the first edition, on which later editions were based. However, Henry Herringman and Thomas Newcomb, the stationers who collaborated on this first edition, also collaborated on other editions of Dryden’s plays: *All for Love* (1678), with a dedication to Thomas Earl of Danby; *Amboyna* (1673), with a dedication to Lord Clifford of Chudleigh; *Aureng-Zebe* (1676), with a dedication to John, Earl of Mulgrave and, perhaps most tellingly, *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), with a dedication to James Duke of York. In all of these playbooks, published and prin-

ted by the same stationers, not one of Dryden's dedicatees features on the title page. The prominence of Mary as dedicatee on the title page of *The State of Innocence* is thus unprecedented in his work, and, I would argue, this suggests that the rationale for the dedication goes beyond the need to simply curry political favour. It is also intended to function as a gloss or commentary on the text itself, in line with Gérard Genette's argument that paratextual materials function as thresholds of interpretation and are inextricably bound up with the content of the narrative and its reception (1). As the early printed editions make clear, we must keep Mary in mind when reading *The State of Innocence*.

The dedicatory letter is hyperbolic and has been described as Dryden's "most heavily perfumed" piece of prose (Winn 254). It focuses primarily on the theme of Mary's beauty, but also makes continuous and pointed reference to her (supposed) religious virtue. For Zwicker, the dedication is "astonishing" because in the praise of "the most famous and feared Roman Catholic in England" Dryden "exalt[s] the mystery and glory of her virtue in an idiom which he adopts pointedly from the writings of St Theresa" ("Milton, Dryden, and the Politics of Literary Controversy" 154). The offensive passage is as follows: "the priest was always unequal to the oracle: the god within him was too mighty for the breast: he laboured with the sacred revelation, and there was more of the mystery left behind than the divinity itself could enable him to express" (A1v). Dryden also references fears associated with Mary's interference in politics and power: "You have subverted (may I dare to accuse you of it?) even our fundamental laws; you reign absolute over the hearts of a stubborn and freeborn people, tenacious to madness of their liberty" (A2v). Zwicker argues that the daring language of this dedication is "hovering between amusement and contempt for public fears;" he accepts that it is "difficult to fix," but ultimately suggests that it constitutes a "piece of service" to the monarchy and serves predominantly to "subjugate Milton's Protestant poetry and poetics in a most humiliating way" ("Milton, Dryden, and the Politics of Literary Controversy" 156). Thomas H. Luxon disagrees that the dedication contains an ill-natured swipe at Milton and instead argues that Dryden was trying "to praise the royal couple in some of the new language of heroic virtue he had gathered from Milton's great poem" by borrowing "this rhetoric of praise from Milton's (And Adam's) own words about Eve" (14, 12), but both Zwicker and Luxon read the praise of Mary as intended to flatter – whether designed to aggravate political opponents or to sincerely, albeit naively, strengthen the Royalist cause.

What is not noted here, or in other criticism, are the pointed references made to Mary's negative reception, which surely seem out of place in a statement of loyalty. Rather than baiting the opposition by sardonically reframing their own fears, as Zwicker suggests, Dryden instead undermines his dedication to Mary through repeated references to the lack of celebration and praise she received upon her arrival: "Thus *MADAM*, in the midst of Clouds you Reign in Solitude; and are ador'd with the deepest Veneration, that of Silence" (A2r). Whilst he does attempt to gloss this as a positive – by suggesting that it was her beauty which evoked a stunned speechlessness – the veneer is all too thin, and ending the sentence with the word "Silence" causes readers to take pause. This "Silence" does not only draw attention to the lack of celebrations, but can also be seen as a conspicuous reference to the overt and loud public demonstrations against her and her religion. Further, Dryden writes that she has caused "The brightest and most victorious of our Ladies [to] make daily complaints of revolted Subjects" (A2v). Though once again couched in the positive frame that her beauty means that all men have abandoned previous mistresses or lovers for her, when combined with the language of "Rebellious Fugitives" (A2r), it is ominously similar to the rhetoric of Catholic brides seizing power through sexual domination (Dolan). More particularly, the Duchess did not seem to make a great impression at court, as one commentator remarks that "Most of our great ladies have been rude in their behaviour towards the Duchess of Modena" (Blackburne 40), and so this reference to ladies' complaints might have been founded on a genuine lack of popularity known to courtly readers of the text. These underhanded remarks in the dedication may have raised suspicions about why this particular text, which openly recognises a Protestant republican as its source, was dedicated to Mary, a Catholic princess. Indeed, if Mary or James ever read *The State of Innocence* then they might also have been rightly concerned about the play's depiction of a marriage in which a woman wields power before causing both the fall of her husband – and all of mankind – and the loss of the dominion over which he was "made [...] to Reign" (B4v).

3 Dryden's Eve and the Female Threat in *The State of Innocence*

Dryden's Eve has more agency and power than Milton's Eve and she becomes the main subversive threat in the text, displacing Lucifer and the devils. Comparison of Milton and Dryden's Eve reveals three key ways in

which Dryden modified the character and each alteration, as I intend to argue, invites parallels between Eve and Mary whilst voicing anti-Catholic rhetoric. Firstly, Eve's own recognition of her power and manipulative abilities render Adam helpless. Secondly, Eve's relationship with Dryden's Lucifer, a far less prominent figure than Milton's Satan, depicts Eve not as victim but instead as seducer of herself and author of her own fall. Finally, the consequences for Eve following the fall have been changed in Dryden's adaptation.

From birth Dryden's Eve displays a habitual instinct of gaining power over others. Eve's first lines in the semi-opera indicate her awareness of her power:

The feather'd kind peep down, to look on me;
And Beasts, with up-cast eyes, forsake their shade,
And gaze, as if I were to be obey'd.
Sure I am somewhat which they wish to be,
And cannot: I my self am proud of me. (C3r)

Further, Dryden retains and expands Milton's Narcissus-like reflection-scene and shows Eve trying to embrace her reflection in a fountain. Upon failing to take possession of her own reflection, instead of God gently intervening to correct her, Eve instead gives voice to misogynistic rhetoric about female nature: "Ah, fair, yet false; ah Being, form'd to cheat / By seeming kindness, mixt with deep deceit" (C3r). Having thus recognised her power, beauty, and deceitfulness, Eve's instinctive reaction to Adam's longing for sexual relations is to wield her sexual power to control Adam and maintain sovereignty.

Somewhat forbids me, which I cannot name
For ignorant of guilt I fear not shame:
For some restraining thought, I know not why,
Tells me, you long should beg, I long deny...
I well fore-see, when e'r thy suit I grant,
That I my much-lov'd Sovereignty shall want. (C3v)

This is not, then, a pre-lapsarian and innocent Eve, but instead, as Airey has argued, an Eve "already fallen" ("Eve's Nature, Eve's Nurture" 529). Her demurring and reluctance to copulate may also have been read by contemporaries as analogous to Mary's initial refusal to marry James and the delayed consummation of their union due to their proxy marriage. Dryden's Eve, far more clearly than Milton's, wishes to gain power over

herself and others. Eve is thus a character who reflects misogynistic fears of the threat posed by female agency.

Eve appears more threatening because her manipulations are successful and result in Adam worshipping her in an idolatrous fashion, reminiscent – to seventeenth-century Protestants – of Catholicism. Adam continually reveres Eve as a second God. At their first meeting he states: “Thee Goddess, thee th’Eternal did ordain / His softer Substitute on Earth to Reign” (C3r). Adam is thus shown to idolize Eve in the same way Catholics were perceived to idolize female figures. As Francis Dolan has argued, Catholic iconography often focused on powerful women such as the Virgin Mary and St Theresa (whose writing, as mentioned above, is referenced in Dryden’s dedication). For Protestants of all sects in seventeenth-century England, the notion of praying to and worshipping a human woman in the figure of the Virgin Mary was not only considered idolatrous but also intrinsically tied to fears of female agency.

Returning to Dryden’s dedication once again, the language reflects an awareness of these fears of idolized Catholic women and ties them to the impact of Mary whose beauty, he says, inspires a love akin to dangerous religious zeal:

To hope to be a God, is folly exalted into madness: but by the Laws of our Creation we are oblig’d to Adore him; and are permitted to love him too, at Humane distance. ’Tis the nature of Perfection to be attractive; but the Excellency of the object refines the nature of the love. IT strikes an impression of awful reverence; ’tis indeed that Love which is more properly a Zeal than Passion. ’Tis the rapture which Anchorites find in Prayer, when a Beam of the Divinity shines upon them [...] Mortality cannot bear it often: it finds them in the eagerness and height of their Devotion, they are speechless for the time that it continues, and prostrate and dead when it departs. (A2v)

He couches this supposed compliment in terms of the “madness” of hoping to be a God, and likens meeting her to the experiences of monks who in worship forfeit their speech and life: a particularly sobering and damning image to use in a dedication to the most feared Catholic woman in England. That this idolatry and the religious zeal for beauty represented in the dedication to Mary is reflected in Adam’s response to Eve, which results in their fall from paradise, arguably compounds the association Dryden hoped his readers would make between Eve and Mary.

Adam is not the only character who pales in comparison to the newly empowered Eve figure as Lucifer, Dryden’s Satan, also has a drastically reduced role in Dryden’s adaptation. He and his court of devils become a

parody of Interregnum republicans and Lucifer, no longer a powerful leader, is just another member of the council. Dryden's Satan figure no longer plots with Beelzebub in advance of the council of Hell to corrupt humankind as Milton's does (Milton 2.379–380). In Milton, this kind of subterfuge shows that Satan only co-opts republican discourse and does not in fact believe in it, undermining freedom of speech and liberty and ruling as a tyrant. By contrast, Dryden's Lucifer and the council of devils come to the decision far more collaboratively. Indeed, it is not even Lucifer's suggestion but that of another devil, one who does not feature at all in Milton, called Asmodey. There is no indication that this has been pre-prepared and Lucifer is not characterised as an individual "Machiavelian" schemer and usurper but simply as a tool of the Republic of Hell. It is worth mentioning, however, that despite this reduced role, Dryden does make sure to give Lucifer a line that reflects Catholic threat: when opening the council, he exclaims that the devils can "blow him up, who justly Rules us now" (B2r). The allusion will not have been lost on contemporary audiences used to witnessing celebrations of England's preservation from the 1605 Gunpowder Plot during Pope-burning pageants held annually on November 5th on the streets of London (Rustici 271).

More importantly, Lucifer is rendered almost auxiliary in the seduction of Eve. In Dryden's text, Eve is not led to the tree by a serpent who has interrupted her work. She has instead separated herself from Adam to deliberately come to visit the tree alone:

Thus far, at least, with leave, nor can it be
A sin to look on this Celestial Tree...
But Heav'n forbids: I could be satisfy'd
Were every tree but this, but this deny'd. (E3r)

It could be argued that it is Lucifer's earlier whispered invasion of her dreams which convinces Eve to go to the tree. Certainly, the dream takes on grander proportions and more prevalence in the operatic version than it does in Milton's epic poem, and it is presented as a theatrical spectacle that Lucifer "set[s] before the Woman's eyes" because "Vain shows, and Pomp, the softer sex betray" (D2r). Even in this scene, however, Lucifer's role is rendered less textually and visually prominent: the stage is taken up by the tree, dancing angels, and a "*Woman, habited like Eve*" (D2r), who takes an active role in the persuasive spectacle, whilst Lucifer merely "sits down by Eve" in the background (D2r). Eve as a character is thus more prominent as a figure in a masque designed to persuade herself to sin, more deliberate and aware of her choice to fall and then to bring the

human race with her.⁶ This dream sequence is perhaps reflective of ideas that Mary was a Catholic insurgent poised to bring down Protestant England from the marriage bed: Adam remains in the scene sleeping soundly next to her.

Similarly, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it is Satan who rhetorically convinces Eve that God would not allow a lowly beast to eat the fruit while forbidding her, asking "Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast / is open?" (9.691–692). However, in *The State of Innocence*, it is Eve who begins to convince herself of her right to eat the fruit. Having seen a serpent eat from the tree, before Lucifer as a character can appear on stage and begin his persuasion, she already begins to persuade herself of her right to eat it using the same arguments as Milton's Satan.

Strange sight! Did then our great Creator grant
That priviledge, which we their Masters want,
To these inferior beings? Or was it chance?
And was he blest with bolder ignorance?
I saw his curling crest the trunk infold:
The ruddy fruit, distinguish'd ore with gold,
And smiling in its native wealth, was torn
From the rich bough, and then in triumph born:
The vent'rous victor march'd unpunish'd hence,
And seem'd to boast his fortunate offence. (E3v)

Here, Dryden even has Eve use the language of Milton's Satan to describe the tree, borrowing the description of the fruit as "Ruddie and Gold" directly from Satan's lines to Eve (9.578). Though the serpent eating the fruit and prompting this reflection is supposed to be Lucifer in disguise, his role is more insubstantial and functions predominantly as a prompt for Eve's own proclivities, mirroring the dream sequence. Once again, it is Eve's interpretation of a visual spectacle and her vanity, her sense of her

⁶ The clear masque-like aspects of the dream vision are worthy of further investigation as it is notable that Dryden uses a genre heavily associated with Royalist politics and ideology not, for example, to represent a heaven-like courtly culture but instead in association with Lucifer, Eve, and the temptation of sin. At the very end of the play there is a stage direction referring to a short spectacle designed to show the utopian state they might achieve in the future, but it is in no way as fully developed as the dream masque: "Here a Heaven descends, full of Angels and blessed Spirits, with soft Music, a Song and Chorus" (G2v). Eve's response to this promise of potential future happiness is also damning: "Ravish'd, with Joy, I can but half repent / The sin which Heav'n makes happy in th'event" (G2v).

power and entitlement, which persuades her to eat. Though the spectacle is necessarily brought about by Lucifer, he seems to be relegated from the position of primary antagonist to a stage prop. This is further underscored when Lucifer does appear on stage and begins to talk only for Eve to respond imperiously with, “Thou speak’st of wonders: make thy story plain” (E4r), in other words, asking him to get to the point rather than waste his time with unnecessary rhetorical persuasion. Lucifer thus plays the role of an accessory or subsidiary participant in Eve’s temptation of herself.

The treatment of Eve after the fall further aligns Dryden’s Eve with misogynistic anti-Catholic rhetoric of the 1670s. Dryden’s Eve is no longer represented as the hope for the future and “Mother of Man Kind” as she is on numerous occasions in Milton’s epic (1.36, 5.388, 11.159). In Dryden, there is no mention of her giving birth to the heel that will bruise the serpent’s head, a redaction I attribute to fears around Mary’s ability to produce a Catholic heir who would certainly not be considered a saviour by many late seventeenth-century readers. After the fall, Adam, in a misogynistic tirade to Eve asks “Ah: why must man from woman take his birth?” (F4r), reflecting the grievances felt by many in the period that so much of their political future was dependent on women’s bodies. Female bodies are indeed categorised by Adam as “sin[s] of nature” and “fair defect[s]” (F4r). Tellingly, then, pregnancy and painful labour are no longer mentioned at all in Eve’s punishment. Instead, Eve is to have unsatiated desire and be restrained from her domestic control:

She, by a curse, of future wives abhorr’d.
 Shall pay obedience to her lawful Lord:
 And he shall rule, and she in thraldome live;
 Desiring more of love than men can give. (G1r)

This highlights the connection between Eve and Mary as future Queen consort and reflects back on the problems which many feared an assertive Catholic woman could cause if not kept in check.

I have suggested that in Dryden’s adaptation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the threat is no longer Lucifer, but instead the character of Eve and her ability to manipulate Adam, which is expressed in anti-Catholic and misogynistic tropes. By placing this textual analysis in relation to the dedication to Mary of Modena this chapter posits that Dryden may, in fact, have been using the positive dedication as a Trojan horse to smuggle in a warning of the dangers which the Duke of York’s marriage posed. Read in this way, the text comes across as a veiled threat, or warning, against the

irresponsible actions of James and the problems that his choice of bride could cause for the restored monarchy, were they to have a child. It was, of course, the birth of Mary and James's Catholic son, a male heir destined to continue James's Catholic reign after his death, that brought about his ousting from power in the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688.

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Tyrannical Powers: Representations of Tyranny in Milton

The upheavals of the English Revolution give us remarkable discourses on the subject of political and religious freedom, as well as fresh interpretations of tyranny—its meanings, its genesis, its language, its locations, and its consequences. This essay examines premodern discourses of tyranny that have significant implications for the issue in Milton’s England. Writers understood tyranny in multiple and competing ways as perceptions of the issue and its locations evolved, expanded, or shifted. Complex premodern discourses on tyranny intersect and overlap; these include conceptions shaped by Greek culture (including Aristotelian virtue ethics), by republican Rome (when the expulsion of Roman kings leads to *rex* and *tyrannus* becoming synonymous), by the Bible (where we find not only disillusionment with bad kings but the idea that Yahweh is the only lord fit to rule), and by Machiavelli and Hobbes who dismantle premodern discourses of tyranny and the belief in virtuous rule and citizenship as essential foundations of government. I analyse Milton’s thinking about the scourge of tyranny and its location in his revolutionary prose and demonstrate how *Paradise Lost* invites readers to rethink the contested issue anew as his early modern epic explores the meanings, ambiguous language, and shifting locations of tyranny.

Keywords: Tyranny, Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Machiavelli, Hobbes

“We live in an age of tyrants,” Maurice Latey bluntly observes at the beginning of *Patterns of Tyranny*, his twentieth-century study written in the aftermath of “two of the greatest tyrants the world has ever seen, Hitler and Stalin, and scores of lesser ones” (11). “We have a special interest in diagnosing tyranny,” Latey adds, since we live in a modern “age when it has become a matter of life and death to study these great beasts of history, since at any moment one may arise who will have the power of life and death over all of us,” given that “universal war and destruction are more likely to be launched by a tyrant unrestricted by law, by custom, or

by public opinion than by any constitutional type of ruler” (11). Latey’s observations made in 1969 are prescient with regard to our moment in the twenty-first century as many in the western world struggle to understand how tyranny could once again threaten liberal democracy – this time in the form of a savage war in Ukraine unleashed by an autocrat and nationalist who has brought Europe to its most precarious state since the end of the second World War. If the topic of tyranny has acquired fresh urgency, what might the study of writers from the turbulent political world of Milton’s England tell us about the experience, manifestations, and diagnosis of tyranny?

John Milton and many of his contemporary writers certainly believed that they were living “in an age of tyrants,” even when they bitterly disagreed over where tyranny was located, how it should be defined, and how it might be diagnosed. The middle of the seventeenth century was marked, after all, by a great national trauma with an outcome virtually unthinkable before 1649: Charles I, the first king in English history to be tried by his subjects for treason against them, was charged with tyranny and executed. The principal lawyer who prosecuted Charles, John Cook, portrayed the king as a latter-day Nimrod, a predator and violent, hard-hearted Lord who had hunted his people “at his pleasure” and shed their blood (*King Charls his Case* 8, 13); the High Court of Justice, Cook asserted, had struck a blow against kings with “an unlimited power, that are not tied to laws” and had “cut off the head of a Tyrant” who had spilled the blood of his own Protestant subjects and had thereby “pronounced sentence not onely against one Tyrant, but Tyranny it selfe” (9, 42). At the end of *Paradise Lost*, in the poem’s often harrowing account of postlapsarian history, Milton revisits the story of Nimrod, inviting readers to reconsider the fraught issue of earthly tyrannies both in his own age and throughout human history.

Although literary historians have recently produced valuable studies of tyranny in relation to political thought, arbitrary political rule, and literature in early modern England, there is still much more to consider about the manifold meanings and shifting locations of tyranny in Milton’s England in relation to complex premodern discourses of tyranny.¹ This includes the ways early modern concepts interacted with classical and biblical ones. The interpretation of Milton’s God in *Paradise Lost* as divine tyrant, inspired by the political interpretations of William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron, has likewise elicited plenty of

¹ See especially Stephen Greenblatt, Greg Walker, and Mary Nyquist.

controversial commentary, again often without considering premodern discourses of tyranny, competing concepts of tyranny in seventeenth-century England, and Milton's critical engagement with them.² Yet consideration of these matters during the turbulent period in which the meaning and location of tyranny were fiercely contested can provide fresh perspectives on the ways Milton invites readers to think about tyranny. Consequently, in this essay I examine premodern discourses of tyranny that have significant implications for the issue in Milton's England before turning to the way Milton thinks about the scourge of tyranny and its location in his revolutionary prose. Then I consider how *Paradise Lost* invites readers to rethink the contested issue as his early modern epic represents the meanings, ambiguous language, and shifting locations of tyranny.

1 Tyranny and the English Revolution

If the upheavals of the English Revolution give us remarkable discourses on the subject of political and religious freedom, they also give us fresh interpretations of tyranny – its meanings, its genesis, its language, its locations, and its consequences. As Derek Hirst observes, “The History of the 1640s and 1650s ... taught Englishmen the many meanings of the word ‘tyranny’” (265). This is another politically volatile period in which authors believed themselves to be “writing under tyranny,” to borrow Greg Walker's apt titular phrase, including tyranny which had assumed new forms and locations. As political and religious authorities were contested in Milton's England, living and writing under tyranny could also mean different things to different writers. The terms “tyranny” and “tyrant” by no means applied only to powerful and feared ecclesiastical and political figures associated with Charles I (e.g. Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford) or to the king condemned as a tyrant for putting his self-interest above the national interest and for not acting *pro bono publico*.

During this unstable period, writers understood tyranny in multiple and competing ways as perceptions of the issue and its locations evolved, expanded, or shifted. For Leveller writers, who aligned themselves with radical sectarianism, the struggle against the scourge of tyranny meant not only writing against the extreme tyranny of Charles I; it meant contesting the tyranny of the mainstream Puritan clergy, exposing the tyranny of Parliament which seemed to be suppressing new political freedoms and

² See William Empson's lively and provocative study, with its searing critique of the traditional God of Christianity; and Michael Bryson.

freedom of the press, and exposing the tyranny of the Army and its officers who brought about the experimental republic by means of a *coup d'état* that “purged” the Long Parliament to prevent it from reaching a settlement with Charles I. For royalist writers, who perceived Parliament as an instrument of lawless tyranny destroying the ancient government of monarchy, it meant that living and writing in the new republic was, in one paradoxical formulation, living and writing under “Democratical Tyranny” (*A Mournfull Elegy* 1), since a new age of popular tyranny begun during the 1640s had turned England into a “distracted Nation with unheard of tyrannie, and miserable oppression” (*The English Tyrants* 2). For the godly republican Lucy Hutchinson living under tyranny could mean resisting (as her stalwart husband, Colonel Hutchinson, tried to do) the seemingly unchecked power of a Machiavellian Oliver Cromwell pursuing “ambitious designs” and using “dissimulations” (240),³ a military and political leader likewise viewed by Leveller writers as a tyrant who had betrayed the revolution and had himself become a “mighty . . . hunting *Nimrod*” (Lilburne 16). For the anonymous author of *Tyrannipocrit, Discovered with his wiles*, a radical tract published in 1649 diagnosing the close relation between tyranny and hypocrisy – an issue Milton invites readers to consider in *Paradise Lost* – tyrannical power, having assumed “other formes and fashions,” could now be associated with a wide array of names, vocations, and authorities: “if tyrants must make us slaves, what doe wee care what names they have, call them Kings, Bishops, Senators, Souldiers, &c. Tyrants, if they will exercise tyrannicall power, it makes no matter what names they have” (35).

In Milton’s England, moreover, complex premodern discourses on tyranny intersect and overlap. These include conceptions shaped by Greek culture (including Aristotelian virtue ethics), by republican Rome (when the expulsion of Roman kings leads to *rex* and *tyrannus* becoming synonymous), by the Bible (where we find not only disillusionment with bad kings but also the idea that Yahweh is the only lord fit to rule), and by Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes who dismantle premodern discourses of tyranny and the belief in virtuous rule and citizenship as essential foundations of government. Furthermore, in Milton’s culture deep fears of Catholicism interact with and intensify tyranny discourses: tyranny identified with Archbishop Laud’s ultra-ceremonialist church; tyranny associated with Charles I’s authoritarianism, his contempt of parliaments, and hatred of Puritans; anxieties about unrestrained tyranny

³ See also Hutchinson 239, 249–251, 252, 255, 256–257, 259, 260–261.

fuelled by the Irish Rebellion of the 1640s and suspicions that an untrustworthy king and English papists had a hand in it; and absolute tyranny and arbitrary rule linked with so-called popery. Tyranny is thus often interwoven in the minds of Milton and his Puritan contemporaries, both orthodox and more radical ones, with acute religious anxieties. The apocalyptic and millenarian imagination could also intensify a sense of existential crisis posed by the threat of extreme tyrannies in church and state. Milton himself identified the Beast of Revelation 13 (13:2), who receives from the Dragon “*his power; his seate, and great authority*” (*Complete Prose Works* 3:210, 1:616),⁴ with “the tyrannical powers and Kingdoms of the earth,” envisioning at his most heady moments during the English Revolution that the imminent return of Christ would finally “put an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*” (1:616).

The political, religious, and social crises of the middle of the seventeenth century thus arguably generate a turning point, a time of great religious and political instability when both older and newer conceptions of tyranny intersect and when conceptions of tyranny become more multifaceted. The upheavals of the English Revolution generate discourses of tyranny that re-engage but also revise and sometimes challenge Greek, Roman, biblical, and Renaissance discourses and theories. One aim of this essay, then, is to assess the complex afterlife of these discourses and theories in Milton’s England.

By the time of seventeenth-century England the humanist discourse of tyranny, with its focus on the personal morality of the ruler indebted to classical moralists and Christian followers,⁵ had already been challenged and, to a notable degree, dismantled by Machiavelli whose controversial handbook on princely power, written in 1513 and published in 1532, re-thinks in bold and shocking ways the boundaries between the new prince and a tyrant. It is not that Machiavelli dismisses all the traditional virtues of the prince. He does want a prince who devotes himself to the common good and thus voices reservations about the vulgar tyrant – as in the case of the king of ancient Syracuse, Agathocles – known for vicious cruelty and wickedness instead of *virtù* in the sense of ingenuity, ability, and skill

⁴ The abbreviation *CPW* is used for subsequent references.

⁵ A notable example of the humanist discourse of tyranny written close to the time of Machiavelli’s *Prince* is Erasmus’s *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516). Erasmus stressed the importance of education in shaping the conduct of a good prince and fortifying him from becoming a ruthless authoritarian ruler.

(discussed in chapter VIII of *The Prince*).⁶ Rather, it is that Machiavelli's new prince engages in behaviour – the strategic use of cruelty, violence, deception, and miserliness – associated more with tyrannical rule, at the same time that he needs to seize and maintain his power by means of fear more than love since human nature, in Machiavelli's dark view, tends to be fickle, ungrateful, and selfish, as he argues in chapter XVII of *The Prince*.⁷ Nor does Machiavelli's prince need to concern himself with Christian piety since the prince's appearing to be religious is precisely that: an artful appearance – a carefully projected image – that he can quickly alter as the political occasion requires. The flexible prince may therefore seem to possess moral virtues without truly having or exercising them (as Machiavelli explains in chapter XVIII).⁸ And in a provocative move that defies the humanist identification of virtue with good rulership, Machiavelli refuses to employ the term “tyrant” to describe his new prince or *principe nuovo*, itself a euphemism.⁹

By blurring the boundaries between princes and tyrants and refusing to mould a humanistic prince, Machiavelli's text raised disturbing questions about tyranny during the English Revolution. As the judge presiding over Charles I's trial, Cook regarded Machiavelli's handbook as the primary text for teaching the artful and cunning tactics employed by tyrants. Observing that kings study Machiavelli's handbook “more then Scripture,” Cook stressed that from Machiavelli they learn that they need not keep their word to the people; and they also learn “to be able to faine and dissemble thoroughly,” including virtuous behaviour (*Monarchy No*

⁶ About Agathocles Machiavelli comments: “It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow-citizens, to betray one's friends, to be treacherous, merciless and irreligious; power may be gained by acting in such ways, but not glory” (31).

⁷ Since it is difficult to be both loved and feared, Machiavelli concludes, “it is much safer to be feared than loved . . . For this may be said of men generally: they are ungrateful, fickle, feigners and dissemblers, avoiders of danger, eager for gain” (59). Cf. Erasmus: “The tyrant strives to be feared, the king to be loved” (28).

⁸ “I shall be so bold as to say that having and always cultivating them [moral virtues] is harmful, whereas seeming to have them is useful; for instance, to seem merciful, trustworthy, humane, upright and devout, and also to be so. But if it becomes necessary to refrain, you must be prepared to act in the opposite way, and be capable of doing it” (Machiavelli, 62).

⁹ On Machiavelli's anti-humanist terminology in *The Prince*, see Gabriele Pedulla. On the critique of humanist political theory in *The Prince* in relation to Machiavelli's political thought, see Victoria Kahn, ch. 1.

Creature of Gods making 119–121).¹⁰ In a post-Machiavellian political world, in which the distinction between a good prince and tyrant and between tyranny and civic virtue had been unsettled by Machiavelli himself, the charge and nature of tyranny urgently needed to be reconsidered.

And then there is Hobbes who does address – directly and sceptically – the terms “tyranny” and “tyrant.” In *Leviathan* (1651) Hobbes makes a bold move by dismissing the authority of Greek and Roman literature, especially the passages that discuss tyrants, because they equate kings with tyrants, thereby making it “lawfull” and “laudable” for “any man” to kill their kings (369–370). Sceptical about what he derisively calls “*Tyrannophobia*” (370) – a term he coined¹¹ – he observes that “they that are discontented under *Monarchy*, call it *Tyranny*” (240), and thus he concludes that “the name of Tyranny, signifieth nothing more, nor lesse, than the name of Sovereignty, be it in one, or many men, saving that they that use the former word, are understood to bee angry with them they call Tyrants” (722). Hobbes offers an acute observation about terminology and the way “tyrant,” as an emotionally charged term, has become a term of abuse for political leaders who threaten our interests. This is also an observation with unsettling implications not only for judging tyrants of the past but for considering what constitutes tyranny in our modern world: in Hobbes’s view, one cannot make a moral or even a legal distinction between tyranny and sovereignty, and the charge of tyranny is basically a subjective one, a perception held by some people but not by others.¹² Commenting on “Hobbes’s deep distrust of the whole Western tradition of political thought,” Hannah Arendt was struck by the audaciousness of his intellectual justification of tyranny: “That the Leviathan actually amounts to a permanent government of tyranny, Hobbes is proud to admit,” she observes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (144).

The mid-century revolution in England thus marks a new struggle over the nature of tyranny, including over how to define it, where to locate it, and how to characterise its ethical and moral dangers. Just as

¹⁰ Cook quotes extensively from *The Prince*, including chapter XVIII where Machiavelli stresses the Prince’s need to be flexible and to *seem* to possess moral virtues; on Charles and Machiavellianism: “all the subtilty, treachery, deep dissimulation, abominable projects, an dishonorable shifts” (*King Charls his Case* 39; see also 14, 20). In his depiction of Charles in relation to tyranny and Machiavellianism, Cook also compares “the cruelty of *Richard* the third” (39), as does Milton in *Eikonoklastes* (*CPW* 3:361–362).

¹¹ See *OED* s.v. “tyranno-, *comb.form.*”

¹² “One man’s tyrant is another man’s hero” (Latey 13); see also Waller R. Newell (3).

writers and readers were, to quote Milton's *Areopagitica*, "revolving new notions" and "many opinions" about the idea of freedom, so they were voicing "many opinions" about the presence of tyranny in their age (*CPW* 2:554). Milton the controversialist and poet is right in the middle of this struggle over the nature and locations of tyranny, itself a terrain of conflict subject to competing interpretations.

2 Milton's Polemical Writings on Tyranny

Milton can think about tyranny in his own independent-minded way, although his understandings of the issue occur in relation to a number of its complex premodern and early modern discourses (including biblical, Greek, Roman, and Machiavellian ones) and in relation to the religious politics of his age. Milton draws upon and reshapes the discourses of tyranny he inherits so that tyranny becomes a more multifaceted concept including not only regal tyranny and tyranny of ecclesiastical institutions, but also tyranny over the private realm, especially over consciences and freedom of thought, with the latter comprising intellectual and mental tyranny that involves (in his words) "abandon[ing] our selves to serv under the tyranny of usurpt opinions" (*CPW* 2:343).

Milton directly confronts the dangers of tyranny in formulations that draw upon earlier concepts, while also rethinking them. Thus during the early 1640s Milton encountered the definition of a tyrant in Thomas Smith's *Common-wealth of England* and recorded it in his *Commonplace Book*; there Milton was struck by the definition of a tyrant as a ruler who defies the will of the people, completely disregards established laws, and remakes them solely for the purpose of advancing his personal interests: "by force [he] commeth to the monarchy against the will of the people, breaketh lawes alreadie made, at his pleasure, maketh other[s] without the aduise and consent of the people, and regardeth not the wealth of his Commons, but the aduancement of himselfe, his faction, and his kin[d]red" (Smith 6; *The Complete Works of John Milton* 11:217).¹³ This is close to Aristotle's sense of tyrants as those leaders who rule countries as if they were their private households to be governed for their personal pleasure (1295a16–22, 1311a1–5). By the end of the 1640s, Milton both reinforces this concept of the tyrant and rethinks it. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, written during the unprecedented trial of Charles

¹³ Quotations from Milton's *Commonplace Book* are taken from this edition and subsequent references will be abbreviated as *CWJM*.

I, Milton at first defines the tyrant in a well-established, Aristotelian sense by drawing upon (as Milton does in his *Commonplace Book* (*CWJM* 11:228–229, n.316)) Basil ‘the Great’ who paraphrases Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (bk. 8, ch. 10):¹⁴ “A Tyrant . . . is he who regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns onely for himself and his faction . . . And because his power is great, his will boundless and exorbitant,” he can create massive “desolation” and “oppressions of the people” (*CPW* 3:212). Prompted by the acute national crisis, Milton argues like a polemical humanist and proceeds *ad fontes* as he invokes the authority of the Old Testament on tyrant killing: the God-inspired Ehud slaying Eglon the Moabite king “in his own house” in Judges 3:14–26; the prophet Samuel hewing to pieces the Amalekite king Agag in 1 Samuel 15:33; and Jehu as reformer, instrument of God, and “a subject” (as Milton is careful to remind readers) slaying the tyrant-king Jehoram in 2 Kings 9:24 (*CPW* 3:213, 215–216). Simultaneously, Milton invokes Greek and Roman authorities, including Aristotle’s *Politics* on “Monarchy unaccountable” as “the worst sort of Tyranny,” Euripides, Cassius Dio, and Seneca’s *Hercules Furens*, the latter to glorify tyrannicide since Hercules was the tamer of tyrants (3:204–206, 212–213).

Moreover, because of his doubts about citizens too easily disposed to shut “thir eyes to think they see best with other mens” (3:212), Milton offers a more unusual perspective on a tyrant. He invites readers to re-think what it means to be a lawless tyrant in terms of “distance of place,” English identity, and foreignness:

He therefore that keeps peace with me, neer or remote, of whatsoever Nation, is to mee as farr as all civil and human offices an Englishman and a neighbour: but if an Englishman forgetting all Laws, human, civil and religious, offend against life and liberty . . . though born in the same womb, he is no better then a Turk, a Sarasin, a Heathen. This is Gospel, and this was ever Law among equals; how much rather then in force against any King whatever, who in respect of the people is confesd inferior and not equal: to distinguish therefore of a Tyrant by outlandish, or domestic is a weak evasion. (3:215)

One of Milton’s points is that in this moment of national crisis being an “Englishman” – indeed, the very definition of English identity – has little to do with nearness of place or with national boundaries, a point Milton neatly underscores with his use of chiasmus just before the passage I have

¹⁴ Milton also cites the passage from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (*CWJM* 11:217) and again in his *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* of 1651 (*CPW* 4:521).

quoted above: “Nor is it distance of place that makes enmitie, but enmity that makes distance” (3:215). Thus, Charles I, who has failed to behave in a neighbourly way, has forfeited the fellowship of national community – the king of England himself is no Englishman in Milton’s eyes but rather a savage foreign tyrant.

Moreover, as Milton’s concluding assertion suggests, “to distinguish of” (i.e. to make distinctions with regard to) a tyrant on the basis of his being “outlandish” (i.e. belonging to a foreign country) rather than his being “domestic” is an evasive and weak argument. To be sure, the Hebrew Bible often imagines tyranny in terms of foreignness, as in the case of Deuteronomy 17:15 (“thou mayest not set a stranger over thee”).¹⁵ Milton, we know, can draw upon stereotypes of foreign tyranny when it serves his purpose: the Englishman who forgets “all Laws, human, civil and religious,” and offends “against life and liberty” is “no better then a Turk, a Sarasin, a Heathen.”¹⁶ But ultimately the issue in *The Tenure* is not whether a bad king or tyrant is genuinely foreign as Milton invites readers to reconsider the location of tyranny: physical distance whether “neer or remote, of whatsoever Nation” is not really the crucial issue. It is rather the nature of “enmitie,” notably the extreme hatred and violence against one’s own people to whom a king is “inferior and not equal.”

One manifestation of such enmity, which enables wide-spread violence, involves the complete dehumanising of a people by a tyrannical ruler so that “a whole Nation of men his Brethren” are “no more then so many beasts, or vermin under his Feet . . . to be trod on” (3:204). Such extreme dehumanising, Milton suggests, had resulted in blood guilt, the greatest manifestation of enmity by a ruler who had traumatised his nation. Charles I had shed the blood of his very own people – indeed God’s chosen people – during the civil wars so that he was “lad’n with all the innocent blood spilt in three Kingdoms” (3:197), resulting in “many thousand Christians destroy’d . . . polluting with their slaughtred carcasses all the Land over” (3:214). Both Cook and Milton would remind their contemporaries in 1649 of “bloodguiltiness” as the most severe manifestation of tyranny by citing the Old Testament, especially Numbers 35:31 with its call for revenge: “*the Land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shedd therein, but by the blood of him that shed it*” (*King Charls his Case*, 36; *CPW* 3:533, 586). By representing the king as “a man of blood” and a

¹⁵ As Jennie Grillo observes, post-exilic Jewish writers drew upon Greek stereotypes of the Persian king as a way of writing about bad kings (33–34).

¹⁶ See also *Eikonoklastes* for passages associating Charles I with Turkish tyranny (*CPW* 3:448, 453, 574–575).

limb of Antichrist, Milton and religious radicals stripped away any aura of sanctity around the king.¹⁷ For Milton, moreover, the crisis of the king's trial and the regicide became an occasion to rethink both the meaning and the location of tyranny, including in relation to Englishness.

The question of how to diagnose the nature and location of tyranny, including its origins, is likewise central to *Paradise Lost*, a poem whose "chief design," according to Milton's early biographer John Toland, is to "display the different Effects of Liberty and Tyranny" (182). There Milton's representations of hell and heaven, as well as the poem's account of earthly tyrannies in fallen human history, invite readers to reconsider, from diverse perspectives, the problem of tyranny – the subject of fierce contention in Milton's England – and the language and artifice employed to maintain it.

3 Rethinking Tyranny in *Paradise Lost*

Paradise Lost prompts readers not only to rethink the issue of tyranny, but to scrutinise the incendiary charge of tyranny itself. Learning to recognise the characteristics of tyranny, moreover, requires strenuous and constant discernment by readers. Milton's poem invites its "fit audience" (*Paradise Lost* 7.31) to reassess the multifaceted nature of tyranny as the poet represents its allure, its psychological power, its narcissism, its aggression and violence, its rhetoric and artifice, and its generation of servility, including servility among followers of a charismatic leader.¹⁸

Thus Milton's Satan presents himself as a revolutionary freedom fighter and political liberator scornful of courtly ritual and gestures – refusing "To bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee" (1.111–112) – while representing God as an arbitrary "punisher" (4.103) whose tyrannical realm thrives on "servitude inglorious" (9.141). Satan's shifting

¹⁷ Edmund Ludlow also cites Old Testament texts in support of revenge (132–133); for the sobriquet "man of blood," see Ludlow 141–42, 181, 246; and Patricia Crawford.

¹⁸ I refer to the poem's "fit" and discerning audience in this essay, comparable to the "discreet and judicious" readers Milton appeals to in *Areopagitica* (*CPW* 2:512), in contrast to the uncultivated, indiscriminate "vulgar Readers" Milton scornfully condemns in his note on "The Verse" in *Paradise Lost* and in his controversial prose (e.g. "the blockish vulgar" or "the vulgar" who admire "Pomp and ostentation of reading": *CPW* 3:339, 7:272). See also Sharon Achinstein, esp. ch. 5, on Milton urging readers to engage in strenuous reading and become adept at reading between the lines.

political rhetoric, including his use of republican language, is, however, far from stable, as I have argued elsewhere (*Representing Revolution*, ch. 7). On the one hand, he repudiates the idea of a throne upheld by “old repute” and “custom” (*Paradise Lost* 1.639–640): he rejects the idea of thinking submission (“For who can think Submission?” (1.661)), he calls Hell itself the “Dungeon of our Tyrant” (10.466) from which he hopes to liberate his compatriots, and he scorns the subservient posture of the fallen angels – “in this abject posture have ye sworn / To adore the Conqueror?” (1.322–323) – as if he were echoing Milton’s own complaint, on the eve of the Restoration, about the “perpetual bowings and cringings of an abject people” under monarchy (*CPW* 7:426). Yet elsewhere Satan’s language and actions contradict this revolutionary self-presentation. In addressing the fallen angels Satan also asserts, much like the leader of a royalist government in exile, their right to “return / To claim [their] just inheritance of old” (*Paradise Lost* 2.37–38). The claim for authority based upon “just inheritance of old” would have seemed especially resonant for godly republicans remembering the English Revolution and prerogative rule: writing as an exile during the Restoration, Edmund Ludlow recalled that when Charles I, “a tyrant” in Ludlow’s eyes, came before the High Court of Justice to be tried in early 1649, he insisted “that the kingdome was his by inheritance . . . that being the originall of his title” (131).

Satan’s bold assertion that God “Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav’n” (*Paradise Lost* 1.124) reminds us, then, that in Milton’s England the charge of tyranny was made by opposing political sides and from often opposing points of view as the issue of tyranny was sharply contested. The meaning of the term ‘tyranny’ was unstable and to some degree, as Hobbes suggests, the accusation of tyranny was a subjective one. As Milton’s contemporaries struggled with the meaning of tyranny and its multiple locations, there was intense dispute over not only who was a tyrant but over who or what institution embodied the most dangerous form of lawless tyranny. Was it Charles I and his popish, evil counsellors? Cromwell and fears about his single person rule during the Interregnum?¹⁹ Parliament during the English Revolution? One does not have to interpret *Paradise Lost* in terms of topical identification of historical personages and events – should we identify Satan with Cromwell and his supposed political and religious hypocrisy? – to recognise that the poem invites its readers to weigh carefully the problematical issue of

¹⁹ On acute concerns about Cromwell and single rule during the Interregnum, see Blair Worden, 289, 295–296, 300–302, 310.

tyranny in terms of how and where it operates, and the language that sustains it.²⁰ And to reconsider the volatile charge of tyranny itself.

Paradise Lost thus prompts readers to remain alert to the unstable language that can support the accusation of tyranny and the ambiguous or contradictory political behaviour that reinforces it. Milton observes in one of his early tracts that tyranny, “growne an ambiguous monster” and “guarded with superstition” has “no small power to captivate the minds of men” (*CPW* 1:924) – and the minds of angels too, as *Paradise Lost* reveals. Thus Satan seduces the rebel angels before the war in Heaven and “with calumnious Art / Of counterfeited truth . . . held thir ears” (*Paradise Lost* 5.770–771) as he speaks with “a double contradictory sense” (*CPW* 3:195), like the equivocal Presbyterian divines Milton condemned at the height of the English Revolution (Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution*, 180–190, 207–208). Satan can appeal to the authority of “Imperial Titles” with regard to the right to govern in the very same speech in which he employs the vocabulary of a revolutionary urging his followers to abhor image worshipping, reject “prostration vile,” and prepare themselves mentally to cast off the yoke that he claims is endangering their freedom in the tyrannical realm: “But what if better counsels might erect / Our minds and teach us to cast off this Yoke? / Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend / The supple knee?” (*Paradise Lost* 5.801, 782, 785–788). Spoken by a charismatic leader, this is captivating political language, even in a speech marked by glaring contradictions and “Ambiguous words” of provocation (5.703).

Paradise Lost likewise represents the ways political language and inflammatory accusations, including those of tyranny, are employed in equivocal ways. It is Satan, after all, who calls Abdiel “seditious Angel” (6.152) for refusing to fall in line and follow a third of the angels revolting against God: this is the one time in the poem that that inflammatory word, employed against dissenters in Milton’s England, is used (Loewen-

²⁰ For scepticism about the Satan-Cromwell identification, see Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution* 209. Although Milton’s *Defensio Secunda* includes plenty of warning to Cromwell and the English people about the dangers during the Protectorate of succumbing to royalist excesses and becoming self-enlaved, there is no evidence that Milton ever came to see Cromwell himself as an opportunistic tyrant and “false dissembler” (3.681) operating under the guise of godliness.

stein, *Treacherous Faith*, 306–307).²¹ This is rather like calling a dissident an “extremist” in today’s language. And it is used as the war in Heaven is about to erupt and in the same speech that Satan, sounding like a republican, accuses the angels loyal to God of inglorious servility (*Paradise Lost* 6.165–170), which in turn prompts Abdiel’s vehement redefinition of servitude and its location: “This is servitude, / To serve th’ unwise, or him who hath rebell’d / Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee, / Thyself not free, but to thyself enthral’d” (6.178–181). The tense confrontation between Satan and Abdiel at this point in the poem dramatises a contest over key concepts and terminology: what constitutes “seditious” behaviour and what is “servitude” – and where is the latter located? In his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton had warned that “the falsifi’d names of *Loyalty*, and *Obedience*” can “colour over . . . base compliances” (*CPW* 3:191) to uphold tyrannical power. Milton the controversialist was acutely aware of the ways these terms could be appropriated and manipulated, and in *Paradise Lost* he invites readers to consider the ways concepts like servitude and obedience can become contested and marshalled by different sides.

Paradise Lost likewise invites readers to consider the challenge of discerning tyranny in relation to religion as well as hypocrisy, an issue that troubled Milton and his radical contemporaries during the English Revolution.²² Thus *Tyranipocrit* aimed to illuminate the interconnection between tyranny and hypocrisy and their relation to religious appearances since “the devil did himselfe a notable piece of service, when hee joynd them in one” (34–35); its anonymous author warned its readers that tyrants “cloake [their tyranny] with a simulated sanctity” and that Antichristian tyranny flourishes in both politics and religion because the “tyrannicall, hypocriticall, impious white devil” is “so full of deceit, and hee hath so many evasions, and so much sophistry to maintaine his impious prac-

²¹ For example, the Second Conventicle Act or *An Act to Prevent and Suppress Seditious Sectaries*, which I touch on at the end of this essay, warns “against the growing and dangerous practices of Seditious Sectaries, and other Disloyal Persons, who under pretence of tender Consciences . . . Contrive Insurrections” (3). See also Milton’s attack on the royalist divine, Matthew Griffith, for the equivocal way he had used the inflammatory word “seditious” in his sermon *Fear of God and the King: Brief Notes upon a Late Sermon* (1660), *CPW* 7:469–470, 471.

²² And not only radical writers: one royalist claimed that the ambitious tyranny of Parliament was masked “under the specious pretences of *fighting for Religion and Liberty*, and . . . under this vaile of Hypocrisie, and under the glosse and notion of Reformation” (*The English Tyrants* 7).

tices” (26, 18). In *Eikonoklastes* Milton likewise observes “that the deepest policy of a Tyrant hath bin ever to counterfet Religious,” citing Aristotle’s *Politics* (bk. 5, ch. 11) on “that special craft” (*CPW* 3:361) cultivated by tyrants.²³ There Milton also points to Shakespeare’s cunning Richard III, constantly acting a part, as a warning for how a tyrant, much like Charles I, may operate as “a deep dissembler, not of his affections onely, but of Religion,” as Milton aims to reveal how “Tyranny and fals Religion,” which have “very dark roots,” may “twine and interweave one another” (3:362, 509).

Paradise Lost aims to discover and represent the “dark roots” of these interconnections as it associates Satan with dissembling, hypocrisy, “simulated sanctity,” and reasoning associated with tyrants. The poet first associates Satan with both dissembling and hypocrisy when he beguiles Uriel, “The sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heav’n” (3.691), with a cunning resemblance as he appears in the disguise of a cherub: “So spake the false dissembler unperceiv’d; / For neither Man nor Angel can discern / Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks / Invisible, except to God alone” (681–684). The poet then unmasks Satan as “counterfeit” after his first soliloquy, which enables readers to observe the workings of his tormented mind, and prompts them instead to regard Satan as the “Artificer of fraud” and “the first / That practis’d falsehood under saintly show, / Deep malice to conceal, couch’t with revenge” (4.117, 121–123). Corresponding to the poet’s unmasking of Satan at the beginning of Book 4 is the angel Gabriel’s analysis of Satan’s equivocation after the angels guarding Paradise find Satan at the ear of Eve; this is the second time a version of the word “hypocrite” appears in the poem as Gabriel scornfully exposes Satan’s posture as a liberator, a pose designed to mask more aggressive designs, concealed in heaven by his obsequious courtly behaviour:

And thou sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
Patron of liberty, who more than thou
Once fawn’d, and cring’d, and servilely ador’d
Heav’n’s awful Monarch? wherefore but in hope
To dispossess him, and thyself to reign? (4.957–961)

The poet’s response to Satan’s second soliloquy in Book 4, delivered before this tense confrontation between Gabriel and Satan, explicitly associates Satan with the language of tyranny as the poem weaves together is-

²³ See Aristotle: “[a tyrant] should appear to be particularly earnest in the service of the gods; for if men think that a ruler is religious and has a reverence for the gods, they are less afraid of suffering injustice at his hands” (1324b40–1315a1).

sues of hypocrisy, simulated sanctity, and tyranny. Satan's justification of his imperial aggressiveness in that soliloquy can also be understood in relation to Machiavelli and the behaviour of the tyrant. Machiavelli, as we noted, had blurred the boundaries between a prince, who needs to be ruthless at times, and a tyrant: the prince can embody both good and more disturbing qualities, appearing to display moral virtues when the political occasion calls for it. Full of ambiguities underscored by his contradictory uses of political language, Satan too can blend conflicting qualities as a leader who claims that his aggression – "conquering this new World" – is being executed on behalf of the exiled rebel angels whom he seeks to deliver from their misery and infernal prison. He thus claims to pursue the public good and to be driven in this pursuit at least in part by "public reason just" – that is, reason of state that includes a sense of civic responsibility to the community of the citizens of Hell. Stunned by the paradisaical delights he sees in Eden and by the beauty of our original parents, Satan nevertheless quells any sense of pity he might feel for Adam and Eve and observes:

And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
Honor and Empire with revenge enlarg'd,
By conquering this new World, compels me now
To do what else though damn'd I should abhor. (4.388–392)

Bent on humankind's destruction, Satan is driven by the desire for imperial conquest, as well as hatred and revenge, and it is the poet who, after the soliloquy concludes, concisely exposes the way Satan has justified his aggression (combining force and fraud) to himself: "So spake the Fiend, and with necessity, / The Tyrant's plea, excus'd his devilish deeds" (393–394). Here we can also regard the poet's comment as a response to Machiavelli who is careful to avoid the label or term "tyrant" in his depiction of the new prince who may use reason of state to excuse certain vices as pragmatically necessary for maintaining power. The poet of *Paradise Lost*, however, differs in this respect: he is more interested in identifying the equivocal or contradictory language, reasoning, and excuses of a tyrant – and inviting the reader to do the same – by calling attention to Satan's dubious argument based on reason of state.²⁴

²⁴ On Milton's Satan as Machiavel, although without attention to Satan's soliloquy and the poet's response, see Kahn 209–214.

4 Tyranny and the Tragic World of Postlapsarian Human History

The last books of the poem struggle with the problem of tyranny and the challenges of interpreting it from a different perspective: the tragic world of postlapsarian human history since, as Milton observes in his *Defensio Secunda* (1654), “a tyrant is not our enemy alone, but the public enemy of virtually the entire human race” (*CPW* 4:658). These books raise a key question: What kind of human agency will there be in “a World perverse” (*Paradise Lost* 11.701) plagued by a succession of earthly, sometimes brutal tyrannies? And in a poem concerned with probing causes and origins, they address another crucial question: was the first man, with the “Dominion absolute” (12.68) granted by God, the first king with absolute power over those of his own species?

The angel Michael’s narrative account of Nimrod at the outset of Book 12, which expands and politicises the terse description in Genesis 10:8–10, exposes Adam in detail to the ruthless operation of human tyranny in the fallen world.²⁵ Adam learns about the predatory nature of tyranny manifested by an aggressive ruler whose “proud ambitious heart” disparages “fair equality” and “fraternal state” as Nimrod defies God’s “law” in Deuteronomy 17:19–20 (i.e. that a king should not lift up his heart “above his brethren”) by assuming “Dominion undeserv’d / Over his brethren” (12.25–28); as he claims “from Heav’n . . . second Sovereignty” (35) or divine right (much like Stuart monarchs who claimed “to be Gods on Earth”);²⁶ and as he shows prowess in hunting by hunting men rather than beasts as “his game” (12.30) in his pursuit of “Subjection to his Empire tyrannous” (12.32). Further, to achieve his ends, he employs – much like Machiavelli’s prince or like Satan or the Charles I of Milton’s republican writings – both force and cunning: “War and hostile snare” (12.31). Milton thus uses Michael’s account to tell the tragic story of the origins of inequality and the destruction of fraternity since, as Milton observes in *Eikonoklastes*, “the Kings of this World” have always considered “two things to them so dreadful, Liberty and Equality” (*CPW*

²⁵ For a suggestive but different reading of the Nimrod episode (including Adam’s response) in terms of Milton’s critique of Aristotle’s defense of natural slavery in *Politics* (1256b), see Nyquist 138–147, esp. 138–139.

²⁶ For Cook, Charles I “hath deposed himself as a God, been depended upon, and adored as God” (*King Charles his Case*, 37; see also 8); James I suggested that kings “are justly called Gods” (529, see also 500); on divine right theory in the reign of Charles I, the anonymous author of *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiasticall* writes “The most High and Sacred order of Kings is of Divine Right, being the ordinance of God himself” (B4v).

3:509). Like Satan, moreover, Nimrod engages in rebellion (“from Rebellion shall derive his name”),²⁷ “Though of Rebellion others he accuse” (*CWJM* 12.36–37). The parallel with our contemporary world is the fascist who inverts reality and accuses others of being fascists.

The Nimrod episode illustrates how *Paradise Lost* can be both provocative and oblique when it comes to polemical and topical politics, leaving much to the discretion of its readers. Milton the controversialist and his radical Puritan contemporaries, as we have seen in the case of Cook, invoked Nimrod during the English Revolution to comment on the origins of kingly power and convey the menace of Stuart tyranny (although, as we have also seen, Nimrod could be invoked to suggest Cromwell’s tyranny).²⁸ Nonetheless, the biblical narrative of Nimrod in *Paradise Lost* contains no explicit reference to Charles I and his age: Nimrod here may be regarded as a type of Satan, Antichrist, and Charles I; however, it is left to the poem’s discerning readers to make any topical connection to Milton’s England as an age of tyrants.

Adam’s response with regard to both Nimrod and the question of dominion reveals that our original father was given no monarchical power over other men since he understands, without Michael having to correct him, something fundamental about the extent of his absolute dominion. Adam expresses natural republican instincts as he promptly condemns Nimrod, the first violent, usurping lord in human history, and conveys the limitations of power and sovereign authority, including “Dominion absolute,” the “donation” given to humankind by God according to Genesis 1:28:

O execrable Son so to aspire
 Above his Brethren, to himself assuming
 Authority usurpt, from God not giv’n:
 He gave us only over Beast, Fish, Fowl
 Dominion absolute; that right we hold
 By his donation; but Man over men
 He made not Lord; such title to himself
 Reserving, human left from human free. (12.64–71)

²⁷ Milton draws upon a false etymology that links Nimrod’s name to the Hebrew verb “rebel” (*marad*).

²⁸ Besides Cook’s *King Charls his Case and Monarchy No Creature of Gods making* (6), see e.g., William Erbery, where Nimrod is described “as our kings [...] hunting the saints up and down all the land over” (33); Edward Harrison writes that Nimrod was “the first that brought men into *subjection* by *force* and *violence*” (8).

In giving Adam this speech, Milton is engaging with the divisive seventeenth-century political debate over how to interpret the origins of absolute political power. Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (pub. 1680, though composed earlier) argued that Adam was the first king whose command was "as large and as ample as the Absolutest Dominion of any Monarch which hath been since the Creation" (13),²⁹ whereas John Locke challenged this interpretation by going back to Scripture, including Genesis, and arguing that God, while granting Adam rule over other species, "gave Adam no Monarchical Power over those of his own Species" (161).³⁰ Indeed, Charles I's prosecutor, Cook, took a position similar to Locke's: Adam "had an absolute supremacie over the Creatures, but neither Adam (nor Noah who was his heire of the new world) ever challenged to be Kings" (*Monarchy No Creature of Gods making*, 5–6).

Milton's poem engages dramatically with this controversial issue by imagining our original father responding vehemently to the story about Nimrod and his aggressive pursuit of power. Adam may be no theoretically sophisticated republican; yet his instincts align with the position of Milton who could hardly fathom "how any man who hath the true principles of justice and religion in him, can presume or take upon him to be a king and lord over his brethren" (*CPW* 7:429). And Adam seems to understand – perhaps after having undergone Raphael's earlier education in such issues as political rebellion, the language of tyranny, and the war in Heaven – that the title "Lord" God reserves to himself: the idea that, as both Scripture and *Paradise Lost* suggest, Yahweh is ultimately the only lord or king fit to reign, a point Milton the controversialist had likewise made in his prose by means of his interpretation of 1 Samuel 8 and the elders of Israel's demand for a king (*CPW* 3:202–203, 207, 236, 580).³¹

Michael's response, which confirms that Adam is discriminating this time in his vehement judgment ("Justly thou abhorr'st / That Son" (*Paradise Lost* 12.79–80), the angel says to Adam), suggests that tyranny in the fallen world is both an internal and external process, with tyranny within the private realm enabling its outward manifestations. In *The Tenure*

²⁹ Filmer's *Observations concerning the Originall of Government* includes an attack on Milton's republican ideas of kingship, tyranny, and the people.

³⁰ For Locke's fuller arguments against Filmer, see 141–171.

³¹ This chapter from 1 Samuel was of course one of the most contested scriptural passages during the mid-century revolution since for republicans it could be used to support anti-tyranny arguments, while for royalists it seemed to support a divinely ordained monarchy: see Christopher Hill 107–108, 193; Warren Chernaik 94–96; Nyquist 132–137. For comments on "those foolish *Israelites*, who depos'd God and *Samuel* to set up a King," see *CPW* 7:449–450.

Milton had complained about “a double tyrannie, of Custom from without, and blind affections within” (*CPW* 3:190), and elsewhere in his prose Milton warned his contemporaries that tyranny within can be especially hard to conquer and control. Michael too speaks soberly to Adam about “a double tyrannie”: enthrallment “from without to violent Lords” (*CWJM* 12.93), with Nimrod as their archetype, and enthrallment to “blind affections within,” so that tyrants and those made servile by them are enslaved by their own passions, losing inward liberty as “upstart Passions catch the Government / From Reason, and to servitude reduce / Man till then free” (12.88–90). Indeed, Michael’s lesson here anticipates the end of the poem where he teaches Adam that warfare is not only outward but inward – destroying Satan’s “works / In thee and in thy Seed” (12.394–395) – where it operates in a more psychological, subtle, and spiritual way. Yet is tyranny, both outward and inward, simply imposed upon human beings who lose all agency in the process of becoming servile? The language of Michael’s sober passage about the curse of tyranny after the Fall suggests that there’s still an element of choice, since man “*permits* / Within himself unworthy Powers to reign / Over free Reason” (12.90–92; emphasis added). In *Eikonoklastes* Milton had suggested that servility was not “the natural disposition of an English-man,” and he concluded by commenting on the people’s “*voluntary* and beloved baseness” (emphasis added) so that he might still hope that some citizens, not wholly seduced by the “Sorcery” of a king who had “putt Tyranny into an Art,” might “find the grace and good guidance to bethink themselves, and recover” (*CPW* 3:344, 601). Even in that text diagnosing the relations between tyranny, mental servility, and the power of representation, Milton suggests that “voluntary” human choice among citizens plays a role.

There is nevertheless a tough realism about the poem’s vision of earthly tyrannies in human history, as Michael tells Adam: “Tyranny must be, / Though to the Tyrant thereby no excuse” (*Paradise Lost* 12.95–96). As Michael describes how “Nations will decline so low / From virtue” (12.97–98) in the history of humankind under Satan-Nimrod, the poem reminds readers of the precarious nature of virtuous rule in the face of ruthless tyrannical power. However resilient and hopeful some human beings may be after the Fall – Adam and Eve at the very end of *Paradise Lost* provide a model of hope mixed with sadness in the aftermath of great loss – acute challenges lie ahead for humankind in terms of religious and political life in relation to human freedom. Earthly tyrannies, with profound implications for both political and religious life, follow after

Adam's "original lapse" (12.83) so that God, during dark periods of history when the scourge of tyranny is most pronounced, will "withdraw / His presence" and "avert / His holy Eyes" (12.107–109), leaving those nations that have utterly abandoned "virtue" to practice "thir own polluted ways" (12.98, 110).

As Milton's poem suggests, the problem of tyranny will remain one of the most acute challenges in human history, and among humankind's greatest causes of misery. "Put[ting] an end to all Earthly *Tyrannies*" (*CPW* 1:616), as Milton envisioned in the most heady passages of his millenarian prose of the English Revolution, seems increasingly remote. The poem's historical prophecy in its final books highlights a tension between some glimmer of hope that rare individuals in history – individuals of faith like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses – may stand out at moments to combat earthly tyrannies and a more pessimistic view that the forces of political and religious darkness will often prevail.

Tyranny with regard to religion and inward, private spirituality will prove to be especially severe: Michael explains how secular and carnal power will attempt to force "every conscience" and "force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind / His consort Liberty" in a conformist religious culture in which "far greater part, / Will deem in outward Rites and specious forms / Religion satisfi'd" (*CWJM* 12.521–535). The prophecy of "heavy persecution" arising "On all who in the worship persevere / Of Spirit and Truth" (12.531–533) may evoke not only the grim persecution of the godly in Marian England but the sharp religious conflicts fuelled by the Restoration settlement that included a series of vindictive measures intended to enforce religious uniformity. One of the most severe was the second Conventicle Act (1670) – "the Quintessence of arbitrary Malice" Andrew Marvell called it (2:314). This Act, which filled the prisons with dissenters, exemplified "the *Spirit of Persecution*" in the eyes of Milton's Quaker pupil and friend, since it required no trial by juries and involved concealed informers using "deep Dissimulation" to penetrate the assemblies of sectaries so as to initiate prosecutions against dissenters (Ellwood 284–285).³² Near the end of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's depiction of Truth withdrawing in the midst of a world perverse, without any reform-

³² Thomas Ellwood describes the informers sent forth among the sectaries "with Instructions to thrust themselves into all Societies ... *Proteous*-like change their Shapes, and transform themselves from one Religious Appearance to another, as occasion should require" so "that they might (if possible) ruin all, at least many" (285). For the harsh impact of the Act on Protestant nonconformity, see also Hut-
ton 274.

ing individuals to counter the forcing of religious practices, conveys a sense of the traumatic impact of unchecked religious and spiritual tyranny: “Truth shall retire / Bestuck with sland’rous darts, and works of Faith / Rarely be found: so shall the World go on, / To good malignant, to bad men benign” (12.535–538). Consequently, as Milton’s poem offers one of our most imaginative yet sober engagements with the origins and nature of tyranny, it highlights the need for readers to remain ever vigilant about the rise of different forms of tyranny that can imperil political, religious, and individual liberty. In doing so, *Paradise Lost* reminds us just how precarious and fragile our struggle for human freedom remains.

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The Veteran's Body: *Cry Havoc!* and Recognising Disability in Shakespeare's Histories

In his one-man show *Cry Havoc!* (2012), American war veteran Stephan Wolfert recounts the night he goes Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and stumbles into a 1991 local production of William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Wolfert links Richard's physical disability to the veteran's experience and he discovers how the veteran's trauma is rendered shameful. This essay follows Wolfert's implications to reveal how Shakespeare's plays grapple with 'disability' and 'disorder' in the form of the veteran. Wolfert goes on to compare Shakespeare's characters to Henry Lincoln Johnson, a Black American awarded the French Cross of War for service in WWI. Wolfert describes Johnson as the "American Coriolanus," a violent and traumatised soldier who returns to a civilian life of segregation and tragedy. He represents the veteran upon whom the national vision depends while his shameful exile also serves to foster the collective. I argue that these veteran figures present a paradox: the veteran creates the nation through being shamed and denied by that nation.

Keywords: disability, trauma, veteran, history plays, race

It starts with Richard. In his 2012 autobiographical one-man show *Cry Havoc!*, Gulf War veteran Stephan Wolfert recounts the night he goes Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and wanders into a 1991 community production of *Richard III*. Watching Shakespeare's primary figure of disability, the American veteran recognises his own history of injury and military service. Wolfert recounts, "Like me, deformed, he even had the same posture I had when I was paralyzed in high school, to the right and slightly back, and like me, in spite of our deformities, joining the military and excelling, and like me, finding that that military service is probably now over" (12).¹ From this point, Wolfert weaves together his own biography

¹ I thank Stephan Wolfert for the generous permission to quote from the manuscript of *Cry Havoc!*. For more information, please visit decruit.org.

with snippets of Shakespeare, as if the plays interrupt and intrude upon Wolfert's memories. Commenting on violence in the Iraq invasion, he slips into Antony. Thinking of his night terrors upon returning from the Gulf War, Wolfert breaks into Lady Hotspur's worries over her husband. In effect, *Cry Havoc!* shows that Shakespeare's soldiers do not remain in the early modern period; their afterlives persist into the twenty-first century and resonate with the veterans of today.

Cry Havoc! has been featured in *The New York Times*, has earned awards from theatre groups and mental health organisations alike, and has been performed for years both nationally and internationally (Collins-Hughes). The show's Shakespearean structure also inspires the treatment programme Wolfert has since developed, called DECRUIT. In collaboration with New York University psychologist Alisha Ali, Wolfert uses recitations of Shakespeare to treat trauma in veterans, finding that such performance can transform triggering thought patterns (Ali et al.).

This essay considers the insights into disability and national identity afforded by the dramatic structures of *Cry Havoc!*. Wolfert offers a portrait of both physical and psychological trauma, one revealing the operations of the other. But he also points back at Shakespeare's canon, drawing upon the treatment of veterans across the plays and in early modern English culture. Indeed, Wolfert's adaptation of Shakespeare illuminates a paradox in the treatment of veterans and disability. The veteran's past and his associated disability are rendered incomprehensible in the play's structure; in fact, they become a subject of embarrassment and shame. At the same time, the veteran's experience, his embodiment of traumatic memories, becomes necessary for a vision of collective nationhood.

Although this contradiction proves difficult and perplexing, it derives from the workings of affect, or the emotional exchanges that often defy rationality. I draw on Eve Sedgwick, who began her study of affect with shame and on the work of psychologist Sylvan Tompkins. Shame, she finds, plays a profoundly isolating role, turning physical and behavioural characteristics into the source of rejection. Yet at the same time, shame also depends upon a public body who witnesses and even identifies with that same isolation. Sedgwick writes in *Touching Feeling*, "That's the double movement shame makes: toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality" (37). An exchange is at work; the individual who is rejected also confers the embarrassment of their being onto those who enact the very persecution. In fact, Sedgwick goes on to describe shame in dramatic terms, as if the shamed figure depended upon the audience as an identifiable collective. Sedgwick continues, "Shame, it might

finally be said, transformational shame, is performance. I mean theatrical performance” (38). If one is subject to a critical gaze, then those who gaze also partake in the performance, and political identity follows from this interchange between audience and actor. At stake are the values, behaviours, and the abilities deemed acceptable by audience and actor alike. When Sarah Ahmed extends Sedgwick’s notions of affect to national politics, she also makes a place for shame, arguing that, “What is striking is how shame becomes not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others, but also a form of nation building. It is shame that allows us ‘to assert our identity as a nation’” (112). These undercurrents run throughout *Cry Havoc!* as Wolfert recounts the injuries and trauma inflicted upon the veteran, both creating a sense of embarrassment the public body seeks to erase. We will find, though, that the same public body invites the performance of embarrassment; it depends upon the veteran as much as it writes off the body as unacceptable, a fraud, or simply unfitting for national celebration.

1 Wolfert’s Adaptation of Shakespeare

In its first moments, *Cry Havoc!* invites the veteran onstage while simultaneously signalling his isolation and incoherence. Wolfert opens with a direct quote from Richard III: “Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this” (2). He allows the sentence to linger, unfinished in a pattern that will continue throughout *Cry Havoc!*. Made glorious summer by what? Instead of finishing the thought, Wolfert switches to his own experiences and describes the night he deserted the Army, riding on the top of a train through Montana and wondering what a career soldier, like Richard, should do next. If his winter of discontent – serving in times of war – is over, it too is followed by lingering confusion.

In starting with Richard, Wolfert chooses a Shakespearean veteran with a specific critical legacy. Rather than the heroic Henry V or brave Hotspur, Wolfert selects the villain most associated with disfigurement and criminality. Indeed, a foundational essay of Disability Studies, Leonard Kriegel’s 1987 “The Cripple in Literature,” begins with the paradox of Shakespeare’s infamous king. Richard offers the “two fundamental images that cripples are accorded in Western literature” (32). His crutches “are transformed into a weapon [...] designed to impose the crippled king’s presence upon both his world and the audience” (32), yet Richard’s body is also rendered pathetic in his climb to the throne. According to

Kriegel, "The cripple is threat and recipient of compassion, both to be damned and to be pitied – and frequently to be damned as he is pitied" (32). Richard does not simply appear here as a monster; the audience also indulges in witnessing that body as something affective. David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder similarly turn to Richard as an interpretive crux in their landmark *Narrative Prosthesis*. The king demonstrates "a late Renaissance perspective on the narrative mutability of disability" (101), meaning that he self-consciously manipulates what his disability signifies throughout the play. He "sets to work performing disability" (112). In *Cry Havoc!*, Wolfert watches this performance and turns the interpretive process upon himself; he links physical ability to the veteran's experience. If Richard's back presents a myriad of conflicting meanings, Wolfert treats it as an image of personal trauma, national conflict, and a shared shame that defies easy integration.

When Wolfert first sees Richard, he witnesses a reflection of his own confused physical and emotional identity. He recounts a traumatic wrestling practice in his freshman year of high school, when another student "flexes me over his back like a rag doll. Jumps up in the air and body slams me on the mat. Tears my diaphragm. Contuses my spine in two spots" (4). The injury leaves Wolfert in a rehabilitation ward, where he joins senior citizens recovering from strokes. The young male teenager is suddenly made elderly. Years later, when Wolfert goes AWOL from his time in the service, he disrupts another boundary, now a soldier but not a soldier. He stumbles into a local Montana theatre to first see Richard limp onto the stage with the same back injury, and immediately identifies with him. In performance, Wolfert then slips into Richard's opening monologue: "Deformed. Unfinished. Sent before my time / Into this breathing world scarce half made up. / And that, so lamely and unfashionable / That dogs bark at me as I halt by them" (11). The language reflects Wolfert's emotional and physical state, drawing the two veterans together across centuries. Richard is the primary example of disability in Shakespearean literature – in fact, he is a nexus of disability in all of English literary studies. Wolfert instinctively seizes onto this significance; he discovers the disabled subject who will not find "the glorious summer" all that glorious, who will not fit into the collective nation celebrating its moment of peace.

Wolfert's one-man show continues through his military experiences, with the intrusion of Shakespearean language throughout. Richard's 'deformity' becomes a recurrent metaphor for psychological injury, and here Wolfert insists upon a collective (albeit repressed) experience. For in-

stance, he describes his military training as a process of overcoming natural human empathy. He cites studies indicating that only ten to fifteen percent of soldiers shoot with the intent to kill. “If we were wired to kill automatically,” he argues, “why would our military have to spend this much time, money, and resources on training us to kill?” (19.) His military training, then, involved transformation from natural humanity to something else. To become a killer, the soldier must assume the violent instincts of Shakespeare’s most aggressive, most ruthless villains. As Wolfert gives the account, he abruptly transitions into lines from *Coriolanus*: “But I’m just telling you the truth as I know it and the men and women that I’ve served with and have been working with for the past twenty years know it. The deeds of Coriolanus / Should not be utter’d feebly [...] He was a thing of blood, whose every motion was timed with dying cries” (Wolfert 24–25). Shakespearean allusions intrude upon the biography, speak back to the veteran’s experience, and shape it in the same breath. Wolfert’s life story becomes an assemblage of traumatic moments interwoven with lines that force uncomfortable comparisons. *Coriolanus* is a “thing of blood” and Richard a monstrous villain; Wolfert encompasses them all.

Wolfert’s formal constructions also mimic the psychological experiences of trauma, or what Cathy Caruth describes as the “delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena” (181). These traumatic patterns of flashback eschew narrative logic in a similar manner to how Wolfert’s narrative slips into the language of early modern drama. In fact, Patricia Cahill sees that same refusal across the genre of the Elizabethan history play: “the formal strategies of many Elizabethan war dramas – including the ways in which they offer visual and aural flashbacks and the ways in which they seem, in effect to draw a blank – offer a stunning register of traumatic possession” (8–9). Wolfert borrows from those same war dramas to create a pastiche of his own biography, born to alcoholic parents, abused by his brothers, enlisted after high school, and attacked by friendly fire in a moment of especially devastating tragic irony. In recounting the episodes that inform his psychological disability, he continuously slips into Hotspur, Henry, *Coriolanus*, or Falstaff. These abrupt transitions create the “aural flashbacks” linking traumatised veterans across historical eras.

Other repetitions echo throughout *Cry Havoc!* and compound the effects of ‘aural flashbacks’; Ato Quayson describes “aesthetic nervousness” as a mode in which “the dominant protocols of representation within the literary text are short-circuited in relation to disability” (15). While

Wolfert's flitting between characters begins this work, he also turns to sound effects and gestures that further disrupt the narrative. He describes a training exercise gone wrong, when live rounds bounce through a Hum-vee and strike the face of Wolfert's best friend. Wolfert uses a sound effect, "Pffffit," and cradles the falling body in pantomime. Wolfert repeats the gesture throughout the show, turning to the opposite side of the stage and mimicking the intrusive flashbacks of Post-Traumatic Stress. In one example, he says of his daily experience, "Every Doritos bag possibly being a [Pffft]IED" (22). The small habits of life become triggering reminders of violence and injury, and in the course of *Cry Havoc!*, both gesture and sound refuse narrative progress. Wolfert also returns to the sound to indicate the collective trauma implicit in any wartime casualty. He says of troops in Afghanistan, "Lead vehicle, as happens so often, but we saw so rarely on TV, [pfffttt] disintegrated by an IED, Improvised Explosive Device" (20). He recounts the American troops who perpetuated the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam: "And one day [Pffft] one too many of their brothers were killed" (24). The reiteration does not excuse the atrocities of American troops; it builds in the recurrence of trauma and prevents healing.

While early modern writers did not share our contemporary definitions of trauma, the psychological effects of such disability register in other means. In Zackariah Long's essay on early modern trauma, he finds the guilty conscience or the pained soul as expressions of disturbed memory. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Long's main example is *Richard III*. He describes Shakespeare's play as "the story of one soldier's traumatic conscience," insisting that "the first atrocities [Richard] commits are as part of a military conflict, the War of Roses" (60–61). Just as Wolfert instantly recognised, Richard is a veteran. His murderous crimes follow from his first encounters with legitimised violence. Long finds the most overpowering images of trauma in Richard's midnight encounters with the ghosts of his victims, a scene in which dreams merge with Richard's reality. He is literally haunted by the manifestations of his fallen religious state. Long argues that this spiritual condition maps onto what modern psychology views as the post-traumatic subject. A somewhat sympathetic portrait follows, in which "the traumatic personal consequences of Richard's physical deformities and the social humiliation he suffers because of them" tragically drive his acts of evil (68). In the moment of haunting, Richard also hears from the two dead princes, who give an emotional warning: "Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard, / And weigh thee down to shame, ruin, and death" (5.5.101–102). They invoke

his humiliation, here returned as necessary shaming. When Richard awakes, that prediction quickly comes true in Richard's self-accusations. He says, "I rather hate myself / For hateful deeds committed by myself. / I am a villain" (5.5.143–145). Richard, in other words, suffers psychological as well as physical disability and shame attaches to both. His frame of reference may derive from the religious language of conscience and soul, but he experiences trauma – and its shame – nonetheless.

These midnight hauntings resonate with Wolfert, who describes his midnight terrors by once again quoting *Richard III*. "Soft! I did but dream. / O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!" (30), Wolfert repeats as he delves into the experience of traumatised dreaming. He explains, "Even fifteen years after I got out of the military I didn't sleep right. I would get about two and a half, four and a half, and on a really good night, maybe five or six, if I drank enough" (30). He does not give details of the dreams, only calling one a "doosey" (30), and describing it in violent sound effects and screams. And, as with Richard, Wolfert's ghosts bring the attendant experience of shame. He continues, "And I would rarely spend more than a couple nights in a row next to a young lady cause I'd beaten, bobbed, and thumped several. I even choked a couple. It's dangerous. Impossible to explain. And embarrassing" (30). Like Richard, Wolfert finds himself aberrant and feels shame at the aberrance. Wolfert reveals, then, the veteran's body as a site of traumatic disability. His invocations of wars in Afghanistan and Vietnam distribute that trauma to the collective, a series of sound effects and gestures that are shared yet impossible to explain. Wolfert thus arrives at his thesis, and the motivating principle behind his treatment programmes: healing requires social reintegration, a community gesture welcoming veterans back into social rituals, into safety, and by implication into normativity. Hence the name of his organization, DECRUIT. The alternative he imagines is one of enduring exile and implicit shame. "And I'm the veteran who's so afraid of my war wiring I leave everything behind," he says. "You probably stepped over me on the corner on the way here. I have my piss-soaked pants and tattered cardboard sign that reads: I'm a vet. Please help [...] Oh sorry. Don't. [Sniff] Oh god you stink. Don't look me in the eyes" (34). To quote Allison Hobgood and David Houston Wood, "normativity requires and rewards the repression or forgetting of disability difference" (3). In Wolfert's vision of the shunned exile, the veteran is forgotten and treated as the object of embarrassment. And the way Wolfert constructs his play invokes a series of veterans the collective would rather

treat as aberrations and embarrassments, from Richard III through the American soldiers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

2 The Post-Service Life of Early Modern Soldiers

While Wolfert uses Shakespeare to illuminate the present-day conditions of traumatised subjects, he also invites the audience to witness the same repressions and erasures at work in Shakespeare's own period. As Linda Bradley Salamon shows, the category of veteran in the period developed slowly, yet "the men themselves existed, performing violent tasks deemed necessary by their society, and many of them were subsequently abandoned to poverty, hunger, and disability" (262). Those soldiers who did not die afield – or who did not return whole – became a cultural deviation. Or worse, they were rendered parasites and con-artists in a recurrent trope of the period's pamphlets. In the example of Thomas Harman, author of *A Caveat for Commen Cursetors* (1567), any true soldier would never stoop to begging. He writes,

For be well assured that hardist souldiers be eyther slayne or maimed, eyther and they escape all hassardes, and retourne home agayne, if they bee without reliefe of their friends, they will surely desperatly robbe, and steale, and eyther shortlye be hanged or miserably dye in pryson, for they be so much ashamed and disdayne to beg or aske charity. (11)

Either he dies at war, or he faces execution. In any case, the veteran is eliminated. Notably, for the veteran to ask for assistance amounts to an implicit admission of shame. If these figures performed the "violent tasks deemed necessary by their society," they also feel the resultant shame made necessary by their society.

Harman's dismissal of the disabled veteran signals a significant trend of the culture. Soldiers clearly returned from wars with debilitating injuries, but they could also be dismissed through other means. In her book *Dissembling Disability*, Lindsey Row-Heyveld tracks a social pattern of the period in which disability is continually treated as a scheme to get undeserved relief from almsgivers. She contends, "The fear of counterfeit disability was pervasive and influential in early modern England, and [...] served as the primary justification for the increasing institutionalization of poor relief throughout the period" (3). As poverty increased in the period through population growth, enclosure, and other historical developments, so too did suspicion about poverty relief. Fear of imposters, then, justified

removing charity from the hands of the individual – someone offering relief to a beggar was no longer seen as charitable but instead foolish. Row-Heyveld offers a litany of period sources that give such warnings and finds numerous examples of the trope played out on stage, where characters feign disability for ulterior motives. Once more, a paradox appears. As Row-Heyveld puts it, “Physical impairment became the primary attribute deserving of charity and, simultaneously, the primary characteristic to invite suspicion about the need for such charity” (9). The disabled become a group of imposters, better left ignored.

In the plays of the period, the veteran often appears with similarly fraught attitudes. Linda Woodbridge gives a survey of demobilised soldiers appearing in plays of the early modern period, suggesting that the public theatre does evince some sympathy with the plight of the vagrant soldier, as in the case of Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II* (52–54). However, the question of sympathy remains a complicated one. For instance, Woodbridge cites *Henry V* for its compassionate understanding of the troops’ experiences, yet the play often gives split images of the veteran. When Henry delivers the ‘Band of Brothers’ speech, he imagines the aging soldier looking back fondly on his wartime accomplishments and joining a masculine national collective: “he today that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother” and “this day shall gentle his condition” (4.3.61–63). Military service, and injury, contributes to a masculine, English collective.

The concluding action of the play contradicts that ideal. As Woodbridge notes, the common soldier Pistol leaves the play with few options and no gentlemanly status. After he is abused and battered by the other knights, Pistol grumbles, “To England / Will I steal, and there I’ll steal. / And patches will I get unto these cudged scars / And swear I got them in the Gallia wars” (5.1.78–80). This is a soldier who did indeed participate in the battle at Agincourt, but his actions are continually presented as cowardly and dishonest. Pistol will return to England with counterfeit wounds that he will use to extract money from gullible victims. Shakespeare creates a striking irony: even the soldier who went to battle is rendered an imposter, an embarrassment with no place in the final images of national unity and masculine triumph.

The disgrace is magnified by an earlier exchange between the knight Fluellen and Gower, after Pistol tries to intervene in the execution of his friend Bardolph. Gower recognises Pistol: “Why, this is an arrant counter-

feit rascal. I / remember him now, a bawd, a cutpurse" (3.6.58–59).² As suspicions swirl around Pistol, Gower imagines that Pistol's schemes will continue when they return from combat. Already, this veteran is treated as a counterfeit: "Why, 'tis a gull, a fool, a rogue that now and then goes to the wars, to grace himself at his return into London under the form of a soldier" (3.6.63–65). Pistol only comes to France, it seems, so that he can falsely claim he joined the battle. All of the details – places, commanders' names, and the like – these criminals recite "perfectly in the phrase of war, which they trick up with new-tuned oaths" (3.6.70–71). So, Pistol is branded an imposter before he makes the decision to become an imposter. He may be a veteran of Agincourt, but this character is also not a veteran of Agincourt. Pistol is ultimately one of the 'slanders of the age' to be eradicated from the vision of nationhood as a counterfeit. If his presentation is sympathetic, it is also damning.

Shakespeare thus captures in Pistol a dynamic of the period in which the soldier is at once celebrated for the construction of English nationhood while simultaneously erased for his potential aberrancy. Indeed, Barnabe Rich speaks to the same experience, although he does so from the perspective of an actual veteran who served in overseas campaigns before launching a career as a pamphleteer. In *A Souldiers Wish to Britons Welfare* (1604), Rich presents a dialogue between two captains, and the question arises of how to define a model soldier. One interlocutor announces, "For what is the effect of a Souldiers life? to undertake the defence of Religion, to fight for his Prince, to withstand the hazards of his Countrey, to repulse those that would depresse the same to protect his friende and family" (51). This vision is offered as an unrealistic ideal, and when the two captains turn to real world experience, they admit such soldiers are not readily available. The captain continues, "after the warres ended, when they returne into their Countrey, it is their owne choyce, whether they will begge or steale: if he cannot procure to be one of the *Knights of Winsor*, he may easily compasse to be whipt about the streetes at *Westminster*" (53). Reality cuts against the fantasy. If the veteran does not secure a place among the nobility, poverty and abuse seem the only choices. The dynamic here echoes that of Pistol: when he fails to join Henry's "band of brothers," he is forced into the role of a beggar. According to Rich's speakers, the fact that returning soldiers are no longer honoured is a sign of the corrupt modern days (73). The lowly status of the former soldier is a modern problem, then, and when this same captain

² The phrase "arrant counterfeit rascal" appears in the Folio text and is noted by the editors of the *Norton Shakespeare*.

characterises the fallen state of his contemporary world, he invokes the language of disability. The world “goes on crouches [...] it is waxen olde, decrepit and lame: A limping world God knows” (56). The implication is that the disabled veteran, the one not fitting into the nostalgic views of the history play or national identity, also figures the corruption of the times. In defending a soldier, that is, Rich’s text still excludes those who are aberrations. As with Richard, this veteran may be both pitied and seen as a symbol of the fallen modern day.

I am suggesting, finally, that Wolfert reveals the cultural operations of early modern culture as much as Shakespeare reveals to him the experiences of the veteran. Wolfert’s appropriations show that plays like *Richard III* or *Henry V* paradoxically depend upon the shameful memories of war experience to imagine the ‘normalised’ social body. But where does that leave the veteran? Wolfert writes:

Twenty years of asking, what the hell is wrong with me, going to these plays by Shakespeare, working with classical actor training, and the human sciences. After all of that I’ve come up with a theory of what the hell is wrong with me and in fact the human sciences have helped me transform that into, ‘what happened to me.’ (13)

We can hear in that recognition a move to a social understanding of disability, of Wolfert’s Post-Traumatic Stress. To a degree – what is wrong with Richard III is what happened to us. When Wolfert claims the embarrassment of nightmares, he also admits the ways disability is read by others. Embarrassment and shame arise from the imagined response of the audience, an audience who often watched Wolfert on stage. That moment of vulnerable shame, as Sedgwick and Ahmed imply, is also a moment of collective recognition. Shame, after all, is relational, dependent on all parties in the affective exchange. Overcoming that exclusion also involves the communal participation, beginning in a theatrical performance that lays bare the paradox of the real veteran who is imagined as the imposter.

3 Henry Lincoln Johnson and the American Coriolanus

Another category lingers in Wolfert’s performance that disrupts the imagined national body; I now wish to turn to race, and Chris Bell’s case against “White Disability Studies.” “I think it is essential,” Bell argues, “to illuminate the fragile relationship between disability, race and ethnicity in extant Disability Studies” (278). The most apparent Black veteran,

Othello, is curiously absent from *Cry Havoc!*, but Black experiences need not be limited to Shakespeare's 'race plays'. Indeed, race permeates all the plays, as has been convincingly shown in the work of Arthur L. Little and David Sterling Brown. Wolfert invokes race directly when he tells the story of Henry Lincoln Johnson and brings racial analysis to war plays that we too often assume do not speak to race.

Henry Lincoln Johnson was a 19-year-old African American who served in World War I. Although he joined with the 369 Infantry Brigade from Harlem, the American forces were still segregated at the time, which forced Johnson to fight alongside French troops. Before war begins, Johnson is already excluded from one conception of the collective. Wolfert tells the story of one of Johnson's first nights in combat, when on a nightly guard duty, he and fellow soldier Needham Roberts were attacked by twenty-five German soldiers. Johnson, seeing Roberts injured, fired his rifle, used its butt as a club, reached for his 18-and-a-half-inch Bolo knife, disembowelled the enemy, saved Roberts, and left the twenty-five enemy soldiers devastated. In the melee, he was hit 23 times – only to be treated in a French hospital because he is still excluded from American facilities. Johnson was the first American to win the French Cross of War but died in America at 33, an alcoholic with a metal plate embedded in his foot, estranged from his family, and suffering Post-Traumatic Stress (King).

In this war story, Wolfert discovers "The American Coriolanus." Like the ancient Roman general, Johnson wins horrifying renown on the battlefield by flying into a berserker fury, yet he brings home physical disability and a critical inability to get along. Wolfert quotes Cominius from Shakespeare's play: "I cannot speak him home: his sword, death's stamp, / Where it did mark, it took" (25). Casting Coriolanus as a Black man – as did the 2018 production starring André Sills at the Stratford Festival – offers the potential to reimagine Roman and English pasts, to challenge the seeming white default of history. Henry Lincoln Johnson is a violent soldier celebrated for his violence. When Cominius says "I cannot speak him home" in the original tragedy, he means that Coriolanus' deeds cannot be properly praised. Cominius cannot speak at home those things done abroad. Johnson, though, will never be able to return; his deeds cannot be reported in or to a home that does not exist. Calling him "The American Coriolanus," then, draws out the intertwined afterlives of race, trauma, and disability.

I do not wish to collapse those categories into one another, as if race necessarily means trauma or disability. As Josh Lukin writes, "from the

beginnings of the United States, the claim that ‘Blackness is like disability’ was not used as an expression of how black Americans suffered but as a tool of their oppression” (311). This difficulty is especially pronounced in the long history of African American veterans. As Lukin explains,

black soldiers [...] with war-derived physical and mental disabilities were often denied discharge, and sometimes subjected to beatings and torture in the guise of ‘therapy.’ But the pressure to convey the public message that ‘The Negro is just like you,’ with ‘you’ being an imagined able-bodied, empowered, white audience who could aid in the liberation struggle, led to strange silences and distortions on the subject of the disabled black veterans. (312)

To insist on sameness demands that the Black subject conform, and moreover, conform to an already established history. To recognise that impulse – and to resist it – again revises Coriolanus. To name an American Coriolanus invokes race; in turn, it transforms the object of Coriolanus’ fury and the effects of his banishment.

The implications for a collective national body become clear in a central scene of *Cry Havoc!*. Wolfert imagines Johnson at a Fourth of July picnic, the fireworks popping in the distance in celebration of a national ideal. Here Wolfert uses another sound effect, “chh-puh-hah” – each one interrupting a conversation and prodding Johnson. He stages an exchange between a partygoer and an increasingly-agitated Johnson: “Hey where you been, man? Ahh, France actually. Chh-puh-ah. Oh yah? What were you doing there? Well-ah-there was a war on, actually. Chh-puh-hah” (33). The awkwardness culminates when Johnson is asked if he killed anyone in the name of American freedom. Johnson’s imagined response is elegantly direct: “Fuck off, alright?” (33). The friend: “Oh real nice. Come to my party and talk like that? [...] Why can’t you just come back, talk nice, fit in, and speak pleasantly?” (33). The contradictions once again appear. Johnson is invited into the conversation by an apparent patriot who ties the violence of war to American freedom and the holiday. On the one hand, the veteran symbolises the national collective being celebrated at that moment. On the other, that same veteran is excluded from normalcy with a few thoughtless questions.

The play then returns to passages from Shakespeare. Johnson’s answer to “why can’t you fit in” transitions to a collage of recognisable lines in which Coriolanus insults the Roman public:

You common cry of curs! Whose breath I hate
 As reek o'the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
 As the dead carcasses of unburied men
 That do corrupt my air, I banish you!
 [...]

 For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
 There is a world elsewhere. (34)

Traditionally, Coriolanus' insults and banishment are the moments of pitiful tragedy, when his anger and arrogance destroy his political future. When the lines are spoken by Johnson, Coriolanus' insults operate as self-preservation, a screaming protest to the idea that his trauma must be suppressed so that he can "fit in" and "speak pleasantly" as part of the longer American history. That history cannot acknowledge the original acts of racial segregation that would have prevented Johnson from "fitting in." Coriolanus' lines now signal trauma and a refusal to accept the pleasant-ries of an American holiday in which racial histories are simply ignored.

In this dialogue, Wolfert develops the dynamic of celebration and revulsion that courses through Shakespeare's play, as when the war-hero appears before the Roman patricians to be nominated consul. The veteran appears noticeably anxious as Cominius begins to recount the war hero's deeds. Another senator remarks: "Sit, Coriolanus. Never shame to hear / What you have nobly done" (2.2.63–64). As a figure of the Roman public, this senator attaches martial and patriotic value to the violent actions; these are actions "nobly done." Yet embarrassment still forces Coriolanus to flee as he insists, "I had rather have my wounds to heal again / Than hear say how I got them" (2.2.65–66). His imagery converts the recollection of battlefield injuries into another physical injury, as his wounds would literally bleed again with the intrusion of memory. As Cominius tells of the bloody undertakings, the hero hides, unable to "hear [his] nothings monstered" (2.2.73). Such narratives of violence also imply that the veteran himself is monstrous. In celebrating Coriolanus, then, the public also paradoxically shames and excludes him. Wolfert's picnic scene may lack the tragic stakes of the Roman capitol, but we see the moment replayed: the veteran is nominally celebrated while also being ostracised. If his military actions are tied to the fireworks of Fourth of July celebrations, so are they tied to the trauma that turns to disability and monstrosity, just as they were when Wolfert watched Richard III make his entrance.

Wolfert concludes the story of Johnson with a quote from another of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Titus Andronicus*. He borrows the lines Titus

speaks upon returning from battle among the Goths, when he must bury his sons lost in battle. Wolfert, though, changes the lines to name Henry:

In peace and honour rest you here Henry.
 Secure from worldly chances and mishaps.
 Here lurks no treason. Here no envy swells.
 Here grow no damned drugs. Here are no storms,
 No noise, but silence and eternal sleep:
 In peace and honour rest you here, Henry. (36)

The lines make for a fitting tribute, as Johnson is granted the “peace and honour” unavailable during his lifetime. Another tragic irony surfaces, though. Titus speaks these lines to his deceased sons at the beginning of Act 1, and shortly afterwards slays his own child, Mutius. The father, in a sense, mourns children he also kills. For Johnson, it is a devastating eulogy, for he is a product of American military action honoured by a public body that also excluded and oppressed the veteran in life. Quoting *Titus Andronicus* is all the more relevant given the treatment of race in the play. The tragedy features Aaron, a Black character, who is used to distinguish between Rome and its barbarian enemies. Johnson is aligned with a Roman in Wolfert’s imagination, but in real life Johnson could neither serve with nor recover alongside the nation he served. He was treated as barbarian, and his trauma only seems to justify the treatment years later. As Carlos Clarke Draven notes, the history of Black veterans often turns on the exclusion of these soldiers from benefits, beginning in the Civil War. Titus’s children are honoured even as they are being killed. Coriolanus too is honoured by the Roman public yet made to suffer in shame as the ceremony continues. Those scenes play out in Wolfert’s imagination of Johnson, who is celebrated with a French Cross yet condemned for not speaking pleasantly at the national celebration.

Wolfert discovers the paradoxes of the veteran in the early modern plays. The writing on veterans of the period shows similar erasures, in which wounded or otherwise disabled veterans are rendered frauds and so erased. By drawing on Shakespearean lines to voice his autobiography, Wolfert collapses the two eras and brings to the space of the theatre a shared experience of grief and embarrassment. In the final moments of *Cry Havoc!*, Wolfert intentionally names the date and venue of each performance, always asking, “Now what? Now what?” (40). Sarah Ahmed’s account of mutual emotion captures the movement of national sentiments, and she gives a fitting summation of such a performance: “emotions should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural

practices” (9). That is, the power of affect operates among and through groups; in fact, Ahmed says it is these very exchanges that create groups themselves. Shame's role in this process is complicated and contradictory. She writes,

Shame binds us to others in how we are affected by our failure to ‘live up to’ those others, a failure that must be witnessed, as well as be seen as temporary, in order to allow us to re-enter the family or community. The relationship to others who witness my shame is anxious; shame both confirms and negates the love that sticks us together. (107)

In its isolation, then, shame is also a collective state. As Wolfert describes feelings of monstrosity and deformity, he also implicates the normative social group that defines what it means to speak pleasantly. He implicates the collective body of the audience, who in the course of a performance may slip between identification and alienation. This is the paradox of the veteran emergent in *Cry Havoc!* and the Shakespearean canon to which it alludes. While Shakespeare's plays can imagine a ‘band of brothers’ united in a past history of war, they also alienate the veterans who make up that band of brothers. To reiterate, “shame both confirms and negates the love that sticks us together.”

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Robin Hood and the Afterlife of Yeoman Values in
Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of
Huntington* and *The Death of Robert,
Earle of Huntington*

This essay explores the complex definition of the yeoman as a historical entity in late medieval England, assessing how the figure is represented in *A Gest of Robin Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. In these medieval ballads, Robin Hood is a forester yeoman, whose skills as a hunter and archer are indicative of his status as an outlaw. The early modern period marks an important moment in the character's afterlife and Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington* feature a new Robin Hood character, the gentleman in disguise, who finds himself in the woods by accident. The significant alteration and gentrification of Robin Hood's character in Munday's plays, however, does not erase all traces of his medieval yeoman predecessor. In this essay I analyse the way yeoman values are maintained and reconfigured in Munday's plays and argue that they retain a positive appreciation of the yeoman figure, despite the character's status as Robert, Earl of Huntington.

Keywords: Robin Hood, forest, yeoman, outlaw, gentrification

The afterlives of the mythic hero Robin Hood are numerous, from first references to an ancient oral tradition recounted by William Langland (c.1332-c.1386), through written accounts, to the most recent film adaptations (Knight, "Remembering Robin Hood" 149–161).¹ Literary appropriations include medieval plays and games, ballads, early modern plays, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century broadsides and garlands (Knight, *Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood* 1–30). Each explores different thematic

¹ "The Robin Hood Project," hosted by the University of Rochester, lists fifty-two feature films, fifteen animated films, and fourteen television series (Chandler).

strands, as do later examples (Holt 139): for instance, John Keats' *Robin Hood* poem (1818) expresses anti-urban patriotism by nostalgically reminiscing about the greenwood; and Alfred Lord Tennyson's play, *The Foresters: Robin Hood and Maid Marian* (premier 1892), shows Maid Marian offering an epic panegyric on Robin Hood as a national hero, alongside Harold the Saxon and Hereward the Wake, who fought the Normans (1.1).² This paper focuses on Robin Hood as a yeoman and the ways in which this aspect of his character was adapted during the early modern period by Anthony Munday in *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and, more briefly, *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington*.³ I first contextualise my analysis of Munday's plays, outlining the figure of the yeoman as it was understood in medieval literature, culture and politics by drawing on the medieval texts: *A Geste of Robin Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. The chapter then re-evaluates the process of gentrification that Robin Hood undergoes in Munday's plays and assesses their representation of yeomanry.⁴

The legal document called the Statute of Additions, which was drawn up in 1413 in the first year of Henry V's reign, required anyone named as a defendant in a writ, personal action, or record in a criminal action, to designate their estate, degree, or trade. Men who were below the level of gentleman were to identify themselves as yeoman, or husbandman, or labourer, or by their craft (Pollard 114; Holt 115). In this general context, the term 'yeoman' defined a large variety of different social grades within medieval society. A medieval yeoman in rural England would stand between a gentleman and a peasant or labourer. He would possibly own a portion of land, but without being part of the landed gentry. Within the manorial household, in rural and urban centres, the yeoman also held specific roles, sometimes serving as personal guard and protector of the nobility. Within the public sphere, he would hold administrative positions such as bailiff, constable, or churchwarden. Allusions to these 'yeoman' functions are made in several late medieval Robin Hood tales. Yet, as shown by James Holt, it seems that the social rank of 'yeoman' could be interchanged with that of gentleman and esquire, as in the case of a certain John Otter of Warwickshire who is listed in official records as a gentleman in 1455, an esquire in 1468, and a yeoman in 1470 (115).

² The writings of Stephen Knight are the best starting point for an exploration of Robin Hood's reception history.

³ The plays were produced in 1598 and first published in 1601.

⁴ Quotes from the medieval Robin Hood texts, included parenthetically, are taken from Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren.

1 Robin Hood and the Yeoman in Medieval Ballads

When applied to Robin Hood and his men in the late medieval Robin Hood ballads and tales, the term ‘yeoman’ arguably had a more specific meaning: they are ‘yeomen of the forest.’ They have the skills of foresters, which involved the use of bows and arrows, and know the codes and crafts of the forester, including hunting (Richmond 98). The yeoman of the forest’s skills as an archer were deemed second only to those of knights on the battlefield. Geoffrey Chaucer’s yeoman in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1400) is part of a trio with a knight and a squire that forms a hierarchically organised group with the yeoman at the bottom. The description highlights the yeoman’s impressive weapons and his knowledge of the forest as a gamekeeper, both of which would have been useful to the trio in case of ambush or more frontal attacks:

A Yeman hadde he and servantz namo
 At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,
 And he was clad in cote and hode of grene.
 A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily
 (Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
 His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
 And in his hand he baar a mighty bowe.
 A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
 Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.
 Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
 And on that oother syde a gay daggere
 Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
 A Christopher on his brest of silver sheene,
 An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
 A forster was he, smoothly, as I gesse. (lines 100–117)

Chaucer’s yeoman is a gamekeeper rather than an administrative official in charge of forests (Cooper 37).⁵ His portrait, which focuses on external aspects, fits with what one can surmise about Robin Hood in the medieval tales. By contrast, several passages where ‘yeoman’ is used in *A Gest* (first recorded in printed form in the first half of the sixteenth century)

⁵ The description of the canon’s yeoman in “The Canon’s Yeoman’s Prologue” of *The Canterbury Tales* shows Chaucer’s understanding of the different social categories the term ‘yeoman’ covers in medieval culture. This yeoman is a servant (Latin *valettus*) and the prologue clearly highlights the hierarchical structure of his relationship with his ‘lord,’ the canon (Chaucer 554–719).

remain vague as to their understanding of the specific functions of the yeoman; for instance, in the prologue, where the narrator announces “I shall you tel of a gode yeman, / His name was Robyn Hode” (lines 3–4) or, a little further on, when Robin advises his men not to do harm to “gode yeman / That walketh by grene wode shawe” (lines 53–54). What is clear, however, is that Robin appears as the type of the just man and not the just gentleman (Richmond 92).

Medieval ballads and tales do not visit Robin Hood’s past before he becomes an outlaw, but the ease with which he navigates the forest and makes it a viable, even comfortable abode for himself and his community implies that he is a competent forester (Pollard 121). Robin is also able to ‘manage’ royal forests in Lancashire:

All the compasse of Lancasshyre
He went both ferre and nere,
Tyll he came to Plomton Parke;
He faylyd many of his dere.

There our kyng was wont to se
Herdes many one,
He could unneth fynde one dere,
That bare ony good horne. (*A Gest* lines 1425–1432)

The king’s annoyance on finding his forest emptied of harts with good horns is a consequence of Robin Hood’s hunting / poaching skills.

In addition to these skills, typical of the yeoman of the forest, Robin Hood and his men also engage in outlawry, rejecting hierarchy, and establishing meritocracy. They defy the king and his officers, especially the sheriff of Nottingham; rob the rich and the undeserving without giving back to the poor (a development of the post-medieval tradition); ridicule corrupt heads of religious houses; and use violence, including murder, in the defence of justice (Pollard 117). Robin Hood becomes a yeoman who has “rejected service to a lord, service in a household, altogether” (Richmond 94). Rejection of service to a lord and departure from the household is substituted with communal life in the forest, with no fixed hierarchical structure. In *Robin Hood and the Monk*, following Little John’s heroic deeds in freeing Robin Hood from prison and bringing him to the safety of the linden tree, the latter appoints him “maister [...] Of alle my men and me” (lines 313–314), thus giving up his own position of leadership and recognising Little John’s superiority of character. Little John’s refusal maintains the status quo and adds humility as one of his qualities, but the episode nonetheless serves as a reminder that leadership among the yeo-

men of the forest works according to merit rather than birth rights. In addition, there does not seem to be any hierarchy among the yeomen below their leader.

Heroic deeds are depicted as demonstrations of brotherhood within the yeoman community. In *A Gest* Robin and Much refuse to give up wounded Little John. Instead of killing him or leaving him behind so as to avoid capture by the sheriff, Much carries him on his back as they retreat to find shelter (lines 1217–1232). They find refuge in the castle of Rychard at the Lee, to whom Robin Hood pledges lasting friendship because Lee previously helped a “pore yeman,” thereby demonstrating shared understanding of the importance and enactment of brotherhood values between yeoman (*A Gest* lines 71, 1069–1076). In addition to economic independence, self-confidence, freedom, intense *communitas*, and fellowship, these values outclass social division and hierarchy (Holt 126; Gray 84).

A Gest and several of the earlier ballads, such as *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*, circulate yeoman values and ideology that have political force. These fictional tales could have inspired the middling class, to which yeomen belonged, into playing a more active role in the political sphere by challenging corrupt royal officials without necessarily questioning royal authority as such. The attraction of most of the medieval tales of Robin Hood is based on their destabilising function and their momentary, carnivalesque inversion of roles. They question the status quo, critique individual wrongdoing, and, although the fictional characters remain in the end obedient subjects to the king, they nevertheless plant the seeds of revolt and rebellion in the minds of late fifteenth-century middle-class audiences.

Late medieval texts promote Robin through association with Christian virtue, with the Virgin Mary, and by denigrating specific characters. *Robin Hood and the Potter* does so through comparison with an avaricious potter, but what seems most significant in this tale is the insistence on the association of religious devotion and yeoman values. The ballad identifies him as a “yeman” who “For the loffe of owre ladye, / All women werschepyd he” (lines 5–12). *Robin Hood and the Monk* also portrays Robin as a devout Christian, whose reason to leave the forest community temporarily for Nottingham is motivated by a desire to attend mass in Saint Mary’s church. *Robin Hood and the Monk*’s emphasis on Robin’s religious devotion contrasts with the deceitful behaviour of the monk who reports Robin’s presence within the church. Both the monk and sheriff act as foils for Robin who is depicted as genuinely devout, while they, as re-

ligious and secular officials, ignore the sanctity of the mass and the concept of the church as a refuge for fugitives and outlaws. Here, Robin relies on traditional religious values and insists on attending the ritual of the mass whose spiritual content cannot be lessened by deceitful and selfish (religious) authoritative figures.

The narrator of *Robin Hood and the Potter* addresses an audience of “god yemen” (line 5), but under this label a multiplicity of social roles could apply. While Robin Hood himself bears all the characteristics of a yeoman of the forest, the audience of yeomen mentioned in the late medieval tales may have been a more socially diverse range of individuals.⁶ Holt offers the following comment about the household yeoman:

In short he could be a prosperous landholder who, if he was socially ambitious, might have pretensions to gentility and achieve recognition as a gentleman. At the other end of the social scale, he would not be easy to distinguish from the general ruck of the rural population from which his family might recently have emerged. Those who listened to the tales of Robin Hood could place their yeomen anywhere within this range. That no doubt broadened their appeal. (117)

Another use of the word ‘yeoman’ expands social possibilities further. The Latin term *valettus* came to be translated as ‘yeoman’ in the early fourteenth century. In the context of the household and the court, it described a social rank below knights and squires (117). So, the audience of yeomen could have included yeomen landholders, household or official yeomen, and yeomen of the forest.⁷

The outlaw deeds described in *Robin Hood and the Monk* rest on the premise that the tale, based on values shared by the middling class, would also appeal to gentlemen and labourers with similar concerns. Although the early ballads and tales mention only Little John, Much the Miller’s son, and William Scarlock as Robin’s named companions, they also mention a group of unnamed *wight yemen*, that range from twelve to one hundred and forty, thus populating their narratives with a broad community who support and assent to these values.⁸ Early ballads and tales were clearly aimed at an audience conversant, and responsive to general yeoman values, but it is also more specifically targeted towards the forester

⁶ On texts that specifically address an audience of yeomen see Holt (105).

⁷ For a detailed social history of the yeoman, see Holt (105–153).

⁸ Their presence within the narrative also triggers inclusiveness beyond its frame to the tale’s audience (Knight and Ohlgren 49).

yeoman world encapsulated by Robin Hood, “yeman of the forest” (*A Gest* line 887).

A Gest shares the same values as *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*, but a process of gentrification is already at play in this late medieval text and may reveal a desire to extend its impact to a more gentrified and/or socially ambitious middling class audience. Indeed, although Robin remains the standard bearer of forester values, his amenable exchanges with the knight Sir Rychard at the Lee is concluded by the spreading of boards and tablecloths for a courtly banquet that takes place in Robin’s wood (lines 1261–1264). Another moment, earlier in Fitt One of the ballad, inverts the social hierarchy when Robin arms Sir Rychard, who has been dispossessed of his wealth by the abbot of St Mary’s Abbey. Fitt Eight brings Robin to the royal court for a one-year long stay where he gains reputation, but at a certain financial cost and with the loss of his skills at archery, which stand for his forester yeoman status (lines 1729–1752). Stephen Knight highlights differences from previous medieval tales in the definition of his social status:

The opening of the *Gest* elevates Robin: Little John addresses him as ‘Maister’ at the start of his first two utterances (lines 19, 41), and speaks to the knight of ‘My Maister’ (line 99) – an approach very different from Little John’s attitude in the two early ballads. Robin assumes a quasi-Arthurian position of waiting for a marvel before dinner and instructing his men: it is as if the author has a copy of Malory’s ‘The Wedding of King Arthur’ open before him. This positioning of Robin replaces both the Mary-worshipping focus of ‘Robin Hood and the Monk’ and the yeoman class-identification of ‘Robin Hood and the Potter’; it provides a serious social upgrade for Robin that is pursued through the language and plotting of the whole text. (*Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood* 21)

Robin’s participation in the life of the royal court is in the end unsuccessful in *A Gest*, but it nevertheless points to the potential for transformation from yeoman of the forest to the falsely accused gentleman of the early modern period.

Ohlgren suggests that *A Gest* was first performed following its commission in 1439 as a semi-dramatic performance on the annual awards banquet of the Drapers Company in London (Hoffman 119). Whatever the case may be, it seems that the *Gest*’s subtle social upgrading in terms of form, content, and character, suited the mercantile urban audience for whom *A Gest* was performed by minstrels in guildhalls or household halls. As shown by Gray, the significant contrast between *A Gest* and *Robin Hood and the Potter* in terms of their length, character, and method

of performance, suggests that the late medieval Robin Hood material circulated both as a short epic, or long ballad or romance-ballad, and in the form of the merry tale (81). The early Robin Hood poems, with their plain and often formulaic expressions, were almost certainly initially circulated orally by minstrels in the marketplace or in taverns for a mixed audience, while *A Gest*, at least initially and in the form that has survived to this day, was aimed at a more gentrified audience (81).

The process of gentrification of the Robin Hood character undergoes further transformation from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. The *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (1521) by John Major and its elaboration in English in Richard Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569) proposes a narrative that utterly and definitely transforms the yeoman into an earl (Knight and Ohlgren 296), as well as claiming Robin Hood's authenticity:⁹

But in an olde and auncient Pamphlet I finde this written of the sayd Robert Hood. This man (sayth he) discended of a nobel parentage: or rather beyng of a base stocke and linage, was for his manhode and chivalry advaunced to the noble dignité of an Erle. Excelling principally in Archery, or shootyng, his manly courage agreeyng thereunto: But afterwarde he so prodigally exceeded in charges and expences, that he fell into great debt, by reason wherof, so many actions and sutes were commenced against him, whereunto he aunswered not, that by order of lawe he was outlawed [...]. (Grafton 28)

The chronicle hesitates in its account of Robert Hood's nobility, by first mentioning his noble parentage before moving on to explain his title of earl by means of his personal qualities, such as manhood and chivalry. Within this newly socially mobile society, where 'gentillesse' is acquired by deeds rather than by blood, social ascent via the exchange of material goods can also be followed by social descent. As the chronicle tells us succinctly, Robert Hood, unable to reimburse his creditors, is declared an outlaw. According to medieval law, the status of outlaw is reached when a person, having been lawfully summoned to court, refuses to appear for trial (Knight and Ohlgren 149n5). This Robert Hood becomes the wronged nobleman Robert, Earl of Huntington in the plays of Anthony Munday. The type of the forest yeoman seems therefore to be symbolically obliterated, at least initially, from early modern renderings by the transformation of his name from Robin to Robert and finally to Robert, Earl of Huntington.

⁹ For more information on the historicity of Robin Hood, see Luxford 70–76.

2 Munday's Huntington Plays

The yeoman values and ideology identified in the first part of this essay persist in Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington*. These plays, both written between 1597-1598 and printed in 1601,¹⁰ were first performed by the Admiral's Men's Company in front of socially-diverse audiences at the Rose theatre (Gurr 237). The range of ticket prices alone is suggestive of mixed levels of affluency.¹¹ Meredith Skura has suggested that the plays seem to have been addressing an aspiring and emerging urban London middling class in need of heroes whose social elevation fulfilled their own desires, with their success measured in aristocratic terms (166). As I intend to demonstrate, Munday's plays instead continue to convey yeoman values such as independence, self-confidence, freedom, brotherhood, and fellowship, despite the main hero's promotion to the rank of earl.

The Downfall, a play-within-a-play, is set during the reign of the crusader King Richard I (1189-1199), more specifically during his captivity in Austria. Robert, Earle of Huntington, has unjustly been declared an outlaw by his uncle, Gilbert de Hood, Prior of York, and by Sir Doncaster, a nobleman at the court of Prince John. The accusations are based on a debt that Robert was intending to pay back. This denunciation takes place as Robert and Matilda are about to be betrothed. Matilda, daughter of Robert Fitzwater, desired by Prince John, follows Robert to the greenwood where she changes her name to Maid Marian. Robert is betrayed on several occasions by various courtiers including his uncle, Sir Doncaster and, to a lesser extent, by Queen Elinor, her son Prince John, and Robert's servant, Warman. Following the surprise return of King Richard, Robert is recognised as a faithful subject of the king and is invited back to the court. In a somewhat trusting gesture, Robert exonerates the conspirators, whom he thinks have repented, and returns them to the king as a gift (Nelson 106–107).

¹⁰ *The Downfall* and *The Death* can be found in Knight and Ohlgren; subsequent parenthetical references record scene and line numbers. Knight and Ohlgren only offer an extract of *The Death of Robert*, up to the death of Robert in scene five. Their edition is the most recent one (2000) and is also accessible online.

¹¹ Prices were one penny for standing, two for a gallery seat, three for a gallery seat with cushion, and four for a gallery seat where one can be seen. The price range quadruples between the cheapest and most expensive positions, thus making the plays affordable and available to a diverse social audience (Gurr 214). On the Admiral's Men, see Rutter.

The Death involves the same characters. Robert is poisoned by his uncle and Doncaster at the end of scene five. During this slow death, which lasts almost the whole of the act, he shows great equanimity, inviting his enemies and friends to reconcile and be good subjects to John who has succeeded his brother Richard as king. The following scenes focus on John's harassment of Matilda / Marian. The protection of her uncle, Lord Bruce, being insufficient, Matilda / Marian takes shelter in Dunmow Abbey, but her fate follows that of Robert in that she is poisoned by one of John's evil henchmen. The play ends by showing John repenting for his evil deeds (Nelson 105).

As can be inferred from these brief summaries, several major elements of the late medieval ballads and *A Gest* are left out of Munday's plays: community life as experienced in the forests of Barnesdale, Sherwood, and Inglewood, receives less attention. The trusty tree, official seat of the forest people, is gone. There is no archery contest in Munday's plays, and Robin Hood's other deceitful tricks are omitted. More significantly, his religious devotion in general and more specifically towards the Virgin Mary, which situates his exploits within the larger context of Catholic England, is also absent from the plays. Instead, although the narrative is historically situated during the period of King Richard and Prince John, Munday transfers the events to an early modern aristocratic court, including intrigues, poisoning, and complex love affairs (Robert, Prince Johan, and Marion). This new context and staging of the play in post-Reformation London enables the expression of increased hostility toward members of the Catholic church (Knight, *Reading Robin Hood* 76; Phillips 99–104), such as Friar Tuck's reference to "The envious Priest of Hothersfield" (*Downfall* 11.1618) and the overall representation of Robert's uncle, Gilbert de Hood, Prior of York, as the main villain of the play who masterminds the outlawing of his nephew (2.158–163) and pays the sheriff "a hundred markes" to execute the plan (2.163).

Munday's plays of Robert, Earle of Huntington transform the Robin Hood character of *A Gest*, and other late medieval tales, from yeoman to nobleman. Skura suggests that yeoman values might not have appealed to a London audience in the late sixteenth century, hence the alteration, and claims (based on Munday's biography) that the new Robin Hood would have appealed to Munday as part of a new mobile and ambitious middling class seeking gentrification (173–175). However, the extensive use of the term 'yeoman' in the plays suggests that, rather than being completely obliterated, yeoman ideology and values are still present in the plays, at

least until the protagonist's demise in line 824 of *The Death*.¹² The remainder of the play portrays secular courtly intrigues marked by King John's aggressive attempts to win over Matilda / Marian. References to yeomanry and its values die with Robert.

A close reading of a few passages from *The Downfall* elucidates the meaning of the lingering presence of the concept of the yeoman in the play. The connotations of service to a lord attributed to the state of the yeoman are pronounced by irredeemable characters in the plays, such as Gilbert de Hood, who betrays a member of his own family out of envy. His use of the term 'yeoman' to qualify the low social rank into which Robert has fallen as an (undeserved) outlaw is understood by the Prior as a synonym of 'servant'. It is not impossible that the Prior plays with the multiple meanings of 'yeoman' in order to demean Robert's status: "That was my Lord; but nowe is Robert Hood, / A simple yeoman as his servants were" (4.496–497). This negative perspective on the state of the yeoman is taken over in the following lines by the wife of Warman:

Backe with that legge [curtsey], my Lord Prior:
There be some that were his servantes thinke foule
scorne to be cald yeomen. (4.498–500)

Here, in a nutshell, the social fall of Robert of Huntington, which contrasts with the immoral climb of his former servant Warman, who will be appointed Sheriff of Nottingham, incarnates the new social mobility between classes in early modern England which enabled, for better or for worse, precipitous changes to one's own social condition.

Within that context, aggressive social climbers, such as Warman and his wife, would wish to banish from collective memory any reference to their lowly status as 'yeomen'. Robin offers solid evidence for Warman's unscrupulous desire for social promotion, which he carries out by betraying his master (3.345–365). While Warman's social ascent is achieved by immoral means, Robert's social descent is unjust. His demotion from earl to yeoman is perceived by his supporters at the court, and by the majority of today's critics, as a problem that needs to be fixed. This reading is, however, complicated by Munday's ambivalent use of the term yeoman throughout the play. Scene nine of *The Downfall* no longer uses the term

¹² The term 'yeoman,' in its singular and plural uses, appears fourteen times (lines 497, 500, 1015, 1265, 1271, 1297, 1317, 1332, 1341, 1597, 1621, 2484, 2696, 2797) in *The Downfall*, and four times in the excerpts from *The Death* (lines 340, 347, 405, 684, 835). Also see Appendix.

‘yeoman’ as meaning servant, but instead associates it with the greenwood of the medieval tales and ballads. The stage directions for scene nine read as follows:

Enter Scathlocke and Scarlet, winding their hornes at severall doores. To them enter Robin Hoode, Matilda all in greene, Scathlockes mother, Much, Little John, all the men with bowes and arrowes. (9.1258–1260)

The paraphernalia linked to the greenwood, such as the colour green, horns, bows, and arrows, serve as a context for what I would claim is a powerful regeneration of yeoman ideology in the plays.

Scarlet and Scathlocke (like Robert, unjustifiably exiled as outlaws by Sir Doncaster) refer to a life in the Sherwood area that gave them freedom to move unhindered from one location to another, with yeomen welcoming them in various parts of northern England:

Its full seaven years since we were outlawed first,
And wealthy Sherewood was our heritage.
For all those years we rained uncontrolde,
From Barnsdale shrogs to Notinghams red cliffes;
At Blithe and Tickhill were we welcome guests.
Good George a Greene at Bradford was our friend,
And wanton Wakefields Pinner lov'd us well.
At Barnsley dwels a Potter tough and strong,
That never brookt we brethren should have wrong.
The Nunnes of Farnsfield, pretty nunnes they bee,
Gave napkins, shirts, and bands to him and mee.
Bateman of Kendall, gave us Kendall greene,
And Sharpe of Leedes, sharpe arrowes for us made:
At Rotheram dwelt our bowyer, God him blisse.
Jackson he hight; his bowes did never misse. (9.1279–1295)

The lines provide audiences/readers with a strong sense of northern locality, stretching from Barnsdale Wood at the southernmost point, to Kendall in the north, in the Lake District. That geographical layout stresses the extensive mobility of the two “uncontrolled” brothers before their arrest.

Even if the list is reminiscent of conventional place lists associated with evil characters in medieval drama (McGavin 49), Scarlet’s and Scathlocke’s contacts with the locals also suggest the existence of a positive brotherhood of yeomen with different crafts able to supply their needs. While some of these are of a material nature (pots and green woollens from Kendall, sharp arrows from Leeds, and bows from Rotherham), they also include hospitality, friendship, and love. Scarlet’s long speech depicts

a regional economy run by equals with different skills and bound together by friendship and trust. It presents the audience with a community of exchange devoid of social difference, in which the nobility does not exist. Yet it is the nobility, represented by Sir Doncaster of Hethersfield (*Downfall* 9.1302), that brings about the symbolic end of the lawful community of yeomen, through his arrest and judicial condemnation of Scarlet and Scathlock to death.

The two brothers, who are based on a single character in the medieval tales, embody yeoman brotherhood and stand, in my view, as a significant model for Robert. Immediately following this positive account of their life as part of a northern yeoman community, Robert gathers all his yeomen and officially delivers the outlaw code that will regulate their own community. The first provisions are specific to Robert as their leader, who gives up his title of earl and renames himself Robin. The second addresses Matilda who is renamed Maid Marian. This name change identifies her as the secular female ideal that supplants the Virgin Mary of the medieval tales to whom Robin showed his devotion (Field 6–22). A name change marks an identity change and the insistence with which Robin sticks to his new name speaks of the profound transformation that he undergoes in the woods. The third article is concerned with unbridled sexuality, which each yeoman should keep under control by expelling lustful thoughts about women. The fourth article promotes hospitality in the form of feasts offered to passers-by, provided they pay for the privilege, without having been warned about the scheme. The yeomen / outlaws also swear never to rob a poor man, although priests, usurers, and clerks are considered acceptable prey. Finally, the sixth and last rule stipulates that every yeoman should defend maids, widows, orphans, and distressed men (*Downfall* 9.1329–1358). Thus, the yeoman of the forest's rules define the ways in which members of the new community need to behave in order to fit into that new social reality.

The name changes combined with the six provisions that constitute the outlaw code mark both individual and societal transformation. At this point in the play, Robin and Marian willingly embrace yeoman values as a long-term option. If they still reminisce about the world of the court, it is not to express nostalgic longing, but rather to reify the natural world as a paradisaical space, expressed by Robin in the following way:

Marian, thou seest though courtly pleasurs want,
 Yet country sport in Sherewodde is not scant.
 For the soule-ravishing delicious sound
 Of instrumentall musique, we have found

The winged quiristers, with divers notes,
 Sent from their quaint recording prettie throats,
 On every branch that compasseth our bower,
 Without commaund, contenting us each hower.
 For Arras hangings, and rich Tapestrye,
 We have sweete natures best imbrothery.
 For thy steele glasse, wherein thou wontst to looke,
 Thy christall eyes, gaze in a christall brooke.
 At court, a flower or two did decke thy head:
 Now with whole garlands is it circled.
 For what in wealth we want, we have in flowers,
 And what wee loose in halles, we finde in bowers. (9.1366–1381)

This list of courtly comforts underlines Robin's noble origins but nevertheless shows him supporting yeoman values by proxy, through his interaction with Scarlet and Scathlocke.

Friar Tuck ('played' by John Skelton) reminds the audience about the time when Robin, then Earl of Huntington, saved the two brothers from the gallows, building his reputation as a good man through this gesture of brotherhood towards these two honest yeomen (Knight, *Reading Robin Hood* 77), and also labels Robin "The yeoman good" (*Downfall* 11.1596–1598).¹³ The meaning of 'yeoman' here is multiple. From the perspective of the court, it certainly concerns the social degradation of Robert to Robin. On the other hand, following the proclamation of the outlaw code, and the recent praise of Robert as saviour of Scarlet and Scathlocke, the qualifier 'good' echoes the late medieval tradition.

The surprise return of King Richard marks the point at which Robin must begin to confront his former aristocratic way of life. However, the transition is characterised by Robin's reluctance, and that of his men, to give up life in the greenwood. Scene Four of *The Death* describes Robin's encounter with Richard, who greets him as "Earle Robert" (4.394). The king is immediately rebuked by Friar Tuck, who informs him that Robert / Robin does not wish to be called "Earle, Lord, Knight, or Squire" (4.403), but rather "Robin Hood, plaine Robin Hoode, / That honest yeoman stout and good" (4.404–405). The king then addresses him as Robin Hood, thus officially recognising the name change, and by extension his transformation.

¹³ In the prologue of the play, a fictional Skelton, based on the poet (c.1460–1529), informs the audience about the play-within-the-play (in which he will play Friar Tuck). The character of Skelton thus provides another example of a medieval afterlife in Munday's early modern play.

There are further instances where yeoman values are embraced by the king. Scene Four of *The Death* shows the king in the company of several of Robin's companions, with Friar Tuck carrying the head of a stag that has been shot by "honest fellow Scarlet [...] a yeomanbold" (4.346–347). The king rewards Scarlet and Scathlock for their boldness with twelve pence a day for life, and Robin then "bestowes" his yeoman on Richard before giving detailed instructions for his funeral in which the yeomen are overwhelmingly present (5.817). In this speech, Robin asks that the yeomen sing "For holy dirges [...] wodomens songs," bequeaths his "goods and plates" to them, and addresses his goodbyes to both yeomen and royal figures, thereby merging courtly traditions with those of the greenwood (5.814–824).

Yeoman ideology and values thus pervade Robin Hood's last speech in Munday's play. Brotherhood, community, and independence are central to his concerns. By bestowing the yeomen upon the king, he hopes to free them from the yoke of lower royal officials. So, rather than regarding him as a nobleman in disguise, he should be considered as a member of the gentry who converts to embrace the state of the yeoman until his last breath. In that respect, Skura's point about the appetite of socially mobile Londoners for new heroes who reflect their social status desires needs nuancing. Robin in Munday's play is not a gentrified yeoman, but instead a member of the gentry who adopts yeoman values.

Munday's *The Downfall* and its sequel *The Death* provide a set of values that have a transformative power on Robert, Earl of Huntington, so much so that his return to the court marks an attempt at reforming it with the yeoman values that he has fully integrated. If the court is too corrupt to give Robin a chance to disseminate them within the royal entourage, the bestowing of his yeomen upon the king following his death leaves slim hope for the court entourage to redeem itself. Having renounced his title of earl and renamed himself Robin Hood, his return to the court in this new identity propounds the court's possible transformation from greedy social promotion to brotherhood, compassion, and social justice.

The gentrification of Robin Hood in Munday's plays is an important turning point in his medieval afterlife (Nelson 121). From the early modern period, Robin has consistently been portrayed as a nobleman unjustly condemned as an outlaw. The available evidence supporting that point is overwhelming. The circulation of ideas within Munday's plays is, however, more complex: though less overtly than the medieval tales, they still uphold the values of the greenwood and the outlaws' code. Robin Hood reluctantly re-joins the court to face his death, praises the yeomen on his

deathbed, and shows his attachment to their cultural milieu by welcoming their woodmen's songs for his funeral. Scarlet and Scathlocke's description of their northern community of yeomen offers a model for crafting a set of six regulations to guide the yeoman community around Robin. There is also no turning back for Robin with regard to his change of identity. It is not Robert, Earl of Huntington, who returns to the court, but Robin Hood, plain Robin Hood, acknowledged by King Richard. Carrying identity-change over into the world of the court entails a carrying over of the values that have prompted that change. So, rather than talking about the nobleman in disguise who undergoes a process of self-transformation before returning to his milieu, we should see Robin Hood of the Munday plays as a convert to yeoman ideology whose attempts at conveying its values among the gentry ultimately come at the expense of his own life. As a man familiar with the competitive and unforgiving London world (Skura 173–175), although having given up Robin Hood as forest yeoman, Munday nevertheless wanted to convey through his plays some of the values of yeoman ideology, not as a nostalgic sign for a world which had vanished forever, but rather as an antidote to an aggressive, ambitious, and ruthless late sixteenth-century London social model marked by self-interest and self-promotion.

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Appendix

The following table offers information about the speakers who use the term “yeoman,” identifying the connotation of the term, and the character who is referred to.

Play, Scene,	Speaker	Connotation	Recipient
Do, iv, 497	Prior	Negative	Robert
Do, iv, 500	Warman’s	Negative	General
Do, vii,	Robin	Positive	Scarlet and
Do, ix, 1265	Scathlocke’s	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1271	Scathlocke’s	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1297	Scathlocke	Positive	General
Do, ix, 1317	Robin	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1332	Robin	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1341	Little John	Positive	RH’s men
Do, xi, 1597	Friar	Positive	RH
Do, xi, 1621	Friar	positive	RH’s men
Do, xiv,	Robin	positive	RH’s men
Do, xv,	Robin	positive	RH’s men
Do, xv,	Eltham	neutral	Prince
De, iv, 340	Friar	positive	General
De, iv, 347	John	positive	Scathlocke
De, iv, 405	Friar to the	positive	Robin
De, v, 684	Stage direc-	positive	praise of
De, v, 835	King	positive	Robin

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Postdramatic Theatre and Pre-Theatrical Drama,
What's in a Name?: An Afterlife for
Early British Drama

This essay reconsiders what made late-medieval British drama distinct from that of other periods and what it shared with those dramas. It argues for a form of afterlife for the medieval and early Tudor stage in the dramaturgy of postmodern performance. Responding to Hans-Thies Lehmann's claims for a *post-dramatic* theatre, it suggests that we should also think about a *pre-dramatic* theatre, or rather a *pre-theatrical drama*, existing, not in the tragic theatre of ancient Greece, but in late medieval England and Scotland, and that the *postdramatic* and the *pre-theatrical* have much in common in their radical approaches to stagecraft.

Keywords: *Postdramatic theatre*, playhouses, pre-theatrical drama, interludes, morality drama

In this essay, I will reconsider what made late-medieval British drama distinct from that of later (and indeed earlier) periods – and what it shared with them.¹ But I will approach these questions via what might seem an odd claim about a form of afterlife for the medieval and early Tudor stage in the dramaturgy of postmodern performance. In so doing I will be drawing out the implicit suggestion that if we can talk, with Hans-Thies Lehmann, about a *post-dramatic* theatre, might we not equally talk about a *pre-dramatic* one too, not as Lehmann argues in the tragic theatre of ancient Greece (34, 70), but instead in late-medieval England and Scotland, and might the two be meaningfully connected?

Lehmann's claim, building on a long tradition of German theatre scholarship, was that the most significant (and only truly revolutionary) transformation in modern theatre history came with the non-narrative

¹ I am grateful to Pascale Aebischer, Guillemette Bolens, John J. McGavin, Eleanor Rycroft, Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, and the anonymous reader for *SPELL* for their very helpful suggestions during the evolution of this essay.

happenings and performance art of the later twentieth century and their successors. Prior to that, he argued, all of the theatre-work produced between the English Renaissance and later modernity, however vociferous its claims to novelty, was dominated by a single, essentially realist paradigm, which, following Peter Szondi and, most obviously, Bertolt Brecht, he called *drama* (Lehmann 21; Szondi; Fischer-Lichte 1997, 2002 passim). Founded on the Aristotelian principles of mimesis and action, *drama*, in this Brechtian sense, assumed its function was to tell stories (Brecht's term was *fabel* [story] *theatre*), delivering internally coherent works, structured around empathy-inviting characters, and narratives in which audiences were invited to invest intellectually and emotionally, observing a play-world – a “fictive cosmos” in Lehmann's words (22) – happening behind the conventional fourth wall in a production driven by scripted dialogue (21, 34). In so doing, spectators supposedly became merely passive observers of the performance event. As Platon Kerzhentsev put it, “The entire development of bourgeois theatre has brought with it the absolute passivity of the spectator” (Fischer-Lichte 41).² *Postdramatic* theatre, Lehmann claimed, rejected each aspect of this model, just as Brecht and the early twentieth century avant-gardes had tried less successfully to do half a century or more earlier.

Lehmann's argument is, of course, fundamentally about how the performance events of the (post)modern period are different, and why that difference matters. But, might it also offer a way of thinking about earlier performance history? In what sense(s) might the British drama of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries be helpfully seen as *pre-dramatic*? But first a few words on the term *postdramatic theatre* itself. Szondi, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Lehmann all use the term *theatre* to describe the generic practice of performance, and *drama* for that particular performance paradigm which they suggest dominated western stages from the Renaissance onwards (Fischer-Lichte *History of European Drama and Theatre* 5). So, *theatre* is taken to be the constant, and *drama* a particular iteration of it. But, viewed from an English perspective at least, this labelling seems unhelpful, indeed, to have the terms precisely the wrong way around. For, by referring to the generic performance practice as *theatre* we inevitably, and largely silently, adopt a very particular, historically contingent inflection of performance practice as if it were a timeless

² Platon Kerzhentsev, *Das Schöpferische Theater* (“The Creative Theatre”), translated into German by Richard Weber, Prometh, 1980, 161, cited and translated into English in Fischer-Lichte, 1997 41. See also, Szondi, 8, and Artaud 54–55.

norm. And this is especially unhelpful in discussions of a performance culture in which there were, of course, no *theatres*, in the post-Renaissance sense of the word.³

In part, the question is accentuated by the only partial overlap of the terminology in use in English and German and potential losses in translation in both directions (Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre* 12–13, 340–341; Szondi 7). In English the term *playhouse* for a multi-function theatre-building has fallen out of general usage. So, *theatre* must do potentially confusing double work to denote both the art-form and the structure that characteristically houses it in the modern world. But the conflation has significant implications for our understanding of both dramatic practice and its associated aesthetics. In England from the 1560s, and more obviously from the turn of the seventeenth century onwards the *theatre* (as physical structure, socio-commercial enterprise, and idea) became, despite the fact that much acting took place elsewhere (Davies 25–69), the overwhelmingly dominant model for thinking about the performance of plays, at least until the rise of the site specific and *found space* performances of (post)modernity (Carlson 132). A hint of this shift from thinking about *acting* to thinking about *theatre buildings* can, perhaps, be gained from the fact that, when Thomas More explored the idea that life was like a play in the 1510s, he suggested that kings' games were a matter merely "played upon scaffolds," in which the real identities of the actors were known to their neighbours (More 83; see McGavin and Walker 172–175). But when Sir Walter Raleigh revisited that idea at the other end of the century in "On the Life of Man" it was as a comparison with a full-blown enterprise with its own architectural setting of tiring houses, seats for spectators, and a curtain that can be drawn "when the play is done."⁴

As I will suggest, the further one reads into Lehmann's account of the principles of *postdramatic* theatre – its self-reflexivity and refusal of

³ I restrict the discussion here to theatres in the modern conception. The complexities involved in using the more ambiguous, multi-function early-modern term *playhouse* are helpfully revealed in Davies.

⁴ "What is our life? a play of passion, / Our mirth the music of division, / Our mothers' wombs the tiring houses be, / Where we are dressed for this short Comedy, / Heaven the Judicious sharp spect[at]or is, / That sits and marks still [*always*] who doth act amiss, / Our graves that hide us from the searching Sun, / Are like drawn curtains when the play is done, / Thus march we playing to our latest rest, / Only we die in earnest, that's no Jest" ("On the Life of Man," spelling modernised).

closure, its openness to contemporary circumstances and the presence of the audience, its incorporation of non-narrative elements, its refusal to prioritise text above performance, etc. – the clearer it becomes that the *postdramatic* revolution was actually an attempt (in English terms) to *untheatre* theatre. It sought to sweep away all the assumptions and the accumulated baggage accreted around the idea and the institutional apparatus of ‘the theatre’, to re-expose the bare-bones of the unhoused, mobile, porous figures of early performance. So, while for scholars of modern drama it is perhaps understandable to see *playmaking* and *theatre* as near synonyms, from a pre-1560s perspective they are anything but. To describe playmaking as *theatre*, even in 1580, would have been to conflate many diverse performance practices with just one of the venues in which they might take place. It collapses the long history of performance into a flattened, modern perspective that excludes more than it seeks to describe. In reality to call play-making and acting *theatre* is as limiting as calling all music-making *concert hall* or all joke-telling *comedy club*. It offers up a historically specific, commercially and architecturally determined, and ultimately ideologically inflected version of an activity as if that were the thing itself (Boal 133–135; Read 5).

But simply reversing the terms *drama* and *theatre* does not close down the generative potential of Lehmann’s thesis. Indeed, the very questions raised by the idea of a *postdramatic* theatre open a helpful space in which to revisit some old issues regarding pre-playhouse performance in Britain. Essentially, what *postdramatic* theatre does is take the conventional assumptions of a well-made play and deliberately subvert them, challenging audiences to recognise and appreciate those acts of subversion. With the pre-theatrical drama, by contrast, there was really no pre-existing model for the performers to subvert; and, consequently, no need to *untheatre* theatre. The precedents offered by classical drama, for example, were neither fully understood nor consistently followed until later in the sixteenth century. So writers and performers were free both to experiment *ab initio* and to borrow from and adapt other performative genres familiar to them (such as processions, ceremonies, flytings, tableaux, and games), or to draw from literary forms such as fabliaux, verse narratives, and humanist dialogues, and bring heightened, ironized versions of real-world events (the reading out of proclamations, duels, wrestling matches, jousts, or the confessional speeches and executions of condemned prisoners) into their plays without apparent concern for formal transgression. The result was almost inevitably a performance culture that was flexible, audience-facing, and porous to the world beyond the play. It was also both site-spe-

cific and even (in moments such as the delivery of a self-contained sermon or the reading out of putative Acts of Parliament in Sir David Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* of 1552-1554 (604-605 and 610-612)) quasi-verbatim in nature. The distinction between play-form and real-world events was therefore blurred almost as a matter of course.

To turn to another key feature of the *postdramatic* theatre, its self-reflexivity, this too was an inherent part of pre-theatrical drama, a consequence of its uncertain status as an art form simultaneously homeless and yet deeply rooted and invested in its places of performance, a practice without the equivalent of an artist's studio, yet with an intimate connection with the spaces and communities with which it engaged. It had, notoriously, to be generated, performed, and consumed in other people's spaces, spaces designed and used primarily for other things, even if sometimes by the same people who were now performing as well as receiving the play there. Hence, pre-theatrical performance needed repeatedly to explain itself to those with a prior claim to those spaces, to justify its existence and its claim to attention, to apologise, even if only with mock-humility, for its presumption in appearing where it did. The young boy acting as Prologue to Nicholas Udall's *Respublica* (1553) thus entreats spectators "of gentle sufferance / That this our matter may have quiet utterance," trusting not to cause offence and that the audience will stay to the end (lines 3-8, 14), while Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Luces* (1490s) ends with the actor nominated only as 'B' offering a fulsome apology for the shortcomings of both actors and writer and concluding, "Yet the author thereof desireth / That for this season // At the least ye will take it in patience. / And if there be any offence / (Show us wherein or [ere] we go hence)" (lines 2336-2340). Within a few decades such apologies would be merely formulaic, and there is, as I suggest, a degree of false modesty at play even here. But the sense of intrusion and of being there on sufferance was nonetheless, I think, authentic here, and a real issue to be acknowledged and circumnavigated with an appeal to laughter. And in making these wry apologies for their intrusion into spaces not their own, the pre-theatrical performers were prompted to ask, again both playfully and at the same time entirely seriously, the same kinds of questions as did their *postdramatic* counterparts. What *is* this thing that I am writing or performing? What are its generic limits, its social functions, its cultural, political, or religious value?

Such self-reflection is also evident in the traces of performance to be found in the archives and antiquarian writing of the period. And it is there still more obviously in the earliest printed texts, in which we see drama

taking its first steps from being a purely ephemeral practice towards becoming a commodified art-form in its own right, with a continuing physical presence and economic value. As the latter, it would generate its own artefacts to be traded and an infrastructure to sustain it, *scripts* to sell for private reading or for other companies to perform at other times in other places. ‘Four may play it easily,’⁵ title pages begin to promise, assuming readers who share the same assumptions about, for example, the possible motives for purchasing playbooks, the likely resources of acting companies, and what might constitute a ‘playable’ script. This process would lead to the building of a significant number of playhouses: substantial, enduring, often multi-purpose structures dedicated to the sustaining of what was by then an established commercial practice: a creative *industry* to rank alongside printing, sculpture, or pictorial art.⁶ But in the earliest days, prior to the mid-sixteenth-century, the self-reflexive anxiety of all those involved in producing and marketing play-texts (from writers to printers and booksellers) about what exactly this new and potentially paradoxical commodity – a *performance artefact* – was, or might be used for, is evident in the descriptions they gave these texts on their title pages, which tried to explain them in terms of other more familiar forms and more marketable genres. They tentatively offered readers “a *dialogue* [...] compiled in manner of an interlude,” (*Gentleness and Nobility*, emphasis added) or “A *treatise* [...] in manner of a moral play” (Anonymous, *Everyman*, emphasis added). The association with the better-known dialogue form, evident in the first of these, is also implicit in the formulation, “A merry play *between* [...]” various named characters, used in William Rastell’s editions of Heywood’s *Johan Johan* (1533) and *The Pardoner and the Friar* (c.1534). Plays were thus sold, not on their own terms, but as something *like* a treatise, or *like* a dialogue, but yet not quite identical to either.

Subsequently, printers began to carve out a set of distinctive qualities that gave play texts an appeal of their own, based upon the Horatian injunction to mix improvement with delight. Thus, for example, John Alde’s 1568 second edition of Fulwell’s *Like Will to Like* called itself

⁵ The description, clearly aimed at small (probably itinerant) acting companies, comes from the title-page of Wever. Similar claims are made, for example, for the anonymous *Wealth and Health*: “Four may easily play this play,” and *Impatient Poverty*: “Four men may well and easily play this interlude.”

⁶ For the problem of defining playhouses in this period, see Davies 1–29 and *passim*.

“very godly, and full of pleasant mirth.” What they did *not* do, however, at least not at first, was seek to position the moral play or the interlude in terms of the precedents provided by the classical theatre, despite a relatively well-established tradition of printing Latin plays for the school and university markets (Walker, *The Politics of Performance* 10).⁷ Indeed, Richard Pynson, who himself published the six comedies of Terence between 1495 and 1497, when he came to publish *Everyman* in the 1510s, described it, as we have seen, as “a treatise in manner of a moral play,” avoiding classical terminology entirely. Why so? The broad conclusion is surely that this ‘new’ vernacular art-form understood itself – or wished *to be* understood – as something distinct from the classical drama. It did not fall readily into the genres of tragedy or comedy, it did not subscribe to the Aristotelian *unities*, and it was clearly not written for, and did not require, a *theatrum* in which to be performed.

Only slowly, it seems, did the idea catch on that vernacular English plays with ‘merry’ content and positive outcomes might be consistently described as ‘comedies’. Hence John Rastell’s edition of the anonymous *Calisto and Melebea* (c.1525) was tentatively described as “a new comedy in manner of an interlude,” but his own *The Nature of the Four Elements* (c.1525-30) described itself instead as “A new interlude and a merry,” and *Fulgens and Lucrez* (c.1512), which combines a comic narrative with a classical Roman setting, was equally described only as “a go[o]dly interlude.” As late as 1568, indeed, Henry Bynneman was still hedging his bets, calling the anonymous *Jacob and Esau* “A new merry and witty comedy *or* interlude” (emphasis added).

To return to the idea of *theatre* and theatres; a theatre, of course, places a frame around a performance. As the origins of the word in the Greek *theatron* (“a place for viewing,” *OED*) suggest, it puts spectators literally in their place. Physically, it arranges the participants in accordance with the preordained roles of performer and spectator, marking out the respective territories of each. Culturally, it frames the performance event and everything surrounding it as a transaction governed by the protocols between customer and service-provider. So, the experience of a theatre audience is that of a licensed visitor to a realm set apart from their

⁷ Latin drama was taught in Cambridge from 1502 and Oxford from 1505, with a number of grammar schools following suit. For a fruitful account of early-Tudor drama’s seemingly conscious decision to refuse to embrace Tragedy in particular, see Pincombe, especially 114–116. For a discussion of the presence of tragic material embedded in John Bale’s *King Johan* (1538), see Cavanagh.

everyday experience. In the pre-playhouse period, by contrast, the performance spaces were coterminous with everyday space, *playing places* marked out only temporarily by agreement between actors and audience for the duration of a show. ‘Make room, make room’, the actors cry, and spectators either do or they do not. The eponymous protagonist of the *Interlude of Youth* (c.1512-3) makes his way into the acting space with a cry of “Aback, fellows, and give me room!” (line 40). Provision in John Pickering’s *Horestes* (1567) offers the more elaborate, “Make room and give place; stand back there afore!” (Pickering sig. Div) giving spectators more time, perhaps, to respond to his less demonstrative entrance. In the York Smiths’ pageant of *The Temptation of Christ*, Satan moves through the crowd in the street with “Make room belive [*quickly*] and let me gang [*walk*]” (line 1, spelling modernised). Equally, the actor playing the Son in Thomas Ingelend’s *The Disobedient Child* (1567) has lines that allow him, if necessary, to push through the crowd *out* of the playing space as well as on the way in: “Room, I say, room; let me be gone!” (sig. Biv), as does Nought in *Mankind*, “Make space, sirs, let me go out!” (line 701). Evidently, only when all present agreed that the entertainment was over could a pre-theatrical play really be said to end.

It is the actors who are the guests in this scenario, invited into the hall by its owners, or into the town by its denizens, or they are themselves members of the same communities as the spectators, co-opted from among them to deliver an event or create a pastime for everyone, as were the members of the craft guilds that produced the York Corpus Christi play. On such occasions the audiences (or a majority of them) were always already ‘at home’ and the performance was a welcome irruption of licenced playfulness into the fabric of their own activities.⁸ The pre-theatrical play world was thus not framed as a separate realm (“a fictive cosmos” in Lehmann’s term) by the space, marked out as the subject and object of *theatre*; rather the performance worked to transform a space into something not so much *other than* as *as well as* its normal self. For the playing space never lost its identity as hall or street, field or yard. Nor did the performance try to erase that identity. Rather, it supplemented it, acknowledging and drawing upon its existing associations, bringing, for example, a debate supposedly from ancient Rome into Cardinal Morton’s

⁸ In this sense, the pre-playhouse drama stands in contradistinction to the idea, expressed most succinctly, perhaps, in Norman Holland’s suggestion that “Plays happen in special places” (Holland 70). It was the play itself that made pre-theatrical playing spaces *special*.

hall in London in Medwall's *Fulgens*, and being completely explicit that this is what it was doing, never for a moment trying to create the illusion that spectators are actually *there* in Rome, even vicariously, or that the Roman characters are not actually always *here*, being played by actors, in the Tudor hall. And all the time the presence of the roles of A and B, both simultaneously members of the household audience and agents in the plot, keep fresh in spectators' minds the fact that what they are watching is a play, whose plot might conceivably even be altered at their own whim ("By my faith," says A, "but if it be even as you say, / I will advise them to change that conclusion" (128–129)). Here, all the Romans are represented openly as merely 'players', performing their pastime after two successive meals for which the audience is told it should be duly grateful.

In a similar way, the York religious pageants brought representations of the Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ onto the streets of the city. This allowed audiences to experience vicariously the emotional impact of standing at the foot of the Cross, or witnessing the Harrowing of Hell, without ever losing sight of the fact that they were doing so in front of pageant wagons they themselves had perhaps helped pay for, and were standing before Holy Trinity Priory or the courts of justice on the City's High Pavement, or at the end of Gropecunt Lane (now more sedately Grape Lane) in the red-light district, locations each with their own distinct contemporary resonances and associations, by turns pious or magnificent, judicial, commercial, or seedy. Each site inflected the meanings that spectators might detect in the pageants played there (McGavin and Walker 1–66). All of this was a very long way from (*the*) *theatre*, as it was understood from the seventeenth century onwards.

So, in early drama there was never the scope (or any perceived need) to create an "empty" stage in the manner imagined in Peter Brook's experimentation of the 1960s (1).⁹ Early drama's spaces of performance were inevitably already filled with a plenitude of previously inscribed and ongoing meanings. The plays performed there had to jostle for signification with the resonances created by those other functions, resonances that were by turns either latent or strikingly obvious. Rather than trying to compete, the drama made a virtue of necessity and co-opted those pre-existing associations into their own symbolic and affective structures; each space resonant with the functional associations and implicit hierarchies of class, profession, and gender linked with its quotidian location and

⁹ For powerful critiques of Brook's formulation from a modern perspective, see Read 19 and Carlson 132–133.

functions. Thus, for a woman or a man to watch the same pageant, depicting, for example, the story of Mary Magdalene or the trial of Christ, played at the end of Grape Lane with the red-light district in the corner of one's eye,¹⁰ or on the High Pavement with the buildings housing the contemporary law courts in plain sight, might thus be a very different experience. Likewise, the experience might differ at these or different moments: for a young or an old person, someone healthy or sick, able-bodied or with a disability, a parent or a child, a priest, a lawyer, a prostitute or one of his or her clients. For each of these people, these spaces might mean something quite different and so the pageants played there probably did too.

What I am describing here has been helpfully termed 'ghosting' by Marvin Carlson in his study *The Haunted Stage*. Reacting similarly to Brook's idea of the empty space, Carlson persuasively notes that,

Brooks' creative interpellation does not create a theatre out of a void but makes a theatre out of a space that previously was thought of as something else. The distinction is a critical one [...] because the "something else" that this space was before, like the body the actor that exists before it interpellated into a character, has the potential, often realized, of "bleeding through" the process of reception, the process I have called ghosting. (133)¹¹

Within the found spaces of pre-theatrical drama, indeed, the 'previous uses' tended not just to bleed through into the present performances but to be always fully present and in plain sight. There remained, not simply personal and cultural memories of earlier functions, but a living awareness of current and future uses too. The other uses of a medieval street or Tudor hall co-existed with the dramatic interpellation, silently but insistently pressing their case to resume and to reclaim the space as fully their own the moment the performance ended.

Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall have elegantly described the framed easel painting of the post-Renaissance period as "bossy" (8). It teaches its viewers how to look at it, restricting their freedom to view it

¹⁰ I am grateful to Eleanor Bloomfield for the allusion to playing at the end of Gropecunt Lane, delivered in a so far unpublished paper to the Medieval English Theatre conference in 2020.

¹¹ I am grateful to Pascale Aebischer for bringing this to my attention; although I wrote this essay in ignorance of Carlson's important study, I take the opportunity to note the overlaps in our arguments in the notes, and to acknowledge the fact that he got there first.

from other angles, to imagine it in unexpected, potentially subversive, ways. “One can, of course,” they suggest, “look at an easel painting from an eccentric angle, but there is, usually, nothing to be gained by this. [...] The field of control [...] is expansive” (8). And a similar piece of coercive framing is attempted, albeit never completely successfully (McGavin and Walker 1–42), by the theatrical stage. Its audiences are situated so as to focus their attention on the stage area. The play’s effects, its entrances and exits, asides, and physical business are all predicated on that particular spatial relationship between stage and spectators and only fully legible within it. By contrast, the pre-theatrical street plays, the touring plays, and even the great hall plays, had to be created without such complete confidence in the likely geography and topography of performance. In a street the crowds might situate themselves in various ways, and might move or mill about during the performance, shifting the dynamics of address. Equally, no touring venues would be configured in quite the same way. And, even in a known venue, benches and tables in a hall might be arranged differently depending on the numbers dining, thus restricting or expanding the playing area, while the unpredictable presence or absence of particular charismatic or elite diners might radically alter the social and cultural dynamics of a community audience. Playing with the king or queen present was, for example, a very different proposition to playing in their absence. And plays had to be written and rehearsed with such indeterminacies in mind, allowing for the accommodation of such variables, both trivial and profound, in the conditions of performance. Their writers could never assume the same right to be ‘bossy’ as could their playhouse successors. That bossiness needed to be devolved to the actors to improvise *in situ*. This would have been equally true, of course, for those plays written in the 1580s and thereafter where performances at court, in one or more playhouses, and on tour were all possibilities. Such plays needed to be equally adaptable, and so could be thought of as both pre-theatrical and theatrical at different times, depending on the auspices of any given performance.

Pondering a related issue, Lehmann observes that the experience of *simultaneity*, rather than the careful, sequenced shifts of focus fundamental to narrative drama is a prime feature of *postdramatic* performance (87). Too many things happen at the same time, forcing spectators to choose which to attend to. And they often did in pre-theatrical drama too. But, whereas this is a deliberate strategy in modern performance, in the earlier period it was an almost inevitable consequence of the circumstances of performance, in which the actors had always to play against the backdrop

– or perhaps more properly the foreground – of the communal life of a royal or noble hall, or a public street, in which the reactions of particular spectators to what they were watching, or not watching, themselves formed rival centres of attention, and an important aspect of the experience of witnessing the play. ‘Is that the bishop watching from the brothel window?’ ‘Oh no, the king is yawning! ... Did he laugh when I did? Did he see me laughing?’

In most pre-playhouse drama there was, then, no ‘illusion,’ and no attempt to represent an imaginary world seemingly separate from the physical environment hosting the production either.¹² The actors might allude to imaginary spaces in the play-world (as Fulgens does, for example, when he says, in passing, that he will walk a while in his garden), but these spaces are offstage, elsewhere, and in Fulgens’ case simply an obvious ploy to allow the actor to leave the stage for a time. While the actors are on stage, they see what the audience sees. And the audience sees everything that is currently physically present in the space, so the actors acknowledge these things too as they act around them.

Such performances were thus not contained within a distinct ‘fictive cosmos.’ Nor were their audiences necessarily static or passive, needing to be provoked to engage with the actors, as Lehmann claims of *drama*’s audiences. The cries of ‘make room!’, the ranting boasts of the tyrants, and the bawdy banter and antics of the Vices, all of these presuppose an active, mobile, potentially restive audience, likely to take issue with the actors’ claims at any point, requiring not to be provoked from passivity but, rather, variously to be quieted, directed, corralled, or managed at different points in a production.¹³ Similarly, the moral plays and interludes drew richly on the powerfully inscribed hierarchical geographies of the halls they played in, with characters differentiating between thronging standing servants, seated gentry, and enthroned patron(s) as they moved about the hall. “Brother, hold up your torch a little higher,” says Merry Report convivially to a servant in the hall in Heywood’s *Play of the Weather* (1.98). In *The World and the Child*, Folly asks “all this many [...] / That standeth here about” (the standing spectators in the hall) to judge a

¹² For a fruitful discussion of this issue, see Debax 32–33. Again, there is little sign here of that effect claimed for theatre and art more generally by Norman Holland, via which spectators “cease to pay attention to what is outside the work of art; [and] concentrate their attention wholly on it [...] begin to lose track of the boundaries between themselves and the work of art” (66, see also 72, 79).

¹³ For the potential raucousness of early drama audiences, see Carpenter.

disputed hit in a fencing match (lines 560–561). In Medwall’s *Nature*, Worldly Affection calls for a stool from “a pyld [*bald*] knave” in the audience (l.518), while in Fulwell’s *Like Will to Like*, the actor playing Nicholas Newfangle is directed to throw a playing card, the knave of clubs, “unto one of the men or boys standing by,” hoping he will drop it so that he can instruct him to pick it up, thereby ‘proving himself’ a second knave by association (sd, Aii(v)). More soberly, Mercy in *Mankind* famously demonstrates his moral discrimination when addressing the audience by distinguishing between “ye sovereigns that sit and ye brethren that stand right up” (line 29). And still more sombrely, an outdoor performance such as that called for by *The Play of the Sacrament*, the production seeks to generate a sense of community among actors and audience members alike by ending the play with a procession into the nearby church, led by the actor playing the bishop (Walker 2000 230, sd following line 785).

The pre-theatrical drama did not, then, seek to convince audiences that they were anywhere other than where they actually were. Thus, counter-intuitively, perhaps, the only real “illusion” evident in the early theatre canon probably came at those moments when what the audience was watching seemed to be, not an imaginary world beyond the everyday into which they were being seductively drawn, but that everyday world intruding itself on the performance, threatening to impede the actors in the execution of their work. When an actor playing a poor man enters the playing space of Lyndsay’s *Three Estates*, for example, walking through the audience, begging for alms as he goes (lines 1934–1937), or when the actors playing A and B in *Fulgens* step into the middle of the hall before the action starts to chastise the audience and ask each other if a play is expected, then at least some spectators might have been briefly ‘tricked’ into thinking they were witnessing something outside the “agreed pretence” (Butterworth 2) of the performance, and tempted to respond to it as they would in everyday life, wondering whether, perhaps, they ought to shoo the intruders away so as not to “spoil the play” (McGavin and Walker 171–176). Here it is the apparent irruption of the real that is the illusion, not any “dream time” (another of Lehmann’s dismissive phrases (155)) notionally created by the actors. But this can happen only in contexts where the real is already so interwoven with the conditions of performance that such irruptions are always entirely possible and might even be expected.¹⁴

¹⁴ See McGavin for a powerful example of such a context.

With this in mind, it is useful to think again of a play like *Fulgens*. One of the things that it does is present something that Lehmann might think of as a fictive cosmos (of sorts), a story set long ago and far away in ancient Rome. But the way it does so serves to undermine the very notion that that cosmos, that story, is in any way separated from the performance environment in which it is presented. For the other, more immediately obvious thing that the play does is stage a discussion *about* the presentation of the Roman story, voiced by actors who, as I have suggested, readily acknowledge the presence of the audience, the presence of the actors who will present the story, and the nature of the festive setting in which the play is being performed. Thus, the play openly represents its mechanism for presenting the story as a key part of its own action; “Peace, no more,” B tells A and the audience, “for now they come! / The players be even here at hand” (lines 198–199). The act of ‘framing’ a Roman cosmos is thus itself framed as a fictional enterprise for the audience’s amusement, so spectators’ total immersion in that world is never possible either. What is happening here is more properly *presentation*, not *representation*, and the actors doing the presenting remain visible through their roles as they do so.

Lehmann is surely right to claim the fundamental difference between even Brecht’s theatre and the *postdramatic* events and happenings that are his own focus. Only in such events does the performer abandon any claim to representation or narrative entirely in favour of simply moving or remaining static in a space. Here there is indeed no illusion, no pretence. The person shouting seemingly unconnected words and phrases really is shouting, the person self-harming in the gallery really is self-harming, even if they do so within the quotation marks of a pre-arranged performance event. They are not shouting or self-harming as if they were someone or somewhere else. The pre-theatrical drama had no equivalent to this, beyond, perhaps, the non-narrative performances of jugglers, dancers, and musicians which might punctuate an interlude or accompany a pageant through the streets. Pre-theatrical drama remained *dramatic* in Lehmann’s sense, in its commitment to narrative or exposition, to the *something* that it presented that *pointed beyond itself*, even if that pointing was itself ironically foregrounded as a part of the performance. So, the early drama is no doppelgänger for the *postdramatic* stage, even if its spirit clearly haunts the aspirations behind it.

What the pre-theatrical drama offers in excess of both the *postdramatic* and the Brechtian stages, though, is its commitment to collaborative playfulness, its open-ended invitation to spectators to play along, to con-

tribute to the meaning of a performance even when the matter being presented is deadly serious. Thus, ironically, given the unwarranted reputation of the late medieval moral drama for unrelenting didactic earnestness, close examination proves it to be every bit as self-reflexively playful as anything produced in the twenty-first century, and probably more trusting and respectful of its audiences too. Even where its subject is the salvation of the soul, there are always moments in the action, or figures on the stage, who invite spectators to view the performance *as* a performance. And there is no attempt to shock or outrage spectators as there is in much *postdramatic* performance, and no real effort to deliver didactic content wholly *straight* either. And the pre-theatrical spectator is always addressed, not as a passive observer of illusion, but as a potentially willing collaborator in meaning-making, their reward for collaboration being a sense of shared, conspiratorial enjoyment.

If we might think, then, of *postdramatic* theatre as having the same relationship to dramatic theatre as abstract art has to representational art – in that it aspires to be craft without mimesis – we might perhaps think of the pre-theatrical drama's relation to dramatic theatre as closer to that between medieval manuscript illumination and Renaissance representational art. Innocent of the supposedly 'naturalistic' principles of perspective and scale, illumination, like pre-theatrical drama, readily acknowledges both its own artifice and its function as an accompaniment to a text or a theme. Like a manuscript *mise-en-page*, the pre-theatrical drama wears its representational role very lightly, combining pertinent matter with impertinent, high with low, and surrounding its core 'text' with eye-catching illustrations and routines that play off of that central text, neither fully *illustrating* it, perhaps, nor yet being entirely irrelevant to it either.¹⁵ Where the illuminator always acknowledges the words on the page, even if only as surfaces on or around which to pose playful figures, thereby drawing attention to the materiality and physicality of the page itself, so the pre-theatrical actor acknowledges the material and cultural conditions of their performance, thus keeping the presentational medium always in the consciousness of the spectator. So, A and B in *Fulgens* or the Vices of Heywood's interludes act in similar ways to the figures who peer around the edges of a manuscript text, haunt its margins, or balance on its surfaces. *Yes*, they implicitly suggest, *this is* a piece of paper or *this* an interlude, a set of words with serious meaning for its readers or witnesses. We all understand how this works, but let us, having acknowledged that fact,

¹⁵ For an excellent exposition of this principle with regard to manuscript marginalia, see Bolens.

have some fun with the medium at the same time as engaging with the message. In so doing, pre-theatrical drama probably ensured a rather more congenial relationship with its audiences than either the Brechtian or the *postdramatic* stages aimed at,¹⁶ without sacrificing its capacity to challenge their behaviour and assumptions.

¹⁶ For a similar suggestion, see Wickham: “the makers and players of [pre-Reformation] interludes enjoyed a social and intellectual environment conducive to virtuosity in artistic achievement – a relationship between artist and audience distinguished by mutual understanding and respect” (35).

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Authorial Afterlives in Women's Conduct: Eliza Haywood's *The Wife* and Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*¹

In her conduct book, *The Wife* (1756), Eliza Haywood uses numerous quotations in order to bring substance and authority to her advice for married women. Haywood's quotations can be traced to Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* (1702) and its companion piece, *The British Parnassus* (1714), works that commonplacéd authors and texts that had enjoyed success in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century book trade. I argue that commonplace books helped to promote the authors whose works they contained and that Haywood used *sententiae* both to augment the authority of her pseudonym, Mira, as an author of advice literature and to align herself with (emerging) canonical authors, thereby promoting her own authorial legacy. I also suggest that the use of quotations in Haywood's conduct book gave the lines and their authors multifarious afterlives in the lived existences of her readers.

Keywords: Eliza Haywood, Edward Bysshe, women's conduct books, John Dryden, commonplace books.

This paper traces the afterlives of influential authors, mainly of the Restoration period, through an early eighteenth-century poetry manual-cum-printed commonplace book, to a midcentury conduct book for women. The commonplace book is Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* (1702), and the conduct book is Eliza Haywood's *The Wife* (1756).² I will suggest that Haywood used quotations found in Bysshe's compendium to bring

¹ My thanks to the Swiss National Science Foundation for funding the research for this article.

² Bysshe's dates are unknown. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ONDB*) gives his dates of activity as 1702-1714. Haywood's dates are better known, but the *ODNB* only gives an estimate for her birth year, 1693. She died in 1756.

substance to the conduct advice found in her text and to augment her own writerly authority. Indeed, the *sententiae* are directly linked to the advice she provides as she tells readers how to integrate the sentiment and the author's words in their lives. It may thus be argued that, in addition to their textual reproduction in Bysse and Haywood, the commonplace authors and their words enjoyed afterlives in the lived existences of Haywood's readers.

Haywood's *The Wife* is the culmination of a multi-stage process of textual mediation. First, authors write texts, which are published and sold by stationers. Second, the text is selected by a compiler and included in a printed commonplace book, an act of cultural transmission where the words of an author are given prominence and life beyond the confines of a printed oeuvre, and are curated through selection and organisation under thematic headings. Since Bysse attributes the quotations in his collection, giving "a full authorial list [...] on the title-page reverse," his collection "moves in the direction of being an anthology of authors rather than of excerpts," and the cultural valuation participates in a process of canonisation (Terry 180, 222). Third, Haywood selects from Bysse quotations and authors that she feels will best promote the conduct precepts contained in her text and, in doing so, furthers her own authority as a writer: locally, she fashions Mira's conduct-book voice as one to be trusted, and more generally, she promotes her own legacy. The fact that *The Wife* makes the title-page claim to be written by "Mira, one of the authors of the *Female Spectator*," shows that this voice and this legacy are part of an ongoing project of authorial self-fashioning. Finally, the reader of Haywood's conduct text receives the quotations, and decides whether to apply them to their life. At each stage of these successive acts of reading and retaining, there is an exchange: the agent who selects the text – Bysse, Haywood, her reader – gains legitimacy and prestige, and the text and its author are promoted and preserved for posterity.

The goal of commonplaceing since its earliest humanist days was to provide quotations to enhance rhetorical efficiency, as well as to offer moral *sententiae* whereby to achieve self-improvement (Erne and Singh xi–xii). The organisation of commonplace books was intended to provide users with a way in which to easily access excerpts according to thematic concerns. In *De Ratione Studii* (1511), Desiderius Erasmus advised teachers to ensure that a student "should first provide himself with places and clearly defined sections and systematic procedures, so that whenever he lights on anything worth noting down, he may write it in the appropriate section" (qtd in Moss 103). If such work was intended to be performed by

those who would be using the books, Ann Moss remarks that “it is easy to see how a market might open up in printed preselections of excerpts” (104). Many studies of eighteenth-century poetry collections place *The Art of English Poetry* together with publications that are entitled “miscellanies” (see Carly Watson and Barbara M. Benedict). The *Digital Miscellanies Index*, a relational database that combines c.1470 “poetic miscellanies, taken from the period 1700-1780,” defines a miscellany as “a bound volume containing a significant proportion of verse by three or more people”; Bysshe’s collection clearly belongs in this category, with its thousands of extracts and hundreds of authors and thematic headings. While studies of miscellanies have tended to focus on how such collections canonised authors (Williams and Batt 3; Benedict 35; Watson 13), my focus in this essay is more specifically on the way in which Bysshe’s collection provided writers such as Haywood with a source of thematically organised extracts with which to bring depth to their writing, thereby amplifying their own cultural capital.

1 *Sententiae* and Haywood’s Conduct Aims

Haywood was a prolific author who wrote in many genres: novels and novellas, plays, satires and fairy tales, hybrid amalgamations such as *The Tea Table* (1725) and *Epistles for the Ladies* (1748-50), periodicals, and conduct books. *The Wife* was Haywood’s second conduct book; her first, *A Present for a Servant Maid; or, the Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem*, appeared in 1743. *The Wife* was published in 1756, as was its companion piece, *The Husband*. It advocates the range of female attitudes usually found in eighteenth-century conduct books for women, such as wifely obedience and eschewal of public entertainments in favour of devotion to the domestic sphere.³ Haywood uses a number of strategies to promote docility to her precepts, each of which tends to construct her authority as a reliable purveyor of conduct advice. These include giving examples to which she has been a witness, invoking the authority of narrative causality in anecdotes and, as demonstrated in this essay, summoning authoritative outside sources.

³ See, for example, Soile Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities and Power*, especially pp. 55–62. Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction* remains a key text on the tenets of conduct discourse for women in the eighteenth century.

Haywood's use of *sententiae* and her promotion of the words of earlier writers enabled her to fashion herself as an author. Kathryn King has suggested that in the last years of her career, Haywood wrote with an "eye on her legacy" (187–188, 200). Mira, the persona Haywood adopts in *The Wife*, is a "model wife" who had been the main contributor to the *Female Spectator* (1744–1746) and appeared in *Epistles for the Ladies* (King 192). This eidolon was "invested with considerable moral authority" and spoke in "the voice of enlightened conduct book female morality" (192). Haywood invokes outside sources very regularly – thirty-one of the forty-one sections of her conduct book contain such references – and in doing so, aligns her authorial voice with those of celebrated writers like John Dryden, who had occupied the post of Poet Laureate from 1668 to 1689. Outside authority is brought in by paraphrase, allusion, or by quotations, often typographically set off from the surrounding text. She regularly names the authors she refers to, as when she says that rumour is "beautifully described by Mr. Dryden" (73), or else gives them a professional appellation: Abraham Cowley is "this great poet" (94–95) and Dryden "a late great author" (76). Sometimes, rather than referring to a writer, she cites the title of a text: "Among the comedies, I am pretty sure the *Careless Husband*, and *Journey to London* [full title of the latter is *The Provoked Husband*, both by Colley Cibber], have not been so often acted without making some proselytes both of husbands and wives" (41). The effect is to establish her citations within overtly literary settings so that, as a result, she comes across as an author with deep knowledge of recent literature and the capacity to parse it in a useful manner for her own readers.

Haywood's stated motivation in writing *The Wife* was to reform marital relations and the inclusion of quotations from outside sources resonates with this goal. She describes marriage as "the choicest blessing Heaven could bestow on mortals" (11). In order to promote its harmony, she has "thrown together some few hints, which if improved into practice [...] cannot fail of restoring to marriage [...] true honour and felicity" (12). The quotations that she introduces have a part to play in this restoration. Often, she orients the outside source towards reader's lives, suggesting that readers internalize the disposition they find there. It could be a question of remembering: one instruction "ought to be engrav'd in the mind of every woman" (26), another should be kept "in perpetual remembrance" by "every married woman" (104); Haywood even goes so far as to say: "I would fain perswade every woman to keep always in her mind this saying of the poet" (66). These are strong, totalising injunctions.

Sometimes, readers are encouraged to incorporate, and even to embody, the sentiments that the poets provide: a reader would “do well to repeat often within herself [a] just and pathetic maxim” (105) and women are advised “to take this lesson from the mouth of Lavinia in the *Fair Penitent*” (41). Again, modelling herself closely upon a theatrical character, a woman might “cry out with Jane Shore in the play” (127). The words of the authors, in an act of literary consumption, are metaphysically mingled with the reader’s sense of self. The conduct book proposes that these words circulate from text to individual, then within the individual, and finally outside the individual, as she repeats them aloud. (And these words have already circulated: from the author’s text to Bysshe’s compendium and on to Haywood’s conduct book.) The stages of mediation and cognitive adoption are numerous. The reader reads the words on the surface of the page, repeats them as if probing their spectral materiality with their tongue, and commits them to memory. Once readers have made the words sufficiently their own they might pronounce them aloud, even “cry [them] out” (127), and enact them in the form of good conduct. If we assume that readers of the conduct book “improve[...] into practice” what they find there, and we accept that this was effective and acted upon, we can say that the authors that Haywood cites have an *afterlife*, in the lives of her readers.

2 *Sententiae* and Authorial Afterlives

Haywood’s citations also offer insight into the reception history of the authors, genres and titles she cites. Of the sixty quotations, paraphrases and allusions in the text,⁴ the most referenced author by a long way is Dryden, with nineteen quotations and paraphrases. The next most popular is Cowley with four, then Samuel Butler, Nicholas Rowe, William Shakespeare, and Charles Sedley with three each. Edmund Waller and Alexander Pope have two, as have Cibber and John Vanbrugh writing together. Cibber (writing alone), Aesop (likely Roger L’Estrange’s translation, 1692), Joseph Addison, Charles Johnson, Nathaniel Lee, Richard Steele, Samuel Garth, Thomas Otway, John Milton, Robin Godwin, Bernard le Bouyer de Fontenelle, Edmond Hoyle, and the Bible are each cited

⁴ I am grateful to the editors of Haywood’s *Selected Works*, Set I, Volume 3, Alexander Pettit and Margo Collins, for their careful identification of most of Haywood’s quotations, paraphrases and allusions. There are six references unidentified by Haywood that scholars have yet to attribute.

once. Of the named or implied authors, Dryden again leads by a long way (31%).⁵ Of the Dryden references, eight are from his heroic play, *Aureng Zebe*, three are from his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, two come from *The Conquest of Granada*, and one each are taken from *The Indian Emperor*, *All for Love*, *The Tempest* (with Davenant), *Secret Love*, *Amphytrion*, and *Religio Laici*. The only other text apart from *Aureng Zebe* and the *Aeneid* that is referenced more than twice is Butler's hugely popular poem *Hudibras*. Thus, Haywood and Bysshe's use of Dryden suggests that his works remained topical in the first half of the eighteenth century, and Haywood's appropriation of them implies that they were deemed to have didactic value.

Clearly, these texts were readily available to Bysshe and this availability was linked to Dryden's print popularity. At the turn of the eighteenth century, *Aureng Zebe* had already been published in five single-play editions as well as in collected editions of Dryden's works.⁶ The *Aeneid* was included in a prestigious edition of classical translation, *The Works of Virgil: containing his Pastorals Georgics, and Æneis. Translated into English Verse; by Mr. Dryden. Adorn'd with a hundred sculptures*, in folio, published by Tonson in 1697. Dryden's career as a dramatist was declining by the 1690s, but his collaboration with Tonson to produce translations of classical verse proved lucrative for both men and established them as producers of *belles lettres* (Frost 199). It is thus not surprising that Bysshe included many quotations from the dramatist's work in his collection.

In Bysshe's collection, tragedy (including heroic tragedy), a genre traditionally associated with didacticism, is the most frequently cited dramatic mode.⁷ Restoration dramatists, in particular Dryden, continued a Europe-wide discussion about the function of tragedy, based on successive interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁸ Catharsis developed "ethical habits of feeling" as well as supplying a psychic equivalent to medical purgation (Hoxby 63). Daniel Heinsius, in his *De constitutione tragoediae*

⁵ Haywood makes four misattributions: one quotation identified as Pope is in fact by Dryden, one identified as Aphra Behn is again by Dryden, one identified as Dryden is by Sedley, and one identified as seventeenth-century historian John Selden is in fact by Sedley.

⁶ On Dryden's print history, see MacDonald.

⁷ Epic and mock epic are the most quoted poetic genres. The prose texts, the least cited form, are harder to categorise according to genre, but include fiction (romance and fable) and non-fiction texts (card-playing instruction, scientific literature and the Bible).

⁸ See Hoxby, chapter two.

(1611), felt that the genre “was committed to the art of living well” (Hoxby 65); Heinsius may have been read by René Rapin, as well as his contemporary, Jean Racine (Nagamori 432). Dryden read and expanded on Rapin’s *Reflections on Aristotle’s Treatise of Poesie* (1674) in his “Heads of an Answer to Rymer’s Remarks on the Tragedies of the Last Age,” reiterating and updating the humanist conversation around Aristotle, which he had already done in his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668).⁹ With his theory of poetic justice, Thomas Rymer articulated the belief that drama must restore morality through plot. As the seventeenth century gave way to the eighteenth, the purview of tragedy became more domestic and more affective, as it moved from the realm of purely public concerns to one in which the private affairs of public people became central to the unfolding of tragic stories (Wheatley 78). These topics and genres, which increasingly featured distressed female protagonists and which centred on marriage and money, were germane to Haywood’s interests in *The Wife*.

Dryden stressed language and style as vectors of the instructive valency of tragedy. Aristotle did not give much importance to this aspect of the genre (Hoxby 84), but Dryden, following Rapin, found it to be of central consequence. This emphasis on language may help to explain why Bysshe commonplacated tragedy, and Dryden’s tragedy in particular, more than other genres:

Rapin attributes more to the *Dictio*, that is, to the Words and Discourse of a Tragedy, than *Aristotle* has done, who places them in the last Rank of Beauties [...] Rapin’s Words are remarkable:— ‘It is not the admirable Intrigue, the surprising Events, and extraordinary Incidents, that make the Beauty of a Tragedy; it is the Discourses, when they are Natural and Passionate.’ (“Heads of an Answer to Rymer” 192–193)

Thus, the effect of tragedy, although still a question of plot, was equally refined into style and expression and, if the positive effect of tragedy was carried by its language, it could be isolated from plot and structure and reduced to brief extracts. This resonates with the thinking of Bysshe when he compiled his collection. In the preface to *The Art of English Poetry*, he expresses a desire to provide readers with more than “tedious Bead-rolls

⁹ Rapin’s treatise was translated into English in 1674, the same year it first appeared in French, and was published by Henry Herringman, Dryden’s publisher at the time. The *Heads* were “notes written by Dryden in his copy of Rymer’s *The Tragedies of the Last Age*,” not published until 1711 (Hume n373).

of Synonymes and Epithets” because when they “stand alone, they appear bald, insipid and uncouth” (A3r). However, he also feels that readers will be more pleased with thoughts and expressions divorced from their larger context: “here is no Thread of Story, nor Connexion of one Part with another” (A2v). Thus, Bysshe curates his snippets as somewhere in between: no longer part of a plot, but long enough to embody thematic and instructive content, which may well be linked to contemporary thinking about the didactic value of the language of tragedies.

3 Haywood and Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*

At first glance one could be forgiven for thinking that Haywood had identified the *sententiae* herself but, as mentioned above, she was in fact reliant on Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* and other related titles produced by Bysshe. Indeed, Haywood's use of Bysshe is suggestive of the ways in which authors used such sources. There are forty-two identified quotations included in *The Wife*, of which thirty-six are taken from Bysshe's compendia (86%).¹⁰ Critics have shown that Haywood also used Bysshe's compilation elsewhere, for example, in “Textual Reuse in the Eighteenth Century: Mining Eliza Haywood's Quotations,” Douglas Duhaime identifies intertextualities in *The History of Betsy Thoughtless*, which he locates in *The Art of English Poetry*. In her edition of Haywood's *The Invisible Spy*, Carole Stewart identifies *The Art of English Poetry* as the likely source of many literary quotations contained in the novel (469).¹¹ Duhaime claims that “previously unsourced quotations from across the Haywood corpus contain material found in Bysshe's work, which suggests Haywood's reading may not have been as voluminous as her writing once made it appear” (par. 27). If her reading was not as extensive as her practice of quotation might suggest, the practice itself, I would argue, both testifies to her authorial self-fashioning as one who had the literature of the recent past at her fingertips, and provides insight into the use and appeal of collections such as Bysshe's.

¹⁰ Of the forty-six total quotations, four remain unidentified; Haywood indicates that one of them is by a friend (36), and one is from an unperformed play (74). It might be that Haywood wrote these herself, as King suggests might be the case for verse that has not been identified in *Epistles for the Ladies* (198).

¹¹ King also refers to Bysshe in passing in “The Pious Mrs. Haywood,” and her note indicates that Norbert Schürer has unpublished research on similar findings in *The Female Spectator* (198).

The Art of English Poetry is split into three parts, reflecting its function as a handbook for poets: “Rules for making English verse,” a manual for versification; a rhyming dictionary; and finally, the commonplace section, containing the “Most Natural, Agreeable, & Noble Thoughts” of English authors arranged alphabetically under subject headings. There are two studies of Bysshe’s poetry manuals (by Dwight Culler [1948] and Stephen Jarrod Bernard [2012]) which both situate Bysshe within the history of English versification aids and printed commonplace books. Bernard additionally discusses the way in which we can adduce Bysshe’s reading practices from his commonplacing and suggests that Bysshe promotes the use of his collection as an adjunct in writerly creativity (125). While Haywood used the collection to augment her legitimacy as a cultural actor, she also used it to expand her creative discussion of conduct themes.

Bysshe’s collection was a substantial and popular text, which grew over time and would have been readily available from bookshops across London. The second edition (1705) saw the addition of 671 new passages, or nearly half again of the original number, and the third edition (1708) included a further 394 passages. This was maintained in the fourth edition (1710); and a further 176 quotations were added in the fifth edition (1714), by which point there were nearly 2700 quotations, arrayed under approximately five hundred themes (Culler 867). Bysshe also wrote a continuation of *The Art of English Poetry*, *The British Parnassus*, published in 1714, which was re-issued as volumes three and four of the *Art of English Poetry* in the sixth edition of 1718.¹² The seventh edition was published in 1724/25, with three different imprints, and the eighth in 1737 with two imprints. As Bernard notes, the plethora of booksellers involved in each reissue after 1718 indicates that the title was popular enough for “booksellers to want to acquire [...] a share in it,” and that it was “distributed by an increasing number of booksellers throughout the first seven decades of the century” (117). Thus, *The Art of English Poetry* went through eight editions, which suggests that there was significant demand for the commonplace book that Haywood utilised when producing *The Wife*.

¹² Volumes one and two were not, however, a reissue of the 1714 edition. Of the thirty-six quotations used in *The Wife* that Haywood sourced from Bysshe’s compendia, four are from *British Parnassus: Othello* (1622) Pope *Essay on Criticism* (1711), Rowe, *Fair Penitent* (1703), *Essay on Criticism* (1711), and Rowe, *Jane Shore* (1714), thus suggesting that Haywood was working with both of Bysshe’s titles.

If we look at the breakdown of authors in Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*, there are striking similarities with Haywood, thus suggesting that her choice was not only shaped by personal preference, but also by Bysshe's curation of authors in his collection. Of a total of 2693 quotations in the final form, we get the following: Dryden 1202, Pope 155, Cowley 143, Butler, 140, Otway 127, Blackmore 125, Shakespeare 118, Milton 117, Rowe 116, Lee 104, Garth 59, Waller 44, plus quotes from "a number of minor Restoration poets" (Culler 868). Dryden is again top (39% of the quotations in Haywood and 44% in Bysshe) and the next most cited authors after Pope are again Cowley and Butler. Haywood had a contentious relationship with Pope; her demotion of Pope as a source in *The Wife*, despite his prominence in Bysshe, might be seen as an oblique way of getting back at him. In her biography of Haywood in the *Selected Works*, Christine Blouch analyses Pope's insulting treatment of Haywood in *The Dunciad*, where she is the prize in a pissing contest.¹³ There are thus parallels between Haywood's choice of outside authorities in *The Wife* and Bysshe's choices for inclusion in his *Art of English Poetry* and *British Parnassus*. This fact arguably attests to the role printed literary commonplace books played in the continued popularity of authors who had enjoyed success in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century book trade, whilst Pope's conspicuously rare appearance in Haywood's text suggests that she was not willing to put aside personal rivalries in order to blindly replicate Bysshe's choice of authors.

4 Using Bysshe's Collections

Haywood's reliance on Bysshe was not exceptional and modern critics are wrong to take a negative view of writers who used commonplace books. In her use of Bysshe's titles to find literary sources for her conduct book, Haywood was following in the footsteps of Samuel Richardson, who drew on Bysshe when writing *Clarissa* (1747-8). Of one hundred and three quotations that Angus Ross counts in Richardson's novel, sixty-nine

¹³ Blouch notes that Haywood did not particularly retaliate, even when given a chance by participating in *The Female Dunciad* (1728), where her contribution did not attack Pope with much vigour (xlvi). The damage was not just to Haywood, but also to her work, which became defined as that of a "dunce author" (xlvi, xlvi). In *The Dunciad*, Pope may have harmed her reputation, but his mockery did not impact the commercial success of her works (xlvi, li).

(66%) are taken from Bysshe (Domingo 942). Some critics have denigrated Richardson for using the collection to source quotations for his masterpiece, implying that he was a paltry reader with little first-hand knowledge of literature, as if use of a compilation made him a less impressive writer.¹⁴ Michael E. Connaughton is particularly scathing, as he speaks about Richardson's "groping effort to depict literary sophistication superior to his own" (185), but this judgmental insinuation misses the point somewhat. Like Leah Price, I would suggest that we consider Bysshe's "poetic toolbox" as "a source in its own right" (41, 40) and recognize both the text's commercial appeal and the fact that Haywood and Richardson used these resources correctly.¹⁵ The fact that Haywood and Richardson used a common method, and probably the same title, to find appropriate quotations to enhance their writing speaks volumes about the role commonplace books, and Bysshe's in particular, played in shaping the afterlives of authors in the first half of the eighteenth century. Bysshe's poetry compilations provided professional writers with a common repository of recent literary matter.

At the same time, there are key differences between Richardson's and Haywood's use of Bysshe. In particular, there is a contrast between how the two authors orient the quotations to the instructive stance of their writing. The conduct book has a single voice, that of the opinionated and authoritative purveyor of conduct advice. Mira often uses the quotations to bring support to her authority and advice, and if she does not approve of the outside voice, she makes sure her readers know about it. Haywood seems to have thought that the literature of the Restoration, and Dryden's works in particular, contained ideas that readers could adapt to their own situations; they just needed channeling by a diligent conduct-book writer.

By contrast, *Clarissa*, an epistolary novel, contains many narrative voices, ranging from the virtuous Clarissa to the villainous Lovelace, via Belford and Anna Howe whose reformations we witness over the course of the novel. All these characters use passages taken from Bysshe and the

¹⁴ In their biography, Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel note that one "cannot altogether rely on quotations in his novels as implying first-hand acquaintance" as many quotations "in *Clarissa* are to be found in Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*" (572). Alan McKillop writes: "To be sure, the numerous quotations in *Clarissa* [...] may seem less impressive and significant when we find that almost all of them appear in well-known eighteenth-century collections," including Bysshe's (141).

¹⁵ Culler suggests that most poets of the eighteenth century consulted Bysshe from time to time, but it was "the sort of book one consults surreptitiously, and keeps locked in a drawer when not in use" (864).

quotations are variously oriented to the novel's overall moral thrust. As the novels were unwieldy and polyvocal, and *Clarissa* especially open to misinterpretation, Richardson may have felt that readers needed to be guided by a more functional book which oriented novels towards their proper use, personal reform. He accordingly published his own commonplace book based on his own work: *A Collection of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflexions, Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison* (1755), a compendium that is structurally similar to the quotations section of *The Art of English Poetry* as it arranges passages from the novels under thematic headings. At the end of his career, Richardson tried to model his authorial legacy, attempting to punch down the considerable energy and vital narrative indeterminacy of his novels to a strict conduct function. The purpose and appeal of commonplace books to writers such as Richardson and Haywood was to find citations appropriate to their local purposes, and the structure of commonplace books, with their thematic headings, enabled them to do so efficiently.

As to Haywood, it is possible to make some deductions about her use of Bysshe by looking at how she integrates the quotations into her prose. Sometimes the quotations are in the middle or at the end of a bit of advice, for example in the section "The great advantages of Sincerity, both to ourselves and others" (49–50). Having described how a man of a suspicious nature might grow to mistrust his wife if he finds that she has not told him "every little step she takes" (49), Haywood states that such a man might "cry out in the words of Mr Dryden: 'Ah! why are not the hearts of women shown'" (50). Here, the lines of verse bring depth of emotion to Haywood's exposition of marital life. When she advises women to refuse the flattery of men, she ends the paragraph with an injunction to the reader to "repeat often within herself" a quotation from Dryden that exposes how flattery can lead to sexual conquest (105). She concludes the section regarding "The great merit of Secrecy, especially in every thing that concerns a Husband" with a Dryden quotation that sums up its thrust: "Secrets of marriage should be sacred held, / Their sweet and bitter by the wise concealed" (76). In the second and third example, the quotations are taken respectively from "Woman" and "Husband and Wife" headings in Bysshe, which are the ones Haywood most commonly used. The first is taken from "Jealousie" in Bysshe, a logical place to look, given the context in *The Wife*. Sometimes, rather than use the quotation to illustrate a matter of advice, the advice seems to be inspired by the quotation, as when she quotes Dryden on how "Men are but children of a

larger growth”; indeed, in this case, the paragraph consists of a brief tag, “Excellently has that great judge of human nature, Mr. Dryden, express’d his sentiments on this occasion,” and eight lines from *All for Love* (65). Most of the quotations, however, are used to illustrate and bring depth to the advice.

The most playful section of Haywood’s conduct book, “On being over-fond of Animals,” contains an anecdote—probably invented by Haywood—that looks to have been inspired by what she found in Bysshe under the heading “Snake.” The section ends with a startling story of a woman Mira found at home “with a huge snake twisted round her neck, and sucking bread and sugar’d milk out of her mouth” (99). This scene “put[s her] in mind” of Edmund Waller’s “To a Fair Lady Playing with a Snake,” a poem commonplacéd in Bysshe. Haywood / Mira does not quote all of what is given in Bysshe, nor does Bysshe himself quote the whole of Waller’s short poem, but Haywood’s description is nonetheless reminiscent of the section that Bysshe includes, in which Chloris eschews love in favour of “play[ing] with Snakes” (*AEP* 2: 434). The phallic implications of the snake, its position in close proximity to the lady’s bosom, together with the lactational image of the snake “sucking [...] milk” from her, bring the poem’s saucy tenor into the conduct book. In this section of *The Wife*, Haywood also describes a woman whose tiny dog, Cupid, has fouled her pocket (98), another who sleeps with her “harlequin bitch” – which drives her husband to sleep with the chamber-maid (97) – and yet another who “keeps a frog in her dining-room, and has every day fresh wads of grass brought in for it to hop upon” (99). These anecdotes purport to be taken from Mira’s encounters among society people and have no counterpart in Bysshe. Thus, Haywood did not simply mine passages from under Bysshe’s subheadings as and when needed, but also used him as inspiration for her own colourful examples, all with the aim of engaging and entertaining her audience.

The goals of commonplacéd, as they were elaborated in the early Renaissance, aimed to provide pithy quotations to supplement rhetorical efficiency and sententious sentiments by which to lead one’s life. Haywood certainly cleaves to this dual function in her use of Bysshe: she brings to her conduct advice the support of the literary greats of the recent past and exhorts her readers to incorporate and embody specific authors’ words. Her use of sententiae suggests that Dryden et al. were not simply popular and worthy of citation in literary contexts, but also provided sentiments by which to lead one’s life. In so doing, Haywood further enhances their reputations and adds to her own authority, both as a know-

ledgeable arbiter of literary matter, and as a dependable dispenser of conduct advice. Furthermore, in their practice of inserting quotations from Bysshe into their prose works, Haywood and other writers shed light on the role printed literary commonplace books with their handy thematic headings played in the continued promotion of authors who had enjoyed print success by the mid-eighteenth century. Whether or not her readers took their “lesson[s] from the mouth of Lavinia in the *Fair Penitent*” or “cr[ie]d out with Jane Shore in the play,” reading of them in Haywood’s text certainly kept such literary references not only in view, but potentially relevant in the daily lives of eighteenth-century readers (Haywood, *The Wife* 41, 127).

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Keats's *Endymion* and Elizabethan Minor Epic

This article considers John Keats's long narrative poem *Endymion* as a revival of the genre of Elizabethan minor epic. Critics interested in the 'Elizabethan' quality of Keats's verse usually focus on his annotation of William Shakespeare's plays, to the neglect of other types of early modern verse-writing that may have influenced him. My article traces certain aspects of the language and narrative of *Endymion* back to three minor epics of the 1590s: Michael Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*, Thomas Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla*, and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. The rural landscapes depicted in these Elizabethan poems, which all feature passages combining the words 'eglantine' and 'nightingales' (near-anagrams of one another), foreshadow the lush pastoral setting of Keats's poem and his love of verbal manipulation. I argue that *Endymion*'s extravagant style represents a self-conscious attempt on Keats's part to recapture the luscious, irreverent, tragicomic idiom favoured by the Elizabethan writers of minor epic. In highlighting these shared qualities, my aim is to re-contextualise Keats's underrated early poem as a unique fusion of Romantic and Elizabethan styles.

Keywords: *Endymion*, Keats, minor epic, source study, metamorphosis, poetry, Elizabethan, Romantic

In a study of "Lamia" published in 1976, Garrett Stewart referred to Keats as a writer of "metamorphic verse" (15). Stewart was using the term "metamorphic" to notice a connection between the style and content of Keats's poetry. Keats's obsessive focus on themes of change and transience is, Stewart contends, borne out stylistically in his poetry: "This rhetoric of metamorphosis dictates everything [down to] the smallest details of morphology [...] the investigative changes going forward in the poet's own idiom and prosody coincide brilliantly with the very theme of change" (4). Stewart's essay highlighted some of the ways in which Keats's poetry, in its blurring of syntactical categories, its verbifications and unusual compound words, can be seen as a restless art. Keats not only

writes about transformation in his plots (Saturn's fall from grace, the shapeshifting of Lamia), but also writes about transformation in a transformative way. The phrase "metamorphic verse" is felicitous for another reason, suggesting a family resemblance, unexplored in Stewart's essay, between Keats's poetry and a set of older English poems of metamorphosis: the so-called 'minor epics' of the Elizabethan era.

Critics have long recognised the influence of minor epic on Keats's verse, especially *Endymion*. Northrop Frye in the 1960s called *Endymion* "a revival [...] of the Elizabethan Ovidian mythological poem, of which Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe', Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', and Lodge's 'Glaucus and Scilla' are examples" (58). R. S. White, fifty years later, echoed Frye in claiming that "[*Endymion*] is partially a Romantic revival of the Elizabethan short epic like 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Hero and Leander'" (*Literary Life* 85).

This essay is an attempt to look more closely at some of the stylistic connections between *Endymion* and minor epic. As well as discussing parallel passages (the traditional bread and butter of source studies), it will consider what White, in his study of Keats and Shakespeare, calls "point[s] of imaginative contact" (*Reader of Shakespeare* 21). It argues not only that certain passages in *Endymion* were influenced by similar passages in minor epic (though I hope to show that this is the case), but also that minor epics reveal an ethos or worldview comparable to that found in Keats's *Endymion*. Elizabethan minor epic is a genre concerned with "mutability," according to Jack Stillinger Keats's "most persistent theme" (131). To position *Endymion* as a rewriting of minor epic is in part to reexplore that much-studied aspect of Keats: his Elizabethan-ness. I also want to re-state the case for Stewart's phrase "metamorphic verse," showing how Keats's reading of minor epic gave him an appropriate poetic imagery and language in which to articulate his thinking about change.

'Minor epic' is a confusing name for what are, by most standards, pointedly un-epic poems. These Elizabethan narrative poems, fashionable in the 1590s, are neither epic in scope (1000 lines being their conventional limit) nor in their Ovidian subject matter (love affairs between gods and mortals). Minor epics, also known as 'epyllia' (the history of this nomenclature is complex: see Bär), are marked by their ingenuity of wordplay and highly ornamented style of verse. They start out with a comic tone, but typically end with the tragic death, or else the irreversible transformation (into a flower, a brook, a constellation), of the loved or loving mortal. Although I have had to restrict the present discussion to the three minor epics listed by Frye in the quotation above, there is evidence for Keats's

familiarity with other entries in the minor epic genre; Charles Browne's list of Keats's books shows, for example, that Keats owned a copy of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, in a nineteenth-century edition published by Samuel Weller Singer and containing George Chapman's continuation of Marlowe's poem (Lau 128–129). The ideal purpose of this article would thus be to serve as a starting point for further discussions of Keats and minor epic.

1 Michael Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moone*

The critical foundation for an understanding for Keats's interest in Michael Drayton's two excursions into the minor epic genre was laid in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century by Sidney Colvin in *Keats* (1887) and *Keats: His Life and Poetry* (1917). Claude L. Finney later built on Colvin's work on Keats and Drayton in his two-volume work *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, as well as in an important journal article, "Drayton's 'Endimion and Phoebe' and Keats's *Endymion*."

Among contemporary Keats critics, allusions to Drayton are rare. Kelvin Everest invokes Drayton alongside two other Elizabethan poets, Chapman and George Sandys, to state briefly that "Keats's wider reading in the Elizabethans [...] becomes increasingly evident in 1817" (45). More recently, in her 2022 conference paper "'Honour to the Woods Unshorn!': Sustainable Keats," Fiona Stafford touched upon Keats's familiarity with Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612) in the context of a discussion of the eco-political resonances that early modern and medieval writers held for Keats. However, since Colvin and Finney the matter of Keats's engagement with Drayton's verse has generally received less critical attention than it warrants.

A knowledge of Drayton's narrative poetry provides the likeliest explanation for Keats's peculiar decision to base his first long poem on the story of Endymion and Phoebe, a story without much precedent for treatment in English verse. Apart from John Lyly's comic play *Endymion*, known to Keats through his friend Charles Wentworth Dilke's edition, Drayton had been the only English poet to treat the Endymion-Phoebe story at length. He did this twice, in *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595), published at the height of the craze for minor epic, and in *The Man in the Moone* (1606), a rewriting of his first attempt.

There is a strong material case for Keats having drawn on the second of these, *The Man in the Moone*, in conceiving, planning, and writing his own *Endymion* poem. Charles Browne's list of Keats's books shows that Keats owned an edition of Drayton's poems published by John Smethwicke. This was one of the several editions of Drayton's poems Smethwicke published between 1608 and 1632 (Lau 142). Whatever the exact year of publication, it is certain that, like all Smethwicke's editions, Keats's volume contained *The Man in the Moone*.

The Man in the Moone is echoed strikingly several times in Keats's *Endymion*, as Colvin and Finney both noticed. Drayton's poem starts with preparations for a festival to Pan; Keats's poem starts with the feast itself. In Drayton's poem, the moon-goddess Phoebe appears draped in a blue mantle embroidered with maritime images, including whales and a shipwreck; in Book III of Keats's poem, the sea-god Glaucus wears a blue cloak "o'erwrought with symbols" (200), including a whale, and later in the same book the spell-bound Glaucus is forced by Circe to watch a shipwreck whose victims he is unable to save.

Keats's reading of *Endymion and Phoebe*, Drayton's earlier treatment of the *Endymion* story, is harder to prove. He did not own the poem, which had become a rare antique by the nineteenth century, but Finney nonetheless makes a convincing case for Keats having been influenced by the poem ("Drayton and Keats" 807). Again, similar images are to be found in the two poems. The Mount Latmos setting of Drayton's poem is the mirror image of Keats's: both feature mazy forest paths and trees whose branches and leaves meet overhead (Drayton 23–48; Keats 1:79–86).¹ Drayton's "sweet bubling fountains" (45) mirror Keats's "cold springs [...] warm[ing] their chilliest bubbles in the grass" (1:102–103). In addition to such similarities of imagery, there are interesting resonances across the plots of the poems. In both Keats's *Endymion* and Drayton's *Endymion and Phoebe*, Phoebe woos *Endymion* in the guise of a nymph; in both poems, *Endymion* is unaware that the object of his love is an immortal goddess prior to a climactic revelation scene; and both poems feature a procession close to the end, in which an array of gods and goddesses, including the personified signs of the zodiac, travel across the heavens on their way to the marriage of *Endymion* and Phoebe.

If Drayton's poem had become so rare by the nineteenth century, how did Keats get his hands on a copy of it? Several intriguing alternatives provide starting points for further research. Finney suggests that Keats

¹ Parenthetical citations are to line numbers in Drayton's poem, and to book and line numbers in Keats's.

was shown the poem by one of his literary friends, possibly either Charles Cowden Clarke or Leigh Hunt, both of whom were collectors of rare books and admirers in particular of Renaissance poetry (“Drayton and Keats” 807). To these two should be added Charles Dilke, who had prepared an edition of Lyly’s court comedy *Endymion* for the publishers Rodwell and Martin in 1816, as part of the second volume of his six-volume *Old Plays* series. It is possible that, in the course of his editing, Dilke tracked down Drayton’s poem and showed it to Keats. Alternatively, Keats might have been shown a copy of the poem by his publishers Taylor and Hessey, whose roles in the book trade put them in a position to track down rare books Keats wanted to access. Another possibility, also raised by Finney, stems from the fact that, in Keats’s lifetime, sixteen quotations from Drayton’s *Endymion and Phoebe* were to be found in the two copies of the Elizabethan anthology work *England’s Parnassus* then held in the British Museum library: perhaps Keats encountered Drayton’s rare poem in this fragmentary form.

Amy Lowell suggests a fourth option. While writing her biography of Keats she attempted to verify Finney’s assertion that Keats had read *Endymion and Phoebe*, discovering during her research that a copy of the poem had been held by the library of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey in Keats’s lifetime (Finney, *Evolution of Keats* 248). Thus, this is a poem that, although rare, was available in several of the literary archives of Regency London, accessible to someone interested in Drayton and actively seeking out editions of his works. Given their strong echoes in Keats’s *Endymion*, it is probable that Keats had read both of Drayton’s poems, *Endymion and Phoebe* as well as *The Man in the Moone*, despite owning only a copy of the latter.

2 Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* and Thomas Lodge’s *Glaucus and Scilla*

Keats’s admiration for *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare’s contribution to the minor epic genre, is already well known to Keats scholars. From his letters, we know that Keats was reading the poem when he wrote *Endymion* in 1817, which White has called his “Shakespearean year” (*Reader of Shakespeare* 50). In a letter written to John Hamilton Reynolds during the composition of Book IV in April 1817, Keats enthuses about the description of the snail in *Venus and Adonis*, “whose tender horns being hit, shrinks backwards in his shelly cave with pain” (Gittings 39). Mem-

orably, Keats refers to Shakespeare as “the Whim King” in this letter, an indication of the features Keats admired in *Venus and Adonis*: namely, its whimsy, its playfulness, its meticulous and surprising conceits. There are, in addition, several parallel passages that can be adduced to reinforce the connection between Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Keats's *Endymion*, some of which I touch on in the final section of this article.

In contrast to the well-established link between Keats and Shakespeare, the connection between Keats and Thomas Lodge has not previously been explored at length. But there are compelling reasons for viewing Lodge's minor epic *Glaucus and Scilla* (the genre's original poem) as an influence upon both the plot and style of *Endymion*. Most obviously, Keats incorporates the Ovidian story of Glaucus and Scylla (which describes a sea-god's unrequited love for a sea-nymph who is later turned into a rocky sea-cliff as punishment for her hard-heartedness) into the third book of *Endymion*, although he rewrites its tragic denouement as a happy comedy. This is the same myth that forms the basis of Lodge's minor epic. Moreover, Keats and Lodge take a similar approach in their physical descriptions of Glaucus and other classical deities, imbuing them with comic physicality. Losing his temper, Glaucus “fold[s] his arms” and “shake[s] his heavie head” in Lodge (8),² while Keats describes him as “grasping his stole [...] with convulsed clenches waving it abroad” (3:230–231). This opens up the intriguing possibility that the comic humanising of classical gods the nineteenth-century literary establishment deplored as an ugly innovation on Keats's part,³ was in fact a thematic feature he borrowed from a centuries-old English poem.

There is also a passage in an October 1817 letter to Benjamin Bailey in which Keats possibly makes use of Lodge's poem. Keats writes: “a long poem is a test of invention which I take to be the polar star of poetry, as fancy is the sails, and imagination the rudder” (Gitting 27). Compare that with the following couplet from Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla*: “Discourse was steersman while my barke did saile, / My ship conceit, and fancie was my bay” (115). As well as the rhetorical similarity of these passages (both take the form of a tricolon), the same conceit of the ship of poetry steered by fancy features in both passages.

² Parenthetical citations of Lodge's poem are to stanza number.

³ See especially John Gibson Lockhart's comments on *Endymion* in “Cockney Poetry No. IV”, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 17.3 (1819), where he complains that Keats “vulgarise[s]” figures from classical mythology, turning them into “Cockney rhymester[s]” (522).

As with Drayton's two minor epics, there are striking similarities of imagery between Lodge's minor epic and Keats's *Endymion*. To take just one example, Lodge's poem ends with a procession of happy nymphs to Neptune's palace, comparable to the celebration of reunited lovers in Neptune's palace in Keats's poem. Although no evidence exists for Keats's direct ownership of Lodge's poem, he could have encountered it, alongside Drayton's, in fragmentary form in the copies of *England's Parnassus* held in the British Museum library, or perhaps in its complete form in the libraries of Hunt or Clarke.

3 Keats, Minor Epic, and Metamorphic Style

I turn now to some of the stylistic habits Keats's poem shares with minor epic, while continuing to notice parallel passages that strengthen the case for Keats's familiarity with the genre. Returning to Stewart's description of Keats as a "metamorphic" poet, quoted at the beginning of the article, I argue here that Elizabethan minor epic gave Keats a mythic imagery in which to express his thinking about change; and that their witty, over-determined grammar and rhetoric allowed him to express that thinking in a style that can itself be called metamorphic.

In Keats's *Endymion*, words morph into other words. For Keats, to proceed by the logic of phonemes, as opposed to the logic of what he disdainfully called "consequitive reasoning" (Gitting 36), was a perfectly legitimate way to write poetry. He honed his ability to write in such a way partly through his close reading of minor epic, a genre in which the Elizabethan 'witty' style of poetry is ramped up to extremes. All Romanticists know the phrase "pastoral eglantine" from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," but it is interesting to notice that the conjunction of "nightingale" and "eglantine" in Keats's poetry first appears two years earlier, in *Endymion*: "The rill, / Thou mayst haply delight in [...] Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine" (4:695–701). Keats continues nine lines later, "and a nightingale shall light tame on your finger" (4:710–711). The conjunction of these two pastoral details, nightingale and eglantine, also appears in two of the minor epics this article discusses. Drayton's Mount Latmus is clad in "roses and sweet eglantine" (51); in the same sentence he mentions "The Nightingale, woods herald of the spring" (55). In Lodge's poem, nymphs "jest [...] in the Nightingale's report, / And on the prickle of the eglantine" (16). It is characteristic of the playful sonic textures of minor epic that these almost-anagrams are paired so frequently

within the genre. The letters of “eglantine” can be rearranged to make a “nitengale” which is, admittedly, missing a few of its feathers. In detailing Keats's metamorphic style, Stewart writes that “meanings [in Keats are] sparked by the slightest frictions of sound, definition, and linkage” (3). It is interesting to contextualise this statement of Stewart's by examining the ways in which Keats's metamorphic poetry, which often generates new words by scrambling the sounds and letters of preceding ones, has much in common with the witty and fluid verbal surfaces of minor epic. The “nightingale-eglantine” association that Keats uprooted from Elizabethan verse is one way of illustrating this.

In *Endymion*, a poem in which “mingle” and “merge” are common words, words themselves merge and mingle. Keats's is a style of hyphenation, and never more so than in *Endymion*, where new meanings are generated cooperatively, through the yoking together of different parts of speech into new, metamorphosed units: “rainbow-large” (1:776), “subtle-cadenced” (1:494), “forest-wild” (1:494), “mournful-strange” (1:497), “night-swollen” (I. 215). The compound adjective is one of Keats's most obvious Elizabethan mannerisms, echoing Drayton's “fomy-tusked boar” (262), “civet-breathing air” (349), “nectar-dropping dewes” (254), and “starry-painted sky” (77) from *Endimion and Phoebe*. The goddess Venus is called “the love-sick queen” in both Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Keats's poem (Shakespeare 175; Keats 1:482). The phrase “blue-vein'd violets” in *Venus and Adonis* (125) is echoed in Keats's description of Phoebe's feet as “bluely vein'd” (1:625). The word “Honey” is used as a prefix four times in *Endymion* (not including common usages such as honeycomb and honeymoon): Keats writes of “honey-words” (3:428), “honey-whispers” (1:967), “honey-dew” (2:7), and – the instance his critics took most offence at – the “honey-feel of bliss” (1:904). John Wilson Croker, in his review of *Endymion*, scoffed at this phrase as a neologism, listing it among the “new words” with which Leigh Hunt's “simple neophyte” “adorns our language” (207–208). Perhaps Croker, as a respectable member of the British literary establishment, would have revoked this censure had he known that his scoffing at Keats was only one letter away from scoffing at Shakespeare. For Shakespeare, in *Venus and Adonis*, is also fond of using “honey” as a prefix. In addition to “honey passage” (452), and “honey secrets” (16), he writes of a “honey fee” in the line “the honey fee of parting tendered is” (538). This phrase merely grows the tail of an “I” in Keats's phrase “the honey feel of bliss”.

While compound words are a feature of Elizabethan style in general, minor epic, with its ornate description, was especially enamoured of this

device. I do not, of course, intend to claim that minor epic is the only source in which Keats could have encountered compound adjectives (they abound in other forms of early modern writing, including Shakespeare's plays), but they crop up so frequently in minor epic as to almost become a hallmark of the genre. It is therefore possible to see compound adjectives – as well as compound nouns and other versions of compound meaning – as one aspect of a wider metamorphic style that Keats responded to in minor epic, making it an element of his own style.

4 Conclusion

More research could be done to strengthen the link between Keats's *Endymion* and minor epic. In particular, analysis of the libraries of friends of Keats's such as Hunt and Clarke might help to establish a basis for his familiarity with these poems, while new close readings, of the sort I have begun to sketch out in the previous section of this article, might further show the ways in which Keats's polyvalent, punning approach to classical myth was directly inspired by the narrative verse of England's Elizabethan poets of metamorphosis. *Endymion*, however, is far from being the mere pastiche of Shakespearean style that *Otho the Great* comes perilously close to at times. One of Keats's innovations was to abandon the ironic distance that governs these Elizabethan poems, exploring the theme of changeable love with a sense of authorial agon that is more Romantic than early modern, more akin to Shelley's *Alastor* than to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Such readings should therefore take note of the new strands Keats's poem weaves around its Elizabethan DNA.

In this article I have argued that Keats discovered in minor epic an apt vehicle for expressing his thematic concern with metamorphosis. Minor epic is a genre in which we find the theme of metamorphosis combined with a style of metamorphosis, prosodically and syntactically. We also find this conjunction of a metamorphic theme with a metamorphic style in Keats's *Endymion*. Keats discovered a range of effects interwoven in minor epic – anagram, compound adjective, as well as other effects not discussed here including oxymoron, pun, and paradox – effects that compress semantic variants within the same grammatical space, tending to undermine any notion of identity as stable or essential. The discovery of this changeable style in minor epic afforded Keats the perfect vehicle for translating his own metamorphic imaginings into verse.

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“poetticall raptures, and fixions”: Mary Wroth’s Ne-
gotiation of Early Modern Poetics and Ovid in the
Urania

In the manuscript continuation of Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, the character Antissia goes mad writing inappropriate poetry because an overly ambitious scholar of Ovid supposedly leads her to dabble with literature that is beyond women’s mental capacity. This instance of explicit critique of a female author in the first English romance authored by a woman has continued to trouble critics. My analysis of the episode proposes an alternative approach to the scathing critique on Antissia’s writing by instead reading it as an intervention in the contemporary discourse of poetics. Rather than criticising female authorship, I argue, Wroth questions the proper place of writing in relation to social duties, reflects on poetic invention and craftsmanship and on how to engage with canonical precursors and models. By exposing the authorship practices of Antissia and her tutor and their uncritical emulation of canonical male texts, Wroth valorises her own reworking of two tales from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and indirectly outlines an ideal female or male writer in the tradition of Aristotle and Philip Sidney.

Keywords: authorship practices, female authorship, early modern poetics, Ovid, Wroth

The cartouche on the frontispiece of Lady Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621) explicitly states that Wroth is the daughter of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, and niece of Sir Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. This is commonly interpreted as a strategic move to enhance Wroth’s authority and prestige as a writer (cf. for instance Krontiris 122; Hannay 1; Quilligan 191).¹ By affiliating

¹ For an image of the frontispiece, see the digitised Folger copy accessible on Luna: luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~28474~168643:The-Countesse-of-Mountgomeriess-Uran.

themselves with literary predecessors, authors extend and shape the after-lives of those writers while simultaneously fashioning their own authorial reputations—an ambition Wroth spells out bluntly in the portrait of a tutor and would-be-poet, “studying how to make a peece of poetrie to excel Ovid, and to bee more admired then hee is” (*U2* 40).² The attempt to write oneself into a literary lineage can be made more or less openly; it can be achieved by explicitly invoking one’s chosen models, by imitating their style, genre and/or subject matter, or else by way of literary allusion. Yet, regardless of the chosen method, the act of inscribing oneself into a literary tradition also constitutes a negotiation and reinterpretation of that tradition: that is to say, an engagement with the questions of what place literature should occupy, what its purpose should be, and what forms it should take.

For early modern women writers the need to legitimise their status as authors was more urgent and difficult due to the comparative lack of an authoritative female literary canon. Moreover, as Elizabeth Scott-Baumann emphasises, this lack also extends to early modern women critics, whose discussions of literature remained mostly unremarked upon because they tended to occur in less public genres (143, 145–146, 156). This context, I would venture, underlies Wroth’s scathing representation of Antissia’s mad authorship in the manuscript continuation of the *Urania* that has troubled Wroth scholars. Why would Wroth include such a negative version of female authorship, which, as Jocelyn Catty, among others, has noted (cf. 207–208),³ resonates with Edward Denny’s attacks on Wroth herself, when elsewhere she is so intent on legitimising herself as a writer and as the inheritor of the Sidney literary legacy? I contend that what Wroth is offering us is a sustained though somewhat conservative reflection on literary writing or literary ambitions in the context of the (courtly) society she moves in, including the question of how to engage with the legacy of classical authors, be it as a female or male writer. The episode of Antissia’s mad authorship questions the place literary production should occupy in a noblewoman’s or -man’s daily life and what the appropriate attitude to one’s own writing should be. Moreover, aligning

² All quotations from the *Urania* are from *The First Part of “The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania,”* edited by Josephine A. Roberts and from *The Second Part*, edited by Roberts, Suzanne Gossett and Janel M. Muller. The two parts will be distinguished by the abbreviations *U1* and *U2* in parenthetical references.

³ Cf. also Mary Ellen Lamb (*Gender and Authorship* 159–163) and Paul Salzman (*English Prose Fiction* 143–144).

herself with her uncle's *Defence of Poesie*, Wroth critically engages with the Ionian figure of the poet inspired by the Gods, antithetically outlining an ideal writer who, as a properly taught craftsman, respects generic boundaries, eschews verbose euphuisms and skilfully appropriates the texts of literary precursors like Ovid. By exposing Antissia's authorship practices, Wroth thus indirectly valorises her own writing and radical appropriation of Ovidian texts, suggesting that the bid for an authorial after-life requires more than the mere invocation and naïve imitation of canonical writers.

Scholars have offered various interpretations of the Antissia episode. Mary Ellen Lamb's discussion in *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* is especially attentive to textual details and ends with a series of suggestions for possible interpretations:

Is Antissia an alter ego or a debased self-image? Does Antissia function as a kind of lightning rod to ground otherwise destructive cultural prohibitions against women's writing? Or does her mad form of authorship ... reflect the increasing anxieties of the author of *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* prompted by the outcry greeting Wroth's published folio? (162)

I agree with Barbara Lewalski and other critics that Wroth does use Antissia as a "foil" (294) and aims to distinguish her writing and herself as an author from Antissia's "frivolous discourse and strange actions" (U2 35). At the same time, we cannot discount the possibility that the depiction of the mad Antissia references a contemporary of Wroth's, setting that person up for ridicule by exaggerating certain characteristics or a specific incident known to the Sidney-Herbert circle, which might partly explain the intimate feel of the episode and the cruelty of the jibes. However cruel the "character assassination of Antissia" (*Gender and Authorship* 160), as Lamb calls it, there are two aspects of the episode that I think have not sufficiently been considered in critical analysis to date. Firstly, although Antissia's literary production is ridiculed and severely criticised, her attempt to write is not what Antissia is censured for. Secondly, the focus on the meaning and significance of Antissia as an anti-model female author has impeded critical reflection on the theoretical literary discourse the episode invokes and the role of Antissia's tutor, i.e., the circumstance that she is not alone in her preposterous practice of authorship.

The episode of Antissia's mad authorship relates how Antissia, after employing a tutor, starts writing and declaiming unruly literary texts. She neglects all social decorum and duties, rendering the life of her husband,

Dolorindus, miserable and putting off family members and friends by her behaviour. To cure Antissia, Dolorindus tricks her into a magic water cure dispensed by the sage Melissea. The cure is successful in making Antissia ashamed of her behaviour, but it does not lead her to a better understanding of her literary failures. The episode unfolds in several instalments, consisting of three moments of communal exchange among protagonists with an intermediate part that is represented directly in the narrative. This means that from the outset, Antissia’s madness and literary aspirations are subject to debate as her behaviour is reported, discussed and reflected on. Moreover, in the first half of the episode, near the beginning of the manuscript continuation, the other protagonists’ reactions to Antissia’s behaviour are also commented on. While especially the male characters, Antissius and Rosindy, censure Antissia for her shortcomings, Pamphilia shows a more nuanced reaction, questioning the male characters’ harsh condemnation, pitying Antissia’s state and trying to understand what led to it. For the second half of the episode, which occurs in the second book of the manuscript continuation, the responsibility of reflecting on Antissia’s case is shifted to the text’s readers or listeners. The episode’s narrative structure per se thus problematises a straightforward interpretation of Antissia’s authorship practices and instead emplots them as a matter for critical discussion. As so often in the *Urania*, Wroth does not present us with an authoritative treatise but rather raises issues for reflection and debate, while nudging her readership or audience towards one standpoint or another. Rebecca Fall concludes from the episode’s set up that Antissia’s unruly literary endeavours are narratively and socially productive, in that they provoke narrative progression and allow characters to bond over their criticism of Antissia’s excesses and over their negotiation of what is sensible or acceptable (267, 272). While Antissia’s troubles certainly pose the question of what is acceptable, I think that Wroth is not exploring the delimitations of sense and nonsense from an absolute perspective, but rather in relation to literary authorship practices that concern both female and male authors.

In what follows, I focus on the criticism levelled at Antissia in connection with her writing, moving from the more general to the more specifically literary points of critique. Antissia’s first failing is that she puts her poetic pursuits above her duties of hospitality when welcoming Rosindy. As the ever practically minded Urania comments:

Butt what food did she give you ore comfort after your neere suffering shipwrack? If noe other then this [verbose greeting], itt wovld have binn

to mee a greater storme then the first; this soe cruell, empty blasts of senceles discourse cowld hardly fill the vaines of disaster. (*U2 35*)

Antissia utterly fails to give appropriate attention to Rosindy's physical needs, with the consequence that her elaborate greeting, as Urania insists, is not only tedious but more harmful than the storm that blew Rosindy to her shores. It falls to Antissia's husband, Dolorindus, to "refres[h]" the "wants" of the "wett, hunger-sterv'd almost, sea-and-wether-beaten" Rosindy and to "entertai[n]" him "with [...] pleasing discourse" (*U2 35*). It is thus not Antissia's wish to write and publish her writing as such that incurs criticism, but her failure to limit her literary aspirations and poetic performance to the proper time and place. Literary endeavours, Wroth seems to suggest, should not be a noblewoman's or -man's first concern and take precedence over their social duties—a position that recalls Ben Jonson's praise of Wroth's mother for her model management of the estate in "To Penshurst" (Woudhuysen 422, ll.57–90). Unlike Antissia's poetic endeavours, Barbara Sidney's "high huswifery" (l.85) ensures that a king whose visit is unexpected will still find a due welcome—even in her absence.⁴

Antissia's second major shortcoming is her attitude towards her own literary output, that is, her pride and uncritical belief in its quality and her self-promotion as a writer. Rosindy criticises this failing as follows:

The night beefor I went thence she caused her houshold ladys and servants to present a show to mee, which she to illustrate her owne glory did soe commend and overvallue, telling (to conclude) all (to bee vaine) that itt was of her owne compiling, as she called itt, as verily itt made mee nott esteeme itt att all, though I must confess som things were tollerable, yett nott answerable to her commendations. (*U2 35*)

Antissia's scheme to put on a masque for Rosindy is not criticised, implying that in this instance, literary entertainment occurs in its proper place. Nor is it a problem that Antissia authored the "show" and had it staged by

⁴ Compare also the cryptic explanation accompanying one of the few depictions in the manuscript continuation of Pamphilia writing poetry to capture her grief: "a thing she had nott in a pretty space dunn ore could give libertie soe long to her sorrow and cross destinie as to doe" (*U2 279*). Pamphilia clearly does not indulge in poetic expression of her emotions although, according to the narrative, she would prefer this to "all the stately cerimonies" (279), implying that it might be social and political obligations that prevent her from "giv[ing] libertie soe long to her sorrow." Cf. also Salzman's discussion of this passage ('The Politics of Complaint' 150).

a cast including women. Even the quality of the entertainment is partly acceptable, as Rosindy grudgingly admits. What is deemed problematic, however, is Antissia's boasting, her overvaluing of her own work, her lack of modesty and her affectation, visible in the word "compiling." To readers familiar with the first part of Wroth's romance, these overbearing aspects of Antissia's character come as no surprise, and it is no coincidence that Antissia is twice compared to the Ovidian figure Niobe (*UI* 147; *U2* 35). Indeed, it is highly ironic because Antissia herself makes the connection, comparing (*UI* 147) and contrasting (*U2* 35) her tears to those of Niobe, without recognising that she is prone to sharing the character's traditional flaws, i.e., overweening pride and a tendency to overstep without considering the possible effects of her acts. Arthur Golding in his 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* writes of Niobe that despite

Arachnes punishment at home before hir eyes,
To vse discreter kinde of talke it could hir not aduise,
Nor (as behoueth) to the Gods to yéelde in humble wise.
For many things did make hir proud. (70)

The description of Niobe neatly encapsulates Antissia's resistance to counsel, her sense of self-importance, and the lack of discretion and emotional control that figures her as a counter version of the romance's protagonist and Wroth-avatar Pamphilia.

The criticism of Antissia's self-promotion as a writer brings us back to the question of how to interpret the celebratory cartouche announcing Wroth's authorship in the published *Urania's* frontispiece. Provided Wroth had some say in the design of the cartouche,⁵ one could read the central position and capitalisation of her name as an act of self-promotion similar to Antissia's insistence on "her own compiling" of her work. However, the work's title "The Countesse of Mountgomerie's URANIA" by far trumps Wroth's name in terms of size and legibility, as if to imply that the work, vouched for by its dedicatee, should speak for itself and any promotion of and by the author comes secondary. Furthermore, one could argue that the enumeration of the Sidney lineage, visually supporting Wroth's name, counterbalances its centrality, deflecting attention from Wroth herself and functioning as a gesture of deference that goes precisely against Antissia's boasting of her sole authorship and instead acknowledges Wroth's debt to her literary mentors. Presenting herself as the offspring of a family renowned for their literary accomplishments sug-

⁵ I have discussed this issue elsewhere (Orgis 13–24).

gests an inheritance of talent and a literary education akin to an apprenticeship. The mention of the “ever famous, and renowned” (*UI* cxxi) Philip Sidney, in particular, positions Wroth’s work in a tradition of literary craftsmanship that differs from the view of authorship embodied by Antissia.

Antissia’s authorship and behaviour have traditionally been examined in the context of contemporary ideas of madness and melancholy (cf. Catty 199–208; Hackett 68). I propose that the representation of Antissia’s authorship and its discussion by the other characters also reflects the importance of contemporary debates over the nature of poetry/literature, based on the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Horace. One fundamental question in this debate is whether poetry should be regarded as an art governed by rules and hence demanding study and technical mastery, following early modern readings of Aristotle’s *Poetics* (Halliwell 291–312), or as the result of divine inspiration, also referred to as *furor poeticus*, as suggested in Plato’s *Ion*, where poets are described as “not in their senses” but “seized with Bacchic transport and [...] possessed” (220).⁶ Antissia’s authorship is repeatedly discussed in terms of “that phantisy they call poetically furies” (*U2* 33), which is the phrase Rosindy uses when he starts relating his encounter with Antissia. Antissia’s nephew, Antissius, speaks of her “phantisies” (34) and her “height of poetry, which att the best is butt a frency” (41). Urania assumes that Antissia is “grievously distracted” (35), Dolorindus criticises Antissia’s “poetical furies” (51), and the narrating voice describes her as suffering from “distractions” (50) and being in a state of “fury” (52). In the debate on the nature of poetry, Antissia thus comes down on the side of *Ion*. Wroth, on the other hand, seems in line with Philip Sidney, who, in his *Defence of Poesie*, insists on the poet as a “Maker” and distances himself from Plato’s notion of “Poesie” as “a very inspiring of a divine force, farre above mans wit” (87, 117). In other words, Wroth sides with the Aristotelian idea of poetry as craftsmanship or possibly adheres to the Horatian compromise that inspiration and craft need to work hand in hand (Horace 484–485). In his 1599 *Model of Poesy* William Scott (c. 1571–c. 1617) formulates this com-

⁶ For the early modern reception of the “doctrine of the *furor poeticus*,” see Gavin Alexander’s commentary on William Scott’s *Model of Poesy*, where he explains that “the main line of Neoplatonic thought about poetic inspiration derives from the *Ion*” although “Plato describes the madness by which the poet is possessed by the Muses in *Phaedrus*” (97 n.7.16–18). For a discussion of Aristotle’s conception of poetry in reaction to Plato in its classical context, see Stephen Halliwell (9–10, 23–24, 26).

promise in a comment that reads like a blueprint of Antissia’s failings: “Yet I trust no artist is so overweeningly conceited that he will neglect those artificial directions which bring this natural propenseness and supernatural inspiring into actual and habitual perfection” (10).⁷ Poetry, according to Scott, springs from talent and inspiration but needs to be artfully regulated to meet contemporary stylistic expectations. Antissia fails at this artistic regulation and incurs criticism for doing so.

Antissia’s ignorance or neglect of proper Aristotelian craftsmanship and poetic categories immediately puts off Rosindy when he encounters her on the beach:

she was upon the sand, neither waulking, running, norr standing still, yett partly exercising all. She neither sange, nor spake, nor cried, nor laughed, butt a strange mixture of all thes together, soe discomposed as if pieces of all throwne into a hatt and shouke together to bee drawne out, like Valantines to bee worne by several persones, noe one to have them all, yett all the peeces hunge about her att that time. (*U2* 33)

Rosindy, who is admired by the other characters for his report because it is “soe neatly discoursed and certainly well sett out” (36), continues his criticism of Antissia’s performance by pointing out that he could not tell if she was speaking in “prose ore verse” (34). Antissia’s production sounds both experimental and creative, but in the context of the *Urania* it is clearly considered monstrous and lacking artistic control. It is literally “discomposed,” i.e., the antithesis of a successful composition, and Antissia’s monstrous mixing of genres—reminiscent of Sidney’s “mongrell Traggy-comedie” (122)—is mirrored in her inappropriate mixture of clothing and gestures, which expose her to ridicule and suggest a concomitant lack of control over her body and by extension her sexuality, recalling the virulent public ‘Hic—Haec’ debate over cross-dressing in the 1620s.⁸

Antissia’s choice of style and her poetic aspirations also incur strictures. Antissia favours a verbose euphuistic style that the other characters qualify as “senceles,” “fustian taulke,” “strained pratling” (*U2* 35), “extravagant” (41) and “forced language” (36). In contrast to Scott’s “actuall

⁷ Scott’s treatise survives in a manuscript copy, presumably “Sir Henry Lee’s presentation copy” (lxxvi), to whom the treatise was dedicated. There is to my knowledge no concrete indication that Wroth knew Scott’s work, but the possibility exists given Scott’s distant family relation to the Sidneys and his ties to Sir Thomas Smythe, whose widow married Wroth’s father in 1626 (Scott li). Moreover, Scott’s work frequently refers to and extols Sidney’s *Defence*.

⁸ On the ‘Hic—Haec’ debate, see for instance Mary Beth Rose (367–378).

[...] perfection” that artists should aspire to, Rosindy insists on the out-datedness of Antissia’s style by referring to it as “som poetrie, though olde, sickly stuff, as if poetry were fallen into a consumption” (34). Moreover, Antissia’s literary production is not only overly ostentatious but also flattering in intention: Antissia blatantly tries to gain the admiration of Rosindy and later the sage Melissea by hyperbolically praising them to their faces. Melissea’s response to Antissia that her “high expressions [...] are nott usually found in Ladys, especially of [her] fashion” (52) points to Wroth’s parodic performance through the character Antissia and suggests a general critique of overly obsequious, patronage-seeking writers that extends beyond noblewomen to include male writers, implying that they are the more usual practitioners of such writing, especially if lower class.

Thanks to Pamphilia’s enquiries, we learn that Antissia’s poetic (as opposed to social) failures are to some extent the consequence of inept instruction by the “mad” (41) tutor whom she employed after hearing of him (41) and who, according to Antissius, “soe fittly hath [...] served her as to make her as mad as him self” (41). The nameless tutor does not receive much textual space in the romance, and even less in criticism. Antissia meets him “by mere chance” when he is “waulking on thos sands” (40), i.e., in the liminal space of the beach, and he utterly disappears from the text after the voyage to Delos where Antissia is cured. Nevertheless, as the first of only two tutors in the *Urania*,⁹ his presence in the romance is exceptional and, I would argue, qualifies some of the criticism directed at Antissia. The tutor is described as “raving out high-strained lines which had broke the bounds of his braines, and yett raged in the same fitt still” (40–41), thus setting the model for Antissia’s performances. His poetic hubris is signalled by Antissius’s parenthetical remark that the tutor “had binn mad in studying how to make a peece of poetrie to excel Ovid, and to bee more admired then hee is” (40). The derogatory description of Antissia’s tutor shows that although the criticism of Antissia figures more prominently in the episode, the poetic practices she is criticised for are equally reprehensible in a male writer. It follows that perhaps Antissia’s most grievous fault is her lack of judgement in her choice of tutor and in her qualitative assessment of his poetic performance.

⁹ The second tutor is the meddling Forsandurus (presumably a reference to Hugh Sanford, tutor of William Herbert), who is responsible for the break-up between the protagonists Amphilanthus and Pamphilia in the manuscript continuation of the romance (cf. *U2* 502 n.131.39, 544 n.385.33).

In addition to imitating the tutor's style of performance and diction, Antissia likewise seems to embrace his flawed ambition to surpass Ovid. This finds expression, I would propose, in the following poem celebrating Venus and her "pleasures still unseene" (50):

Come lusty gamesters of the sea:
 Billowes waves, and winds,
 Like to most lovers make your plea
 Say love all combinds;
 Lett nott Dian rule your sprites,
 Her pale face shuns all delights.

Venus was borne of the sea foame;
 Queene of love is she,
 Like her, sweet, pleasant phantisies roame,
 This varietie.
 Juno yett a firme wife is,
 Soe may I bee in my blis.

Pallas is yett a fierce, sterne lass,
 Wisdome doth profess.
 Ceaes a hous-wife I soone pass;
 Lovers I express.
 Venus, my deere sea-borne Queene,
 Gives mee pleasures still unseene.

And you, faire starry sky, beeholde
 Venus mee commaunds,
 That by noe means love showld grow colde
 Butt blowe the fire brands.
 Solls best heat must fill our vaines;
 Thes are true loves highest straines. (50–51)

With this poem Antissia intends "to shew you [that is, her husband Dolorindus] my love in verce as well as prose" (51), but her profession of "true loves highest straines" recalls the "high-strained lines" of her tutor and has the contrary effect of scandalising Dolorindus. Out of her list of goddesses, Antissia chooses Venus as her inspiration even though she explicitly associates her with "Varietie," which clearly goes against the virtues that Antissia as "a firme wife" should profess. As with Niobe, Antissia unwittingly identifies with the 'wrong' classical figure. Her inappropriate outspoken praise of Venus and, by implication, sexual pleasures is thus in character, harking back to her excessive acting out of her negative emotions, i.e., jealousy, grief and vengeance, in the first part of the romance. Indeed, the whole episode of Antissia's mad authorship is

framed in a context of nostalgia and remembering, as characters evaluate her behaviour in view of their past experiences with Antissia. This retrospective orientation of the episode invites readers to consider also Antissia's poetic performance in comparison to the first part of the romance. Both Fall and Paul Salzman have noted that Antissia's poems are not "mad" in that they are incomprehensible (Fall 265; Salzman, 'Mary Wroth's *Urania Manuscript*' 145–146). I would argue, however, that Antissia's poetic effort can be interpreted as a "mad" or at least a deeply flawed attempt to imitate or surpass Ovid because, rather than the *Heroides* or *Metamorphoses*, Antissia chooses the 'wrong' Ovidian text model, i.e., Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, where Ovid invokes Venus, the "Queene-borne of the sea" (67), as his muse.

As Heather James has shown, the importance of Ovid's work as a point of reference for early modern English writers can hardly be overstated, and his works were associated as much with poetic eloquence and (political) resistance as with wantonness (*Ovid and the Liberty of Speech* 10–14). Not all Ovidian texts were seen as fit reading for young and female readers (cf. James, "Ovid in Renaissance English Literature" 423), but what James calls Ovid's "gendered complaint" (*Ovid and the Liberty of Speech* 59) in the *Heroides* offered a model of resistance to political and/or patriarchal oppression that could also be appropriated by women writers (cf. also 235–236).¹⁰ Wroth's creative engagement with Ovid in the *Urania* plays out on different levels. Whereas Antissia's echoing of Ovid realises male educators' worst fears, Wroth's adaptation of two tales from the *Metamorphoses* aligns her with other early modern women writers who not only laid claim to the same classical authorities as male writers of the period but also "talked back to" Ovid (James, *Ovid and the Liberty of Speech* 235) and thereby both carved out an authorial space for themselves and perpetuated Ovid's authorial afterlife, as envisioned by Ovid himself at the end of the *Metamorphoses*.

The *Urania* contains numerous explicit allusions to the *Metamorphoses*,¹¹ but it is rare that Wroth rewrites entire tales. The two exceptions are the reworking of the tale of Caunus and Byblis in the first part of the

¹⁰ On the importance of the *Heroides* to early modern literature see also Laurel Fulkerson (88).

¹¹ In an unpublished paper presented at the 2016 Renaissance Society of America conference in Boston, Lamb listed allusions to Echo and Narcissus, Alpheus and Arethusa, Daphne and Apollo, Iphis, Argus, Niobe, Cyparissus, Narcissus and Byblis, as well as Ariadne and Medea from the *Heroides* ("Classical Precedents for Author Figures in Wroth's *Urania*: Pamphilia, Sappho, and Ovid"). I am grateful to Mary Ellen Lamb for sending me her conference paper.

Urania (518–526), that is, before the episode of Antissia’s mad authorship, and a transformed version of the tale of Myrrha towards the end of the manuscript continuation (*U2* 310–313), i.e., after the Antissia episode under discussion.¹² In both cases, Wroth’s rewriting radically differs from Ovid’s version regarding the female characters involved. In Ovid, Byblis and Myrrha are metamorphosed because they fall in love with their brother and father respectively and seek to consummate their love, or even do so in Myrrha’s case. By contrast, the female characters in the *Urania* actively try to avoid an incestuous act at all costs, even if they ultimately pay with their lives for their virtuousness. Thus, Wroth transforms two stories of transgressive female lust into tales of female suffering and martyrdom, making them undergo a generic shift, so to speak, towards the elegiac mode of the *Heroides*, which can be seen as counterbalancing Antissia’s imitation of Ovid’s wanton texts.

To achieve this effect, Wroth changes and inverts elements of plot, motivation and context, thereby freeing the female characters from any suspicion of guilt. In her rewriting of Caunus and Byblis’ story,¹³ for example, Wroth has the couple fall in love with each other without knowing that they are half-brother and -sister. The attraction between the two is therefore mutual and tragic rather than guilty, whereas in Ovid, Byblis knows the identity of her brother and is fully conscious of the illicit nature of her desires. Moreover, as soon as the couple in the *Urania* learn about their parentage, Wroth explicitly states that “the comparison” to Caunus and Byblis “holds not clearly” (*U1* 525) because they relinquish their dream of marriage and live chastely next to each other in the wilderness until they die shortly after. Instead of undergoing an Ovidian metamorphosis, their bodies are miraculously preserved in the tradition of hagiographic legends—another sign of their virtuousness—and their father erects a fanciful tomb for them. Byblis, by contrast, cannot restrain her desires and repeatedly tries to seduce her brother although he continually rejects her. She runs after him when he finally flees her and is metamorphosed into a fountain due to her incessant tears. It is evident that compared to Ovid’s Byblis, the two lovers in the *Urania* are paragons of

¹² I have discussed the significance of Wroth’s adaptations of these two tales from a thematic and plot perspective elsewhere (Orgis 197–199). On Wroth’s engagement with Ovid and particularly the *Metamorphoses*, see also Roberts’ introduction to the first part of the *Urania* (*U1* xxxiii–xxxv) and Macdonald’s discussion of *Love’s Victory*. For other early modern women writers’ use of Ovidian texts, see James (*Ovid and the Liberty of Speech* 436–439).

¹³ For an alternative reading of this episode, see Zurcher (72–75).

virtue, and the text invites readers to join the protagonists within the romance in their admiration and commiseration of these unhappy lovers, whose tragic tale is commemorated and preserved in the form of a book in their funeral monument (519). Wroth's depiction of incest thereby becomes ambivalent because, on the one hand, it is treated as absolutely inadmissible, but, on the other, the couple's love for each other is presented as innocent and exemplary. As a result, it is not a brother's passionate love for his sister or vice versa that is condemned as monstrous, but the attempt to consummate such a love.

This is, however, exactly what happens in Wroth's rewriting of Myrrha's tale—with the crucial difference that it is not the daughter, called Lydia, who wishes for a union with her father, but Demonarus, the father, who lusts after his daughter. Whereas Myrrha's nurse in the *Metamorphoses* helps her realise her desires, Lydia's mother refuses to do the same for her husband and tries to flee with her daughter. Myrrha also flees from her father, but only after he discovers her to be his unknown lover and seeks to punish her. Her flight is partly successful in that she manages to escape her father, though she is subsequently transformed into a myrrh tree. The flight of Lydia and her mother, by contrast, ends in multiple tragic deaths: Demonarus catches up with them and kills them both as well as his son, who, unarmed, tries to defend them. As Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld remarks, the description of Demonarus' thrusting his sword through Lydia's body blurs the boundary between sexual penetration and martial violence (150) and uncannily literalises the military metaphors with which a text like George Gascoigne's *Adventures of Master F.J.* denotes rape (Salzman, *Anthology* 61). Forced penetration literally signifies death, it seems. Finally, Demonarus even tries to kill his son's beloved, witness to the murders, but she escapes to a fountain and is transformed into a nymph, whereafter Demonarus commits suicide.

For both Ovidian tales, Wroth rewrites her source so radically that she produces counter versions of the original stories that vindicate women's virtue and chastity. Moreover, Wroth does not engage with little-known mythological figures but instead with female characters whose very mention serves as shorthand to designate unlawful lust, as shown by Glauce's contrasting of Britomart's love for Artegall to the passions of Myrrha, Byblis and Pasiphaë in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (3.2.41, 412).¹⁴ Wroth's reworking of the stories of Byblis and Myrrha allows her to broach the delicate subject of incest in her romance and maybe also to

¹⁴ On the importance of Ovid's Byblis and Myrrha for early modern plays featuring incest see Richard McCabe (92–95, 102).

respond to depictions of incest in stage plays like *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612/1613, published 1623).¹⁵ Perhaps one could even read the inverted tale of Myrrha as an allusion to Pandosto’s incestuous desire for his daughter (Salzman, *Anthology* 197–204), which Shakespeare all but excised from *Winter’s Tale* (1609–1611, published 1623, cf. 5.1.222–227).¹⁶

To summarise, Wroth’s appropriation of the Ovidian text goes beyond mere imitation and allusion: she uses it productively—within her romance and to engage with a wider literary context—and in a more socially acceptable way than Antissia to champion an ideal of female virtue and resistance to illicit sexual lust that challenges received stereotypical representations of women. Feminist critics might argue that Wroth’s female characters conform to patriarchal social norms and that by rewriting Ovid’s transgressive lustful female characters, Wroth is, in fact, reinscribing the very norms that limit women’s expression and agency in her romance. Yet, if one focuses on Wroth’s handling of her source, her transformations of the original texts are as bold and strategic as, for instance, Spenser’s rewriting of the competition between Arachne and Athena in *Muiopotomos* (cf. James, *Ovid and the Liberty of Speech* 42–51). Seamlessly integrating the Ovidian adaptations as minor episodes within her romance with only minimal references to the classical sources for readers to pick up on, Wroth’s engagement with Ovid also displays self-assured aristocratic sprezzatura and sophistication—especially if juxtaposed with Antissia’s ostentatious and ill-advised poetic performances.

The episode of Antissia’s mad authorship closes with Antissia’s own retrospective recounting of her temporary madness to a female audience at a later point in the romance (*U2* 251–252). This account is perhaps the most problematic part of the episode from a feminist perspective because, after her water cure, Antissia uncritically echoes the male characters’ condemnation of her behaviour—unlike Urania and Pamphilia earlier, who question the content and tone of the male characters’ remarks (34–35). Antissia’s engagement with male authoritative voices hence remains passive and imitative, just like her imitation of her tutor’s poetry. The water cure does restore Antissia’s sense of decorum and shame, making her realise that she failed to live up to her social duties in her treatment of

¹⁵ Cf. Rosenfeld for a discussion of Wroth’s use of periphrasis to avoid the actual term “incest” (149–150).

¹⁶ Wroth was presumably familiar with *Winter’s Tale* since it was performed in 1613 as part of the celebrations for the wedding of Elizabeth Stuart to Frederick V, Elector Palatine, whom Wroth’s father accompanied on their voyage to Heidelberg (Shakespeare 92; cf. Wroth, *U1* xl).

Rosindy and her husband, but, as Salzman puts it, “this seems to be at the cost of not producing any more poetry” (“The Politics of Complaint” 150). After her cure, Antissia has not gained a better understanding of poetic craftsmanship, apart from the insight that “poetticall furie [...] in true sence is distraction” (*U2* 251). She does not acknowledge her failure to study and abide by Aristotelian rules, but blames her distraction on her “idlenes with a unsteddy braine, mixt with a mulltitude of phansies,” claiming that “Poetrie” is “a study able to unsettle a more serious braine then ever mine was” (251). She therefore takes all the blame on herself, finding fault in her limited mental capacities and not even mentioning the flawed instruction she received from her tutor. Finally, the text signals that Antissia’s lack of critical self-reflection and modesty has not been thoroughly resolved by the water cure: Antissia still wants to be the centre of attention, even if this is achieved through self-humiliation, “willing for the most part to heere her self speake, and thinking all others like her self (which was no partiall dealing), of her minde, to admire her self” (250–251).

The episode of Antissia’s authorship thus ends on as unsettling a note as it begins, ridiculing Antissia and inviting readers to laugh at her. Our unease, however, does not arise because the episode undermines female authorship per se, I would argue. It arises because Wroth’s intervention in a wider theoretical discourse on poetry/literature is predicated on the derogation of the female character Antissia. In Wroth’s reflection on the place, purpose and nature of literary production and on how to engage with canonical classical authorities as an early modern writer, Antissia comes to embody the cultural stereotype of a bad or even mad (woman) writer. On the negative side, Wroth thereby creates what Kim F. Hall calls another “system of power” (192),¹⁷ which superficially reinscribes cultural stereotypes concerning women’s limited mental capacities. On the positive side, Wroth’s theoretical engagement with culturally prestigious classical theories of poetics and questions of literary imitation can be seen as an achievement and a bold move on behalf of a woman writer, especially if one considers the freedom with which Wroth appropriates Ovidian intertexts. In conclusion then, although Antissia claims that it is “a dangerous thing att any time for a weake woeman to studdy higher mat-

¹⁷ Hall coins the term in her discussion of early modern women’s implication in colonialist ideology by seeking to empower themselves through the distinction from supposedly inferior colonial others (192–193). A similar mechanism of self-promotion seems to underpin Wroth’s authorisation as a writer at the expense of her character, Antissia.

ters then their cappasitie can reach to” (*U2* 41), the emphasis in the episode is clearly on “a *weake* woeman” and does not question female authorship per se. However, as Antissia’s case demonstrates, women—as well as men—with literary ambitions should beware of choosing the wrong poetic models to imitate, lest, in Antissia’s words, their “heads” be “turne[d] ... into the mist of noe sence” (251).

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Queer Afterlives: The Old English Hero and the Scholarly Tradition

This article rethinks the scholarly tendency to focus primarily on Beowulf and male, pagan heroes when considering Old English heroism. It offers a more inclusive definition of Old English heroic poetry and of the Old English hero, one that does not consider women and Christian heroes as marginal iterations of the norm, but rather as an integral part of heroic stock. While the heroism of women such as Judith, Elene, and Juliana has been the subject of much scholarly interest, this interest has most often focused on how these women present a gendering of, or a departure from the heroic ideal. Women heroes have tended to be compared to the pagan Beowulf and found wanting. In contrast, I argue, with the example of the Old English *Judith*, that we should compare these figures' heroic performance to other Christian heroes such as Andreas and Guthlac, to avoid any confusion between enacting a Christian heroism and a potentially specifically feminine heroism. I show that, in opposition to the tendency of scholars to focus on gender performance as, in one way or another, productive of heroism, the very heroism of a Judith or an Andreas in Old English poetry transcends gender binaries to become a queer performance.

Keywords: Heroism, Old English heroic poetry, gender, literary genre, *Judith*, queer, scholarly tradition

Quid Hinieldus cum Christo? Angusta est domus: utrosque tenere non poterit. (Dümmler II 183)

*What has Ingeld to do with Christ? The house is narrow and has no room for both.*¹

The epigraph to this article is an oft-excerpted passage from a 797 letter by Alcuin, probably addressed to a Mercian bishop concealed behind the

¹ All translations from Latin and Old English are my own.

by-name Speratus, rather than, as hitherto supposed, to Bishop Hygbald of Lindisfarne (Bullough). Alcuin expresses in this part of the letter his recommendation that the episcopal dinner-table benefit from Christian readings rather than from the entertainment of scopas reciting pagan songs about such heroic figures as Ingeld. Rare is the scholarly discussion of heroic poetry and/or *Beowulf* that fails to refer back to Alcuin's words to signify the boundary that existed in Early Medieval England between Old English heroic poetic tradition and Christian writings, respectively represented by Ingeld, the pagan hero of Germanic legend who appears in *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, and Christ.² This despite Mary Garrison's convincing argument that the passage should be read not as a generalising commentary but instead as a local critique of royal Mercian involvement in the bishop's affairs.

This article proposes that the recurrence of the *Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?* passage in the scholarship is less revealing of any actual Christian/'Germanic' heroic divide in Old English poetry than the tendency, inherited from nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship, to project this divide onto Old English poetry, and to continue considering heroism as primarily male, pagan, and embodied in the hero Beowulf. In fact, I shall submit that the hero Ingeld has *everything* to do with Christ in Early Medieval England, and that Old English heroes are overwhelmingly, and unproblematically, Christian. They are also not infrequently women. I will therefore propose to replace the image of a virile, pagan Beowulf as the epitome of the Germanic hero with a more inclusive representation of heroism, one that comprises Christian and women heroes.

Women heroes are often seen as a sort of contradiction in terms. Thus Jeffrey J. Cohen makes the general remark that medieval "heroism is a gendered realm," and that the "hero represents a kind of hypermasculinity, an exaggerated and perhaps idealized version of maleness" (2, 13). As a result, most of the scholarship that has discussed women heroes in Old English poetry has concentrated on resolving this perceived incongruity and has focused on these heroes' gender performance through opposition to Beowulf, a pagan hero. In contrast, I will argue that in order to understand the heroism of a character like Judith, we should concentrate on their Christianity and piety rather than on their gender. At the same time, I will compare Judith's heroic performance to that of other Christian figures, such as Andreas and Guthlac, since critics often confuse performing

² See, however, Thomas Duncan pp. 29–31.

Christianity with performing femininity.³ Finally, I will show that whereas scholars have focused on gender performance as, one way or another, productive of heroism, the very (Christian) heroism of a Judith or an Andreas in Old English poetry supplants the importance of their gender for the Old English poet, turning them into queer figures.

Before re-defining the hero in Old English literature, one should first have in mind the masculine, militaristic, and non-Christian connotations that have traditionally accompanied the term ‘hero’ for scholars of Early Medieval England.⁴ Since the term ‘hero’ does not actually appear in Old English (Bremmer 76), it is revealing that it is words that usually translate as “warrior,” such as “hæleð” and “eorl,” that are uncritically translated into the Modern English “hero.” Scholars likewise understood these words to be constitutive of the period’s definition of heroism (Herbison 17; Bremmer 75). The result has been the privileging of a militaristic, masculine, type of heroism.⁵

Keeping this connotation in mind, scholars have usually accorded with Cohen and dismissed the possibility of women being heroes whenever not directly tackling heroism in a specific text, such as *Judith* or *Elene*. Hugh Magennis can in this way dismiss women as heroes on the basis that violent action is central to the hero and “belongs firmly to the sphere of male performance” (*The Cambridge Introduction* 79). Even when writing about Judith’s heroism, the notions of woman and hero are so irreconcilable that he concludes that “[t]hroughout the poem Judith’s attitudes and ‘instinctive’ behaviour are presented as those of a Germanic noblewoman, even though her role is not that of a woman at all but of a hero” (“Gender and Heroism” 18). For him, it is Judith’s “ostensible unsuitedness to the task” that makes the poem so successful (18). If one looks through common introductions to the hero and heroism in Old English poetry, women are never mentioned as heroes, apart from in the aforementioned passage in Magennis (*The Cambridge Introduction*), who evokes them only to dismiss them, and in Greenfield and Calder’s *New Critical History of Old English Literature*, which proves a surprisingly early breath of fresh air in

³ Judith is anachronistically presented as a Christian, praying to the Trinity, in the Old English poem *Judith*. See *Judith*, line 86 in Treharne 230.

⁴ In line with the recent drive to dissociate the field of Old English studies from its racist scholarly past, encapsulated for some in the term Anglo-Saxon, I will call the pre-Conquest period ‘Early Medieval England,’ and those who study it scholars of Early Medieval England. For a useful overview of, and discussion on this controversy, see Louviot.

⁵ For such an assumption, linked with an assimilation of the term “hero” with that of “warrior,” see Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction* 79–81.

1986 by including, after its section on “Secular Heroic Poetry,” a chapter on “The Christian Saint as Hero” that includes a discussion of *Juliana* and *Elene* (167–178).⁶ John Edward Damon also discusses *Juliana* and *Elene* in a short section of his book on *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors* (95–122).

There therefore appears to exist a tendency in current scholarship on the Old English hero to forget about Christian saints and biblical characters whose lives and deeds are often portrayed as heroic in Old English poetry.⁷ Stanley Greenfield and Daniel Calder are obviously an exception to this, as is Damon, and it seems that it is those scholars who take into account the potential for the Christian hero who can also accept the possibility of the woman hero. Making a case for the consideration of Christian saints as heroes, Greenfield argues that there is a “rather complex overlapping in the two kinds of heroes” (102). However, whenever Christian or women heroes are acknowledged, it is always apart from the other heroes in appending chapters, as marginal or extreme cases of heroism, implying that ‘true’ Old English heroism exists elsewhere.

Even when Graham Caie astutely notes that “it is perhaps the Christian poetry of saints’ lives and biblical heroes and heroines that best illustrates what we call the heroic spirit” (80), he does not make use of this insight in the remainder of his essay on heroic verse. Robert Fulk and Christopher Cain claim that the best way to define heroic conventions is to compare and contrast heroic texts with “poems about the champions of Christ, which are cast in the same heroic mode” (193), displaying a similar tendency to separate Christian and pagan heroes while still acknowledging their similarities: they are comparable, and yet different. That this opposition makes little sense is reflected in their subsequent claim that the most important of these conventions is the loyalty between lord and thane, something that is an obviously crucial feature in such texts about the champions of Christ as *Fates of the Apostles*, *Andreas*, or *The Dream of the Rood*. Rare are those who refreshingly actually consider that secular and religious heroic poetry share the same ethos. Among them is Kent Hare, who for instance notes in passing that “*The Battle of Maldon* and

⁶ The more so because this partition reproduces Calder’s *Critical History of Old English Literature*, published in 1966. See the absence of women in discussions by Niles (136–184); Shippey (26); Caie; Pearsall (1–24); Orchard; North, “Is there more like *Beowulf*?”; Magennis, “Germanic Legend” 136–148.

⁷ See the absence of Christian heroes in discussions by Niles (136–184); Shippey (26); Pearsall (1–24); Orchard; North, “Is there more like *Beowulf*?”; Magennis, “Germanic Legend” 136–148.

other late battle poems represent not [...] an enduring heroic tradition tempered little by Christianity [...], but rather express the very same ethos as the religious poetry.”

Apart from exceptions like Hare, then, an overwhelming majority of scholars of Early Medieval England still (sometimes unconsciously) consider the male and pagan warrior as representing the true hero in Old English literature, in other words, *Beowulf*. A good illustration of this is Rolf Bremmer’s definition of heroic poetry as

compris[ing] poems that deal with warriors endowed with often super-human courage whose actions are motivated from a special set of values, the “heroic ethos.” Successful in their early career, such warriors are eventually confronted with impossible choices or set such choices for themselves (such as choosing between conflicting loyalties or engaging in an unequal fight). They accept their decision knowingly and willingly, which leads either to victory and honour or to defeat and death, yet with the satisfaction of posthumous fame. (76)

This definition reads as a generalisation of the *Beowulfian* plot rather than of Old English heroic poetry as a whole. Indeed, if we consider the core texts that usually make up the corpus of Old English heroic poetry in scholarly discussions (*Beowulf*, the *Finnsburh* fragment, *Waldere*, *Widsith*, *Deor*, *The Battle of Maldon*, and *The Battle of Brunanburh*), one notices that while some of these poems comprise some aspects of the definition, none but *Beowulf* includes them all.

One might even claim that most definitions of Old English heroic poetry reflect this *Beowulfian* bias and look to have been worked backward from this poem. When comparing a sample of eleven introductions to, or discussions of heroic poetry,⁸ only *Beowulf* and *Waldere* are mentioned by all critics as securely heroic. Indeed, certain aspects of different critics’ definitions, such as the notion that Old English heroic poetry is situated in a pre-Christian context (Bremmer 78; Cherniss 26–28), or that it offers a backward look at the so-called “heroic age” (Niles 136), exclude all but *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnsburh* from the heroic corpus: *Brunanburh*, *Maldon*, and *Waldere* for instance feature Christian heroes, while the *Widsith* narrator evokes God and providence, and the Boethian influence on

⁸ Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction*; Niles; Shippey 26; Bremmer; Greenfield and Calder 85–100; Renoir 99; Anderson 58 and 59–104; Caie 79–104; Orchard, “Is Violence what Old English Literature is about?” 63–94; North, “Is there more like *Beowulf*?” 95–129; Hill, “Old English” 1; Alexander 42; Fulk and Cain 193–224; Pearsall 5–6.

Deor is clear. *Brunanburh* and *Maldon* are further not situated during the heroic age. In truth, *Beowulf* constitutes the main, if not the only, part of the aforementioned eleven discussions of what heroic poetry is in Old English.

The fact that *Beowulf* should be the only work to fully correspond with the accepted definition of Old English heroic poetry is especially problematic when one considers how unusual it is compared to the rest of the Old English heroic corpus. Indeed, it is much longer than any of the other six poems, even if one makes generous projections for the fragmentary *Finnsburh* and *Waldere* (Magennis, “Germanic Legend” 81). This has led scholars to claim its being heavily indebted to classical models of epic poetry (e.g. Anderson 138–141). The fact that *Beowulf* displays superhuman powers, such as having the strength of thirty men (*Beowulf*, lines 379–380, Liuzza 76), further clashes with the very human protagonists of the other poems and may also be linked with the hero (ἥρως) of classical literature, traditionally a demi-god. We have therefore seen that scholars of Early Medieval England have inherited from their nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors the inclination to disregard women and Christians as heroes. Although they mention other poems than *Beowulf* as heroic, ultimately, they tend to dismiss those other texts and their heroes as lacking in comparison. A new, more inclusive definition of Old English heroic poetry therefore needs to be developed. In order to establish one, we should start by gathering together the different features which are most inclusive in previous definitions of Old English heroic poetry.

The first of these is a recognisably heroic diction. As Michael Alexander notes, “the vocabulary of Old English heroic poetry is sufficiently specialised for it to be recognised as a true poetic diction” (48). This shared formulaic, lexical, and epithetic diction regroups most of the poems I have mentioned as “core” heroic texts, but also includes others, notably saints’ lives. Comparing the beginning of *Beowulf* with that of some hagiographic poetry suffices to show that a medieval audience would have instantly grasped that they were dealing with the same genre:

*Hwæt, we Gar-dena in geardagum
peodcyniga, þrym gefrunon
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon!* (*Beowulf*, lines 1–3, Liuzza 54. My emphasis)⁹

⁹ “Listen! We have heard of the glory of the nation-kings of Spear-Danes in ancient days, how those noble men did deeds of courage.”

Hwæt, we gefrunan on fyrndagum
 twelfe under tunglum *tireadige hæleð*
 þeodnes þegnas (*Andreas*, lines 1–3, North and Bintley 118. My emphasis)¹⁰

Hwæt! Ic þysne sang siðgeomor fand
 on seocum sefan; samnode wide,
hu þa æðelingas ellen cyðdon,
 torhte ond *tireadige*. (*Fates of the Apostles*, lines 1–4, Treharne 102. My emphasis)¹¹

Hwæt, we hyrdon oft þæt se halga wer
in þa aerestan aeldu gelufade
 frecnessa fela (*Guthlac A*, lines 108a–110a, Roberts 86. My emphasis)¹²

Hwæt, we ðæt hyrdon hæleð eahtian,
 deman dæd-hwate, þætte *in dagum gelamp*
Maximianes (*Juliana*, lines 1–3, Bjork 78. My emphasis)¹³

The repetition, in the initial lines of these poems,¹⁴ of the poetic interjection “hwæt,” the evocation of the orality of the source material (“we hyrdon,” “we gefrunon”), the community-building “we,” creating a link between scop/narrator and the poem’s audience/readership, and finally the localisation of the action in time (“in geardagum,” “on fyrndagum,” etc.) establishes a commonality between these and other poems that would automatically have alerted an audience to what they were to expect: a heroic poem.

In addition to heroic formulaic diction, scholars agree that Old English heroic poetry propounds a specific ethos, one that is “associated with the age of the pre-Christian Germanic tribes of the late Roman and post-Roman world, as imagined in the later centuries” (Magennis, “Germanic Legend” 77).¹⁵ Often mentioned as key characteristics of this ethos are a militaristic focus, the values of the *comitatus*, such as loyalty to one’s lord

¹⁰ “Listen! We have heard of twelve glorious warriors under the stars in ancient days, thanes to the King.”

¹¹ “Listen! I found this song journey-weary, sick at heart; assembled it from far and wide, how those noble men revealed their courage, splendid and glorious.”

¹² “Listen! We have often heard that the holy man, in his earliest age, loved many dangerous things.”

¹³ “Listen! We have heard deed-ready warriors meditate and consider that, what occurred in the days of Maximian.”

¹⁴ Initial except for the quoted passage from *Guthlac A*, which instead prefaces the introduction of *Guthlac*, who is first mentioned on line 94b.

¹⁵ See also on this Bremner 76–78 and Fulk and Cain 193.

or gift giving, but also bravery, pride, and the desire to gain eternal glory and praise (“dom,” “lof”) for one’s deeds leading to the immortality (“ece”) of one’s reputation through song. This representation is not confined to our seven core heroic texts — *Beowulf*, *Fight at Finnsburh*, *Waldere*, *Deor*, *Widsith*, *Battle of Brunanburh*, *Battle of Maldon*. Indeed, Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe claims that “the ethos of heroic life pervades Old English literature, marking its conventions, imagery and values” (“Values and Ethics” 101). This Old English heroic ethos tends to be articulated through often-rehearsed topoi and themes, such as the recurrence of formal speeches and boasts, the Beasts of Battle typescene, or the theme of the Hero on the Beach.¹⁶ If we take this heroic ethos into consideration, the Old English heroic corpus would include our core texts, but also some religious texts based on Old or New Testament events, such as the *Dream of the Rood*, which presents Christ’s passion as a heroically victorious battle and his relationship with the Cross as *comitatus*-like; *Judith*, with its heroine’s beheading of Holofernes portrayed as an epic battle; or *Exodus*, couching as it does the Israelites’ flight in the desert in heroic terms, complete with Beasts of Battle and Hero-on-the-Beach scenes. The genre would also contain hagiographies, such as *Elene*, *Juliana*, *Andreas*, *Guthlac*, or *The Fates of the Apostles*. I am not claiming that these texts are not, as well, biblical rewritings, or saints’ lives: they are both these things *and* heroic poetry, just as *Deor* and *Beowulf* are heroic but also elegiac. As any other literary genre in the medieval period, the boundaries of the heroic genre in Old English are permeable.

In this way, our new working definition of heroic poetry would include all Old English verse presenting heroic ethos and formulaic diction, painting pagan or Christian stories with the brush of heroic values and ideals. A hero would be then a person foregrounded in such poetry, who embodies and upholds key heroic ideals and concepts. Not necessarily engaging in active fighting, the hero’s tribulations are represented in martial terms. By adopting this new and more inclusive definition, scholars will become aware of the tendency to consistently adopt *Beowulf*’s heroism, and, by extension, pagan, Germanic, male, and militaristic qualities, as the fallback characteristics that constitute heroism, and will stop pitting women heroes against *Beowulf*, and finding them wanting.

Traditionally, the tendency of women protagonists such as *Elene* or *Judith* not to engage in battle has been viewed as an aspect of their weaker femininity rather than as denoting their Christianity. In *Judith*, the

¹⁶ First identified as a theme by David Crowne.

eponymous hero goes into enemy territory with her handmaiden, whose role has been augmented in the Old English version to form with Judith a makeshift *comitatus*. Once there, Judith beholds Holofernes, gives the head to her handmaiden to put in a bag, returns to Bethulia under cover of night, shows the head to the Bethulians, whets their warring appetites with this prop as proof of the feasibility of their task, sends them to battle, and then accepts from them Holofernes's spoils of war, including helmet, sword, and byrnie, thereby becoming the effective leader of their *comitatus*. Judith's taking up the sword makes of her a more physically active hero than male Christian heroes like Andreas and Guthlac. Andreas is for instance never explicitly represented as wielding a weapon. Few scholars have noted that the death of the seven guards barring access to Matthew's prison is recounted in the passive voice: execution takes them; the door of the prison further opens at Andreas's prayer and touch, rather than from any physical feat on his part:

geseh he [...]
 fore hlindura, hyrdas standan
 seofone ætsomme. Ealle swylt fornam,
 druron domlease; deaðræs forfeng
 hæleð heorodreorige. Ða se halga gebæd
 bilwytne fæder. [...]
 Duru sona onarn
 þurh handrine haliges gastes.
 (*Andreas*, lines 992–1000, North and Bintley 171)¹⁷

Thus, if the heroic aspect of the scene is foregrounded (the Mermedonians are named “hæleð,” “heroes,” and their death is qualified as “without renown,” “domlease”) and Andreas is Christ's warrior (“Cristes cempa,” *Andreas*, line 991, North and Bintley 171), the military activity of Andreas is not considered by the poet as indispensable for his representation as a hero.

In the same way, Guthlac's actions may be presented in martial terms, but his fighting lies on the spiritual plane, limited to battling temptations with the metaphorical weapons and armor of his faith:

þær he mongum wearð
 bysen on Brytene, siþþan biorg gestah

¹⁷ He saw [...] guards before the grated doors, seven in one place. Execution took all, they fell without renown; sudden death snatched warriors blood-soaked. Then the saint prayed to the Gentle Father [...]. At once the door opened with a touch from the hand of the holy guest.

eadig oretta, *ondwiges* heard.
 Gyrede hine georne mid gæstlicum
 wæpnum [7 wædum] wong bletsade,
 him to ætstælle ærest arærde
 Cristes rode, þær se cempa oferwon
 frecnessa fela.

we þæs Guðlaces
 deorwyrðne dæl dryhtne cennað.
 He him sige sealde 7 snyttrucræft,
 mundbyrd meahta, þonne mengu cwom
 feonda færsctum fæhðe ræran; [...]
 him wæs fultum neah,
 engel hine elne trymede. (*Guthlac A*, lines 174–190, Roberts 88)¹⁸

However, the passivity of both Guthlac and Andreas and their reliance on divine or angelic help¹⁹ is never really foregrounded by scholars as an impediment to their heroic status. The same thing is, however, not true when it comes to Judith, whose actions are always open to criticism as arising from her perceived feminine weakness. Like the victory of Guthlac, Judith's success is ascribed to God: "hæfde ða gefohten foremærne blæd / Iudith æt guðe swa hyre god uðe, / swegles ealdor, þe hyre sigores onleah" (*Judith*, lines 122–124, Treharne 230).²⁰ This passage is repeatedly foregrounded in scholarship, in contrast to similar pericopes highlighting her male counterparts' passivity and reliance on God. Herbi-son can for instance claim, upon excerpting this quote, that Judith's "courage is not the product of her own physical strength, but comes from God," leading him to argue that this emphasises God's omnipotence, as he has the power to confer heroic qualities, and that even to a woman (6).

Since Judith tends to be compared by contemporary scholars to Beowulf rather than to Andreas or Guthlac, her actions are dismissed,

¹⁸ There he became an example to many in Britain, after that blessed warrior, stern in resistance, ascended the mountain. He prepared himself eagerly with spiritual weapons, blessed the field as a camp for himself, he first raised the cross of Christ on which that warrior overcame many terrors. [...] We ascribe the precious portion of Guthlac to the Lord. He gave him victory and wisdom, powerful protection, when the multitude of enemies raised hostility; [...] help was near him, the angel gave him the strength of courage.

¹⁹ Indeed, Andreas prays to open the door, Guthlac's victory and wisdom are God-given: "we þæs Guðlaces deorwyrðne dæl dryhtne cennað," (*Guthlac*, lines 182–183, Roberts 88), and the angel is at the ready to help bolster his courage when enduring temptation.

²⁰ Judith had then gained great success in the battle just as God, the lord of heaven, granted her, who gave her victory.

although she does act and take up the sword. For instance, the fact that Judith needs two attempts to cut off Holofernes's head is interpreted as a sign of her failure as a hero. For Christine Thijs, she "lacks the physical strength to be a warrior" (51). For Magennis, "a male hero like Beowulf would have succeeded at the first stroke, but then a male hero would not be pitted against a sleeping drunkard" ("Gender and Heroism" 18). This despite the fact Magennis himself acknowledges the uniqueness of Beowulf as a Germanic hero with superhuman strength (*The Cambridge Introduction* 77), and disregarding Beowulf's beheading of Grendel only once the monster is not only passed out, but actually dead. It would be anachronistic to think that the glory of an Old English Christian hero's actions being shared with God as the main *actor* of the heroic plot should strip the hero of her/his heroic quality: it simply extends the glory of the *miles Christi* to include its maker, as demonstrated in the heroic passivity of the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood*.²¹

Because scholars overlook Judith and other women heroes' Christianity, their heroism is always analysed according to their gender; it is thus no surprise that 'woman,' 'femininity,' or 'gender' appear in nigh all the titles of the articles dealing, to date, with Judith's heroism (Swanton; Chance; Dockray Miller; Guenther; Lochrie; Magennis; Mullally; Shaughnessy; Thijs, etc.). Judith is either seen as performing a specifically feminine brand of heroism (Chance; Woolf 171; Dockray Miller), or her heroism clashes with her femininity, alternately subverting heroism (Herbison; Magennis, "Gender and Heroism"), or rendering her man-like/androgynous (Olesiejko; Lochrie; Shaughnessy). Yet some scholars suggest, one way or another, that this obsession with heroism as being primarily gendered, and gendered masculine, might be a mistake. In her analysis of gift-giving in *Judith*, Erin Mullally states that "[b]y allowing a woman to participate fully in this symbolic and material exchange, the *Judith*-poet is suggesting that gender is less relevant to heroic status than the ability to give and receive treasure" (284). Similarly, Patricia Belanoff proposes that Judith's heroic actions not only impact our conception of the specifically female but also push "back the boundaries of what it means to be a Germanic warrior" in general ("Judith" 260).

Perhaps, then, gender is not so important when considering the heroism of figures who are all, be it to a lesser or a greater extent, influenced by the Christian ideal. Their Christianity is actually the most characterist-

²¹ This reflection can be paralleled with Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's notion that agency and obedience were conceived differently pre-Conquest, a concept she coins as "agent action" in *Stealing Obedience*.

ic aspect of their being and influences their heroic performance much more than their gender. The more a character's Christianity is important, the more it will influence their performance of heroism, a performance that increasingly becomes queer, that is to say a performance that so blurs together actions traditionally gendered feminine or masculine that the heroic subject's gender becomes unknowable, queer. Stacy Klein has already suggested that, even in *Beowulf*, Christian readers would have seen in the poem's women a model of heroism that would have been more in line with their religious values, encouraging them to turn violent heroic energies inward in order to battle against their inner vices ("Ruling Women" 91). This more Christian type of heroism represents, she argues, "the possibility of softening rigid boundaries of sexual difference, [...] allowing for a greater fluidity around gender roles and a more expansive definition of heroic masculinity" (93).

This same 'fluid' queering of heroic performance happens in *Judith*, only to a greater extent because the eponymous character's heroism is much more Christian in nature than that transpiring in *Beowulf* (as for instance evidenced in Hrothgar's "sermon"). Scholars have tended to ascribe either femininity or masculinity to different moments of Judith's existence (before and after she takes up the sword, for instance, e.g. Shaughnessy), or to different actions: (beheading Holofernes) is seen as a masculine performance (Magennis, "Gender and Heroism"), but then her speech to the Bethulians is conceived as her embodying the traditional whetting woman (e.g. Lionarons 55).²² Instead, I argue that Judith's heroism is queering, blurring the boundaries that scholarship has traditionally erected. This blurring can be seen most clearly in Judith's epithetic qualification as "ides ellenrof," "courageous lady" (*Judith*, line 109, Treharne 230). "Ellenrof" is usually a term reserved for male warriors (Chance xviii; Shaughnessy 6), while "ides" strongly associates Judith with Germanic womanhood (Meaney). The overlap of these two terms, one strongly connoting heroic masculinity, the other femininity, renders the subject queer.

Similarly, Judith's speech upon returning to Bethulia is a careful mingling of the traditional male Germanic hero's boast ("Ic him ealdor oðrong" *Judith*, line 185, Treharne 234),²³ the war leader's encouraging

²² The entire poem is even considered as enacting the role of whetting woman in the political context of later medieval England. On this, see Klein, "Gender" 44–45. On the validity of using the topos of the whetting woman in Old English poetry, see Lionarons 54–55.

²³ "I deprived him of life."

heroic speech (“Fynd syndon eowere / gedemed to deaðe, ond ge dom agon, / tir æt tohtan” *Judith*, lines 195–197, Treharne 234),²⁴ the Germanic whetting woman (“Nu Ic gumena gehwæne / þyssa burgleoda biddan wylle, / randwiggendra, þæt ge recene eow / fisan to gefeohte” *Judith*, lines 186–189, Treharne 234),²⁵ and the wise, prophetic, and rhetorically adept woman (“þæt gecyðed wearð / geond woruld wide þæt eow ys wuldorblæd / torhtlic toward ond tir gifeðe” *Judith*, lines 155–157, Treharne 232).²⁶ The mixing of all of these positive heroic traits, some traditionally linked to masculinity, others to femininity, makes up the queer Christian hero that is Judith, who represents, through this queerness, the ontological change of the simple human to the signifier of God on earth: “eow getacnod hafað / mihtig Drihten þurh mine hand” (*Judith*, lines 197–198, Treharne 234).²⁷ While, in the Latin source text of the Vulgate, Judith’s action by killing Holofernes has made her a virago – she is deemed “viriliter,” “more masculine,” by the Bethulians (*Judith* 15:11) – the Old English removes any notion of “becoming male,” rather allowing Judith’s gender to become unknowable, queered, thanks to her heroism.

This is the same queer heroism that, to my mind, is used to suggest the ontological *otherness* of the angelic messenger in *Elene*. The angel is turned into “a certain warrior,” “hæleða nathwylc,” of the male sex, “on weres hade” (*Elene*, lines 72–73, Bjork 146), therefore being introduced as a seemingly stable masculine heroic figure. Yet his appealing shining quality – the angel is deemed “hiw-beorht,” bright of hue, and “wlitig,” radiant (*Elene*, lines 73, 77, Bjork 146)²⁸ – links him closely with the preternaturally all-knowing shining *ides* (Belanoff, “The Fall”), something that is reinforced by the angel being deemed a true peace-weaver, “fæle friðo-webba” (*Elene*, line 88, Bjork 148), the only time this term is employed in the masculine in the Old English corpus.

Andreas, in the eponymous poem, is also performing a heroism that could be deemed queer, one that is presented with all the trappings of the

²⁴ “Your foes are condemned to death, and you will gain glory, honour in battle.”

²⁵ “Now I desire to request of every one of the men among these citizens, each of the warriors, that you at once hasten to battle.”

²⁶ “It has been revealed throughout the world that splendid glorious success and honour is granted by fate to you.” On Germanic women as often represented as shining, wise, rhetorically adept, prescient, and of good advice, see notably Robinson and Belanoff, “The Fall.”

²⁷ “[M]ighty God has given you a sign through my hand.”

²⁸ On “wlitig,” usually translated as simply beautiful, most often when it is applied to a woman, and its original meaning “radiant,” see Paul Beekman Taylor 213–214 and Belanoff, “The Fall” 829–830.

warrior-hero, since he is hailed a warrior and a champion (e.g. “beorn,” “cempa,” *Andreas*, lines 982, 991, North and Bintley 170, 171), but one who fights the Mermedonians and the devils appearing in his cell with prayers and well-chosen words rather than with a sword, a characteristic that has often been associated with feminine performance (Belanoff, “The Fall” 823; Magennis, “Gender and Heroism” 5; Fee 406). The devil expresses the heroic, martial, power of Andreas’s words to cut him when haranguing the Mermedonians to action:

Nu ge gehyrað hæleða gewinnan,
se ðysson herige mæst hearma gefremede;
ðæt is Andreas, se me on flited
wordum wrætlicum for wear menigo! (*Andreas*, lines 1197–1200, North
and Bintley 182)²⁹

Here Andreas’s heroic battle against the devil is presented as a flyting: he cuts with words rather than a sword, in the style of women. This queer performance is, however, seen as most injurious (“mæst hearma”) to the army. Andreas’s Christian heroism is linked, like that of Judith, with prudence and mindfulness: he is “mindful, a man of mental patience, the warrior hard in battle” (“gemyndig modgeþyldig, / beorn beaduwe heard” *Andreas*, lines 981–982, North and Bintley 170). The emotional display Andreas produces when imprisoned, phrased in Old English as a “wopes hring,” a ring of weeping (*Andreas*, line 1278, North and Bintley 186), might further link him with the Germanic model of the “geomuru ides,” the mourning/lamenting woman (Hill, “‘Pæt wæs’”). Notwithstanding a potential association with the feminine, the “wopes hring” bursting out of Andreas’s breast appears elsewhere in the corpus of specifically Christian Old English heroic poetry, and is only once ascribed to a woman hero, Elene (*Elene*, line 1131, Bjork 222).³⁰ This further suggests that Christianity queers the heroic performance.

One of the current aims of feminist medievalists, as Klein phrases it, is “[t]o rewrite the categories through which the past is constituted, asking questions that invite attention to women’s lives, thereby demonstrating that what counts as established ‘knowledge’ is often shaped by research that takes men’s lives as an unquestioned standard and that overlooks or distorts women’s experiences” (“Introduction” 3–4). I hope to have

²⁹ “Now you can hear the warrior, who perpetrated the most injury to this army, fight; that is Andreas, who cuts me in a flyting with wondrous words in front of a multitude of men!”

³⁰ On this expression, see North, “‘wopes hring.’”

shown how re-categorising Old English heroic poetry can participate in this project. De-emphasising the gender binary and foregrounding the heroic qualities of Christian protagonists permits a fairer assessment of both Christian women and men's heroic performances.

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Digital Wizardry: The Afterlives of the Offstage

This essay considers how the offstage, which in early modern dramaturgy is often associated with shapeshifting, obscene, strange, and disturbing acts that threaten to pull the focus away from dominant plotlines and ideological structures, has been re-imagined in made-for-digital productions of early modern drama since 2020. It focuses on *Macbeth*, directed for Big Telly by Zoë Seaton in 2020, and *The Witch of Edmonton*, directed for Creation Theatre by Laura Wright in 2022. Both deploy the obscene dramaturgies of the offstage to draw attention to the real-life experiences of the women the plays associate with demonic forces, highlighting their domestic oppression and exposure to violence (in *Macbeth*) and their historical persecution for suspected witchcraft (in *The Witch of Edmonton*). Digital theatre thus creates an afterlife for the offstage that thrives on the tension between what is included in the fictional frame and the traumatic lived experiences that lie just beyond it.

Keywords: Digital theatre, Creation Theatre, Big Telly, *Macbeth*, *Witch of Edmonton*, virtual theatre

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid transition of live performance to digital platforms, two theatre companies in the UK – Creation Theatre (Oxford) and Big Telly (Northern Ireland) – prominently rose to the challenge of continuing to perform early modern drama on digital stages. The companies first attracted attention as digital innovators with their landmark co-production of *The Tempest* in April and May 2020 on the platform Zoom, directed by Big Telly’s Zoë Seaton and facilitated backstage by stage manager-turned-‘Zoom wizard’ Sinéad Owens.¹ Since then, both companies have continued using videoconferencing platforms to produce made-for-digital work that appeals to an international audience of early modern drama specialists. These audiences have become the twenty-first-century equivalent of an early modern coterie, with word-of-mouth (and

¹ “Zoom wizard” is how Owens was credited for *The Tempest* (Creation Theatre and Big Telly, 2020) and *Macbeth* (Big Telly, 2020).

word-of-Tweet or email) bringing together a viewer community with niche interests in early modern drama and experimental digital theatre.

This article is concerned with understanding the complex dynamics governing the relationship between the onstage and the offstage in early modern drama and with how Big Telly and Creation Theatre's digital wizardry re-imagined these dynamics for the digital stage. To set the (off)stage, I start with a discussion of how in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the offstage becomes a powerful site of magic which translates the familiar into the strange and is associated with shape-shifting, obscenity, and an alternative worldview grounded in a reality that is often painful to admit. This analysis then underpins my reading of the afterlives of the offstage in two made-for-digital productions of early modern witchcraft plays: Seaton's *Macbeth* (2020) for Big Telly and Laura Wright's production of John Ford, Thomas Dekker and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* for Creation Theatre (2022). In these productions, I suggest, the onstage/offstage dynamics of early modern dramaturgy bring into sharp and uncomfortable focus the lived experience of the women the plays associate with demonic forces and witchcraft, giving them the power to disrupt the fictional scenarios that occupy the stage. Digital wizardry, in this afterlife of the offstage, is deployed to shine a spotlight on elements of the plots these early modern plays that sensationalise witchcraft seek to occlude.

When Hermia, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, decides to head off into the woods with Lysander, what she intends to do is turn her eyes away from Athens "To seek new friends and stranger companies" (1.1.219). It is into these same woods with their promise of "stranger companies" that Peter Quince suggests that his acting troupe should head and rehearse "in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight" so as to keep their play a secret (1.2.83–84). Quince's star performer, Nick Bottom, immediately agrees that this is an excellent idea, because "there [they] may rehearse most obscenely and courageously," as the Quarto text of 1600, in the reading most commonly adopted by modern editions, puts it (1.2.89–90). The 1623 Folio text has a tiny but interesting variant: there, Bottom finds that moving out of sight will allow them to rehearse not *most*, but "*more* obscenely and courageously" (lines 457–458). *More* obscenely and courageously, that is, than if they stayed in the city of Athens.

Like Hermia, who contrasts the stranger companies of the woods with Athens, where the Duke imposes the strict, if familiar, discipline of Athenian law on her, Bottom thus sets up an opposition between rule-

bound Athens, where Shakespeare has laid his scene and the wood, which is its ob-scene flip-side. This is the only time, in his works, that Shakespeare couples the meanings of “Offensively or grossly indecent, lewd” (OED, 1) and “Offending against moral principles, repugnant; repulsive, foul, loathsome” (OED, 2) with what the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes as the word’s “folk provenance” from Latin *scaena*, making it, in art historian Lynda Nead’s terms, into “literally what is off, or to one side of the stage, beyond representation” (25).² The folk etymology Shakespeare draws on here is suggestive of an opposition between the discipline, ‘unity and constraint’ exercised onstage, where bodily excesses are regulated to produce a heightened, idealised representation of the world that falls into the category of ‘high art,’ and what falls outside its boundaries: nature and, more often than not, the female body, which is seen as organic, “unstructured,” leaky and excessive – what Mikhail Bakhtin would call “grotesque” (Nead 25; Bakhtin 26). Crucially, as Nead explains, in the realm of the obscene “there is no imaginative escape from the real, and the viewer becomes motivated and disturbed” (26), so that the obscenity can function as an incentive to action and political change.

Once Bottom has pointed us in the direction of the obscene wood ‘without’ Athens, Shakespeare exhilaratingly takes us there and brings into view what is normally hidden from sight. In the woods, the offstage disruptive creative processes of rehearsal, magic and dreams can take centre-stage and introduce us to an environment where fairies rule and strangeness is everywhere, but which is also, in some ways, more ‘real’ and ‘true’ than the ordered Athenian scene. When in Act Two the amateur actors gather in the wood for their rehearsal, Shakespeare is poking fun at them while also, through his portrayal of Peter Quince, whose handing out of the parts and obsession with cues reveals that he is especially conversant with early modern performance practice, exposing the actual processes that went into crafting a play for the early modern stage (Stern 31–34).

Tellingly, upon arrival in the wood, Quince proclaims that “here’s a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring house, and we will do it in action, as we will do it before the Duke” (3.1.2–5). “Plot,” here, while referring to

² See also Jonathan Walker’s discussion of this scene and the etymology of “obscene” (25–26) and his broader argument regarding the uses of the offstage in early modern dramaturgy. I discuss the dramaturgical uses of the obscene in a different context and in relation to the early modern stage’s “discovery space” in Aebischer (2020 18–20).

the patch of grass that is also the ground plan for Quince's imaginary playhouse and its stage (with the hawthorn brake as the offstage area), also gestures towards the meaning of "plot" as the outline of the play. The line sets up a connection between the spatial division between the onstage and the offstage and the conceptual design of an entertainment. As Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern have shown, a "plot" or "platt" was the physical object pinned to a wall backstage (72), which, in the technical language of the theatre trade, was there to be "translated" by a team of craftsmen and actors into the finished performance (Turner 129–130). Such a "plot" told the performers waiting offstage when to go onstage and what props they needed for their scenes. Plots, then, are the offstage flipside of the onstage performance: they map out the bits *between* the scenes and regulate offstage action in order to make onstage action possible. Quince's 'green plot' is just waiting to be 'translated,' and that translation is the work of both theatrical professionals and of magic.

In the strange offstage world of the wood, however, 'translation,' as we soon find out, is fraught with danger, as Puck disrupts the mechanics' 'obscene' rehearsal by magically "translating" Bottom's head into that of a donkey. The verb 'translate,' when Quince exclaims "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated" (3.1.105), or when Puck tells Oberon that he "left sweet Pyramus translated there" (3.2.32), carries the technical meaning of transformation of a backstage plot into a finished entertainment. For Quince, the translation partakes of the monstrous, strange, and supernatural: "Oh, monstrous! Oh strange! We are haunted! Pray, masters! Fly, masters! Help!" (3.1.93–94). There is a sense here that there is something profoundly ungodly about this translation that requires prayer to remedy. Theatrical magic has a quite sinister (if hilarious) edge here, as it can make supernatural, invisible forces take on a tangible, visible form and make Bottom's asinine character traits appallingly (delightfully) real.

'Translation' is also how Helena describes her desired transformation when she says she'd give the entire world to be "translated" into her love rival Hermia: "Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, / The rest I'd give to be to you translated" (1.1.191–192). In the end, it is not she who is transformed into Hermia, but Demetrius' love for Hermia which is magically "translated" into love for Helena. The play's happy ending hinges on the 'translation' continuing once the lovers have returned to the city, with the obscene having a direct impact on the scene of the play's happy resolution.

When the lovers tell Theseus and Hippolyta about the absurd way in which in the offstage space of the woods their formerly misaligned love

relationships have been translated into a tidy ‘Jack shall have Jill’ pattern (3.2.461), the ruling couple’s response is telling in its invocation of the concept of ‘strangeness.’ To Hippolyta’s “’Tis strange my Theseus, that these lovers speak of,” Theseus answers:

More strange than true. I never may believe
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more
 Than cool reason ever comprehends. (5.1.1–6)

Of course, the audience know that the strange events the lovers report are true: they, after all, have just watched them take place. Callan Davies’ research on ‘strangeness’ helps us understand Theseus and Hippolyta’s use of the word “strange” here, along with Quince’s earlier exclamation regarding the strangeness of Bottom’s translation and Hermia’s comment about the “stranger companies” she was setting out to seek in the obscene woods: Davies has shown that the term ‘strange’ in the period is “used to describe visual and verbal moments that are both attractive and repulsive, or that are both understandable and obscure, and so it serves as a euphemism for contentious and potentially transgressive subjects” (2). Strangeness, that is, is a word that is strangely apt to describe the borderline between the visible and the invisible, the translation zone between the obscene and the seen/scene, what can be fully comprehended and what can only be apprehended but is nevertheless very real.

The strange domain of the obscene, which in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is principally exploited for its comic potential, can become a much darker force in early modern tragedies, where, to borrow Andrew Sofer’s definition of the “dark matter” that is relegated offstage, it becomes the “tidal force of gravity that pulls at us unseen” (5). It is this pulling power of dark matter relegated to the offstage, to the transgressions that are kept just beyond sight, so that they may be apprehended rather than coolly comprehended, that I want to explore in Seaton and Wright’s digital productions of early modern witchcraft tragedies. To what extent does made-for-digital theatre enable the kinds of strange, obscene translations associated with the offstage world to come to the foreground and shed fresh light on the plays? How does digital wizardry make the familiar strange and the strange disturbingly, disruptively real? How do these afterlives of the offstage enable the lived experiences of historical women to reach through the centuries and their fictional framing to touch present-day viewers in what amounts to a call to remembrance and action?

Seaton's *Macbeth*, which was produced on Zoom in October 2020 to be part of the Belfast Theatre Festival and timed to virtually 'tour' to Oxford via the Creation Theatre box office for the final two weeks of the Halloween season, capitalised on the play's emphasis on the weird, wayward and strange, its investment in offstage horror (think of Duncan's offstage murder and Macbeth's beheading) and its easy juxtaposition of witchcraft and ordinary human motivations. A tragedy of state supported by supernatural forces was, in Seaton's production, combined with the hyperrealist details of a lived-in domestic interior to bring the familiar into immediate contact with the strange.

This production's investment in the offstage and backstage as spaces where witchcraft and theatrical magic thrive was obvious already in its framing device, which took the shape of a COVID-19 pandemic-style Public Health briefing by the Prime Minister flanked by two advisers, who warned viewers about the insidious spread of witchcraft and 'tested' individual audience members for signs of contagion. The briefing over, a brief pre-recorded sequence tracked the politicians' movement from the lecterns on their political stage to the backstage areas of Brighton's Theatre Royal. Once in the dressing room, the politicians turned into the witches of the play, with an on-screen costume change and make-up adjustment that segued into the next scene, where they appeared to Macbeth and Banquo against the backdrop of an eerie virtual tree-lined heath.



Figure 1. A witch (Angus Óg McAnally) in the wings of the Theatre Royal (Brighton), with Macbeth (Dennis Herdman) sitting in the stalls. *Macbeth*, dir. Zoë Seaton (Big Telly, 2020).

Later, when Macbeth returned to seek further guidance from the witches, he found them in the wings of the theatre, from where they were busy creating the genealogical apparitions of a line of kings. Quite overtly, the production thus advertised the backstage and offstage zones of a recognisable theatre building as spaces generative of magic and digital illusions rooted in a fundamentally theatrical environment.

These overt uses of theatrical offstage worlds were complemented by obscene effects generated whenever the production moved away from using green-screened virtual backdrops and anchored its offstage world in a recognisably 'real' yet strange environment, seemingly away from the trappings of digital theatre. This was a production that was remarkably self-assured in its sophisticated use of pre-recorded materials and virtual backgrounds and that could very easily have been entirely staged in such virtual environments. It is the more striking, therefore, that virtual backdrops conjured up through digital wizardry were consistently juxtaposed with 'real,' lived-in domestic spaces, creating a productive friction between the two types of space.

The use of 'real' environments as an offstage space, in turn, was noticeably character- and gender-specific: it was reserved for Lady Macduff and Lady Macbeth, played respectively by Lucia McAnespie and Nicky Harley.³ Both actresses were performing inside their own homes, surrounded by the everyday clutter of a lived-in private space to which the cameras had (seemingly) unfettered access. This was so despite Lady Macduff's blind- and door-closing bedtime routine and the closed door of Lady Macbeth's bedroom, which clearly demarcated those spaces as off-limits, private, untheatrical. Much of the power of the scene of Lady Macduff's murder, as a consequence, was derived precisely from the sense of threat within a private domestic space, as the hand-held camera adopting the point-of-view of the murderous intruder followed her through her house, deploying conventions associated with horror film that resonated deeply with the Halloween season's investment in jump scares, horror and supernatural forces.

The sequences located in Lady Macbeth's attic bedroom likewise stressed the ordinariness and domesticity of this character. The audience first encountered her lying on her bed, watching the government briefing on her laptop in a way that suggested that she, too, might simply be an audience member, in semi-lockdown (Liedke and Pietrzak-Franger 138). Soon, however, it became clear that her laptop was able to transmit into

³ My discussion of the obscene in Seaton's *Macbeth* here complements my argument regarding the grotesque obscene in *Viral Shakespeare* (74–88).

that safe and familiar-looking space the sinister forces of the witches, as the news bulletin included a report that, in an implied connection to the witches' prior vindictive discussion of the sailor's wife who had not shared her chestnuts, told of the blood being drained out of the master of a shipwrecked argosy near Aleppo. As Tom Cartelli comments, "This interpolated scripting of the fruition of their curse against the sailor and his wife anticipates the power that the variably playful and predatory witches will command against the Macbeths and their victims throughout" the production (78). If Lady Macbeth's bedroom was already 'offstage' in relation to the 'onstage' environments of the virtual backdrops against which Macbeth was most frequently seen, then the news report on the laptop brought into that offstage world a sinister storyline that was yet further removed from the official world of the virtual stage.

There was also a sinister element to the very fact that audiences were able not only to observe Lady Macbeth in her bedroom, but also able to do so from three different camera angles (ostensibly following the three-camera set-up and continuity editing familiar from television), so that she was subjected to intense scrutiny of which she was evidently unaware. Not least because of the apparent absence of anything suggesting the invisible hand of Ryan Dawson-Laight's set design, an environment that looked real and familiar – just another bedroom in lockdown – became strange as it was touched by sinister forces. The sense of unease crept up on the viewer when Lady Macbeth was joined in her bedroom by her husband. Suddenly, what previous space-mapping shots had led the audience to expect to be a corner with a sloping ceiling was now revealed to be an incongruous flat-ceilinged corner in which Macbeth could stand unimpeded, flanked by a standard lamp. Reviewing the production, Benjamin Broadribb described this scene as follows: "as Harley performed in her own bedroom opposite Herdman in front of a similarly oversized virtual backdrop of the same room, the setting fluctuated between inherent realism when focused on Lady Macbeth and disorienting artificiality that towered over Macbeth" (281). In terms of conventional filmmaking and editing, the camerawork here was wildly disorienting, frustrating the spatial coherence mainstream film grammar works so hard to create. Not only did Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's eyelines not meet, but viewers were suddenly propelled into an environment in which the hidden nooks of Lady Macbeth's bedroom revealed impossible vistas. The spatial incongruity was the more unsettling for being so firmly ensconced in a realistic world made uncannily strange through the digital witchcraft that could translate the familiar into incoherence and disorientation.



Figure 2. Lady Macbeth (Nicky Harley) in her attic bedroom, talking to Macbeth in the corner where the ceiling slopes down. *Macbeth*, dir. Zoë Seaton (Big Telly, 2020).



Figure 3. Macbeth (Dennis Herdman) talking to Lady Macbeth from the corner of her bedroom, which no longer has a sloped ceiling. *Macbeth*, dir. Zoë Seaton (Big Telly, 2020).

In fact, as Gemma Allred observes, a sense of spatial distortion affected all spaces associated with and controlled by men in this production. Allred points out how

Once Lady Macbeth leaves her room the stairs and doors are out of scale. Similarly, Macbeth's fortress is clearly painted cardboard and Dunsinane a glitching virtual background. There seems to be an inversion of traditional gender roles – female spaces are solid and real, male spaces flimsy and intangible. (Private correspondence, 23 March 2023)

Yet it was also in those private, solid, real female spaces that the women's bodies (rather than their environments) were always at risk of distortion and fragmentation. Subsequent to her murder, Lady Macduff was reduced first to her hand clutching the wound on her stomach and then to her face, whose dead open eyes seemed to stare into another world. Similarly, as Lady Macbeth's sanity began to slip, extreme close-up of her tearful eyes, the inside of her mouth and of her nostrils, turned her face into a grotesque version of a blazon that was both hyper-realistic and distorting and the more disturbing for being so firmly anchored in the "solid and real" space of her attic room.

Lady Macbeth's modest, private offstage/obscene bedroom stood in marked contrast to the luxurious virtual public stage/scene on which she could be found subsequent to Macbeth's coronation. Whereas the first half of the production was screened in black-and-white, giving the scenes in the attic bedroom the grainy look and reality-effects associated with CCTV footage, the moment the crown touched Macbeth's head, the production switched to garish technicolour effects as the royal couple were reunited against the virtual backdrops of their throne room, state bedroom and banquet hall. On these virtual stages, it was Lady Macbeth who was able to ward off the forces of witchcraft that had previously invaded her bedroom: oblivious to the presence of Banquo's ghost, she was able to function rationally throughout the banquet scene. It is only when she returned to the 'real' offstage environment of Nicky Harley's attic bedroom that those sinister forces broke in on her with a vengeance, as, through a simple digital chromakey trick involving wrapping a green cloth over her shoulders, she enveloped herself in the virtual environment of the gilded banquet hall, inhabiting the virtual onstage and the analogue offstage spaces all at once, with her mind fracturing as the divide between the real and the fictional, the familiar and the strange broke down for good.

When Lady Macbeth was finally released from the ever more claustrophobic seclusion of her offstage bedroom to wade off into the Irish Sea,



Figure 4. Lady Macbeth (Nicky Hurley) wrapped in the offstage environment of the banquet hall. *Macbeth*, dir. Zoë Seaton (Big Telly, 2020).

in a stunningly poetic pre-recorded sequence that was intercut with Macbeth’s live “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow” soliloquy delivered from Dunsinane’s battlements (1.13.50), it was the offstage natural environment into which Lady Macbeth immersed herself that offered a sense of unexpected release even as it took its audience into a scene which resolutely remains unseen in Shakespeare’s play. Finally, Lady Macbeth was able to move in an environment that was neither realistic nor virtual, unfettered from oppressive domesticity.

Seaton’s deployment of the real environments of her performers’ homes as the production’s offstage spaces thus achieved a quite radical realignment of the plot’s prioritisation of Macbeth’s fantastical, witchcraft-driven character arc, shifting attention onto the pressure-cooker environment of women trapped in locked-down domestic interiors. There, the very naturalistic clutter of everyday life exacerbated the sense of threat and the mind’s ability to twist and bend reality to breaking point. Reframed as a domestic tragedy, this *Macbeth* used the offstage as a means of spotlighting the very ordinariness of a woman confined to her home and only able to access the outside world vicariously and virtually via the news or her intermittently visiting husband, who only ever appeared to distort the corners of her room and mind, making the familiar strange and upsetting. This offstage version of the play relegated the tragedy of state to the realm of spectacular theatrical magic while reserving its most poignant moments for the ‘real’ everywoman experience

of its heroines, whose compelling fates in a space “beyond representation” (Nead 25) exerted the “tidal force of gravity” (Sofer 5) that pulls at us unseen.

A similar gravitational pull in which the offstage ‘reality’ of women’s lived experience had the power to re-orient a plot away from its dominant plotlines, and which similarly let the supernatural intrude on and rub against the ordinary, also characterised Wright’s production of *The Witch of Edmonton*, a domestic tragedy which has long been recognised for its ability to make “the quotidian and the supernatural share a common space” (Barker 163). Wright’s production self-consciously deployed the digital wizardry made possible by the next generation of digital stage to pull the focus repeatedly onto the real-life experiences of women executed for witchcraft. The offstage reality of these women’s persecution and deaths served to pull Wright’s implied digital audience into a recognition of the obscene underpinnings of the unified and orderly scene, to preclude any “imaginative escape from the real” and to motivate and disturb her implied viewers into not accepting Ford, Dekker and Rowley’s sensationalist use of the recently executed Elizabeth Sawyer’s confession as simple entertainment (Nead 26).

Unlike *Macbeth*, this production’s set design was entirely reliant on green-screened virtual backgrounds into which the cast were inserted using vMix software to share virtual spaces and into which ghostly presences could be digitally layered into an image, using the same video-mixing technique Seaton had deployed for Banquo’s haunting of Macbeth’s banquet. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, this technique was repeatedly used to disrupt the realist illusion created by virtual backdrops, making the familiar strange. When, having been murdered by Frank, Susan’s oversized ghost returned to haunt him in his hospital room, the translucence of her double ghost placed her both inside the room and outside it, in the off-stage world of Frank’s fevered guilty imagination (see figure 5).

Digital Wizardry, in this production, was in fact systematically deployed to bring the offstage onstage and dead characters into contact with the living, offering alternative viewpoints on the plotline that powerfully brought the force of gravity of the obscene to bear on the plot. Thus, for the sequence in which Old Ratcliffe (PK Taylor), in an ekphrasis to rival Gertrude’s account of Ophelia’s drowning, narrated the offstage suicide of his bewitched wife, digital layering was deployed to show both the ekphrasis and the suicide it described simultaneously. Significantly, while the viewpoint onto the ekphrasis was external – Ratcliffe was in a mid-shot to close-up, speaking to the camera – Agnes’ suicide by “beat[ing]



Figure 5. Frank (Guy Clark) haunted by Susan (Chloe Lemonius). *The Witch of Edmonton*, dir. Laura Wright (Creation Theatre, 2022).

out her own brains” (4.1.225–226), which remains firmly offstage in the scripted play, was here represented and portrayed through Agnes’ own eyes. Adopting her point of view, the camera erratically “ran” through a forest, *Blair Witch Project*-style, and gave the viewer access to the obscene moment of the character’s transition from life to death in the traumatic moment when she repeatedly hit her head against a tree, with the image from “her” camera feed going momentarily black. Shockingly, the sequence ended with Agnes’ post-mortem viewpoint of the forest floor she had fallen onto, taking the viewer yet further offstage into her afterlife and translating her husband’s narration into her own experience of dying (see figure 6).

Such estranging digital wizardry was also deployed for the play’s main staging challenge: the representation of the dog-devil which has bedevilled the performance history of the play (Munro 55–69; Barker), and who, as “the link between the two plots of the play and between its human, animal, and supernatural realms” is the play’s principal shape-shifting figure (Prince 181), poised on the boundary between the familiar and the strange. Here, the dog was performed by Ryan Duncan as a slightly sooty-faced human with fangs he occasionally revealed in a flash of a cheeky smile or snarl. Significantly, Duncan’s first appearance as the dog situated him precisely in the obscene offstage. The sequence started when, having been beaten by her neighbours for gathering sticks on their land, Elizabeth Sawyer wished for “the thing called Familiar” (2.1.36).



Figure 6. Old Ratcliffe (PK Taylor) finishing his ekphrasis about Anne’s death, with the forest floor seen from dead Anne’s viewpoint. *The Witch of Edmonton*, dir. Laura Wright (Creation Theatre, 2022).

The tonal shift from the familiar to the strange was literalised through a sound cue and the image changing from sepia to a red tint, as the devil-dog appeared to Elizabeth from the offscreen position of the camera. The panting of the offstage dog, which came to lick Elizabeth’s outstretched hand, shifted, in a jump-scare, to Duncan’s human voice for “Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own” (2.1.128), at which point the dog’s panting morphed into Elizabeth’s own gasps as she began to incorporate the still invisible devil. That incorporation was made complete when he asked for her gift of body and soul. This prompted his face’s digital superimposition onto Elizabeth’s face to suggest his grotesque penetration of her body and soul, the obscene intrusion of the offstage supernatural force onto the stage, and the translation of an offscreen dog into an onscreen human devil (see figure 7).

For fans of Creation Theatre’s work during the pandemic, the grotesque bleeding together of dog-devil and witch into a composite image pulled into the image the recent intertheatrical memory of the company’s *Duchess of Malfi*, which was co-directed by *The Witch of Edmonton*’s director Laura Wright with Natasha Rickman in 2021. Wright describes this moment as an ‘Easter egg’ which she expected Creation Theatre’s coterie early modernist audience to spot: it replayed the sequence in *Malfi* in which the Duchess’s two brothers warned her not to marry, which culminated in Ferdinand virtually penetrating into his sister’s headspace (see figure 8). For faithful Creation Theatre audiences, therefore, the morphing



Figure 7. Elizabeth Sawyer (Anna Tolputt) penetrated by the overlaid image of the dog-devil (Ryan Duncan). *The Witch of Edmonton*, dir. Laura Wright (Creation Theatre, 2022).



Figure 8. The Duchess of Malfi (Annabelle May Terry) penetrated by the overlaid image of Ferdinand (Dharmesh Patel). *The Duchess of Malfi*, dir. Natasha Rickman and Laura Wright (Creation Theatre, 2021).

of the dog-devil into Elizabeth invoked a related narrative of a female protagonist's persecution and visual penetration by a male figure. The intertheatrical citation opened up the apprehension of an unexpected parallel between these two plays portraying the oppression of women whose lives do not conform to social expectations. The effect was to expand the scope of *The Witch of Edmonton*'s critique of what turned out to be not an individual, but a systematic persecution of historical women, poor and rich alike.

That point was made yet more forcefully through the production's punctuation, at key moments, with inserted vignettes that ruptured the progression of the plot by introducing the digressive accounts of the alleged crimes and executions of women condemned as witches across early modern Europe. After an early text montage that framed the central name of Elizabeth Sawyer with those of seven additional historical 'witches' – Anne Gamperle, Ursley Kemp, Mary Barber, Joan Flower, Agnes Browne, Elizabeth Sowtherns and Joanne Harrison – each of these women appeared in a brief vignette consisting of her reading out an extract from the surviving historical record of her conviction and execution. Each vignette was quite deliberately placed at a turning-point in the plot which spoke, in some way, to the individual story of the 'witch' in question. The vignettes thus obscenely inserted themselves between the scenes in the manner of an offstage plot that organised how those scenes might be translated and understood by the audience. At the point when Elizabeth was publicly accused of witchcraft, all the women appeared together as a chorus to echo her cry "I defy thee," making the defiance reverberate across all their lives and shared experience of persecution (see figure 9). Elizabeth Sawyer's fictionalised life and persecution for witchcraft was thus powerfully framed by and embedded into the centre of a network of historical women who shared her fate and who acted as an obscene chorus of dead women who disrupted the production's scene with their direct address to the audience and insistence on their historical existence and lived experience of persecution and death.

The final vignette was Elizabeth Sawyer's. Meeting the gaze of the camera in a way that, in the production, was reserved for the forces of evil, Anna Tolputt read the passage from the source text for the play, the historical Elizabeth Sawyer's confessor Henry Goodcole's *The wonderful discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a witch* (a sensationalist pamphlet which was entered into the Stationer's Register just a few days after Sawyer's execution on 19 April 1621) in her own voice, that of a performer who had just spent ninety minutes re-performing Elizabeth's life for he twenty-



Figure 9. The historical ‘witches’ assembled on a single screen to lend their support for Elizabeth Sawyer’s defiance.

first-century audience. After her final line, “Written by HENRY GOOD-COLE Minister of the word of God, and her continual Visitor in the Gaol of Newgate. *Published by Authority*,” which she spoke with an admixture of wry resignation and sadness, she simply averted her eyes from the camera. The vignette placed her simultaneously in the scene of the play, the obscene of the historical Elizabeth who remained just out of reach while seeking to connect with us through her gaze into the camera, and the offstage reality of the present-day actor through whose performance all these layers were brought into contact.

These vignettes did not just root the play in an offstage reality, but did so in ways that kept that reality tantalisingly always just out of reach. Filmed to simulate mid-19th-century daguerreotype portraits in oval frames, whose sitters appear to speak from the past to the modern viewer in an uncannily ghostly way, the vignettes represented an unsettling approximation of images which Walter Benjamin pores over in his essay “A Short History of Photography.” Looking at these plates, Benjamin observes how in them, “[t]he human face was surrounded by a silence inside which the gaze was in repose. In short, all the possibilities of portraiture depended on an absence of contact between photography and actuality” (8). There is a detachedness about the human face in early daguerrotypes that gives them a ghoulish quality of near-life and/or near-death, of abstraction from the environment and concentration on the face, held still

for the long exposure period necessitated by daguerreotype technology. As Benjamin explains:

The procedure itself taught the models to live inside rather than outside the moment. During the long duration of these shots they grew as it were into the picture and in this way presented an extreme opposite to the figures on a snapshot. ... Everything in the early pictures was designed to last.... (17)

This last comment about being “designed to last” might explain the popularity, in nineteenth-century English and North American culture, of the sub-genre of the daguerreotype dedicated to post-mortem images. The vignettes of women executed for witchcraft in this production evoke such grotesque post-mortem images, whose subjects were sometimes arranged in a seated position, with eyes open, to simulate life, and who accusingly look at the viewer from the obscene point of view of the dead (Linkman 29; see also Harris 31). Whereas much nineteenth-century post-mortem photography aimed to convey the comforting impression that the deceased had died a “Good Death” (Harris 28), the rarer images of open-eyed corpses meeting the gaze of the viewer are hard to reconcile with such a narrative and seem to speak rather of a ‘bad death,’ which no amount of soft lighting can mellow. The production’s softly-lit, sepia-toned vignettes of women in washed-out circular frames cited these ‘bad death’ images as a bridge to the reality of the lives of these historical women who always remain just beyond our reach, in the ultimate offstage space of death which can only be apprehended and never fully comprehended, even as their stories are evidently designed to last.

That same dynamic of *almost but not quite* reaching the reality of their experience, of apprehension without comprehension, was also created by the fact that the women, while bearing witness to their persecution and death, did not read their own depositions but were instead confined to reading the legal documents and popular press accounts written about them by (male) clerks, confessors and pamphleteers. The voices of the women themselves remained always out of reach, impossible to bring back to life with any certitude. Together, these intrusions of the obscene offstage in Wright’s production of *The Witch of Edmonton* drew the audience towards recalibrating the play’s fictional and historical plotlines in a way that pulled the rug from under the fictional plot of Frank’s bigamy and murder and the silliness of the dog-devil’s shape-shifting, which was exposed as a mere distraction as the vignettes focused attention ever more firmly on the obscene real-life persecution of Elizabeth Sawyer as repres-

entative of a much broader history of oppression, from which there was no imaginary escape.

Both Seaton's *Macbeth* and Wright's *The Witch of Edmonton*, therefore, revealed an investment in using the digital medium to create an afterlife for the early modern offstage that thrived on the tension between what they included in the frame of their productions and the reality that lay beyond it and onto which they afforded glimpses in between the virtual environments where the productions laid their scene. Making the familiar strange, these made-for-digital productions of early modern witchcraft plays capitalised on the obscene power of offstage plots to derail or at least critique the unity and constraint of the official onstage worlds, inserting into them elements of the unsettling realities of domestic oppression and lived experiences of death and persecution that are side-lined by the plays' sensationalist witchcraft plots. By reserving the more obvious digital wizardry of virtual backgrounds and characters being virtually inserted into each other's spaces for the 'scene' of the plays and placing the reality of domestic clutter and of the testimonies of the executed women in the offstage, these productions powerfully translated the tidal force of gravity of the early modern offstage for the digital medium, motivating and disturbing their viewers to prevent them from forgetting the lived experiences that underpin the tragic plots of early modern drama.

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