The Arc of Character:

Medieval Stock Types in Shakespeare's English History Plays

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on practices of stock characterisation as they are represented in literature and drama of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries in England, with particular emphasis on the transformations of social types from medieval literature to early modern drama, specifically Shakespeare's English history plays. Its wider focus is on the social context in which medieval authors created their characters, and on the conventional construction of medieval characters from what Elizabeth Fowler defines as "social persons."

I argue that stock characters allow for permeability between past history and present performance. Attendant on their deployment in literature and drama is their recollection of past literary and cultural traditions. This is why Shakespeare employs them to such great effect in his English history plays: stock characters have an overt purchase on the past that makes history more socially immediate to early modern audiences. Shakespeare's stock characters recall medieval privileging of family and community, and thus are particularly suitable to the English histories' narratives of a country subsumed by family tragedy.

The dissertation focuses on four social persons which Shakespeare uses to construct stock characters: the Garcio, the Alewife, the Corrupt Clergyman and the Romance Heroine. He employs these social persons in four characters: the Bastard Faulconbridge in *King John*, Mistress Quickly in the second "tetralogy," Cardinal Beaufort in the first "tetralogy" and Queen Isabel in *Richard II*. This

dissertation is intended to provoke reconsideration of the stock characters as “flat” stereotypes, and to elaborate upon their complex roles in literary and dramatic history.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la représentation des personnages types dans la littérature et le drame en Angleterre du quatorzième au seizième siècle en mettant particulièrement l'accent sur les transformations des types sociaux entre la littérature médiévale et le drame de la Renaissance, surtout dans les pièces historiques britanniques de Shakespeare. Au plus large, la thèse porte sur le contexte social dans lequel les auteurs médiévaux ont façonné leurs personnages et sur la fabrication conventionnelle des personnages médiévaux à partir des « personnes sociales » telles que définies par Elizabeth Fowler.

Les personnages types, je soutiens, créent un espace de perméabilité entre l'histoire du passé et la performance au moment présent. L'emploi de ces personnages dans la littérature et dans le drame est associé à leurs souvenirs des traditions littéraires et culturelles du passé. C'est pourquoi Shakespeare s'en sert si bien dans ses pièces historiques : les personnages types ont une prise sur le passé qui rend l'histoire plus immédiate sur le plan social pour les spectateurs de la Renaissance. Les personnages types de Shakespeare rapellent l'emphase sur la famille et la communauté pendant l'époque médiévale, ce qui les rend particulièrement appropriés aux récits des pièces historiques d'un pays subsumé par la tragédie familiale.

Cette thèse porte sur quatre personnes sociales à partir desquelles Shakespeare fabrique des personnages types, soit le « garcio », la femme du

tavernier, le curé corrompu, et l'héroïne des histoires romanesques. Il a recours à ces personnes sociales dans quatre personnages, soit le bâtard Faulconbridge dans *La vie et la mort du roi Jean*, Madame Quickly dans la deuxième tétralogie, Cardinal Beaufort dans la première tétralogie, et la Reine Isabel dans *Richard II*. Le but de cette thèse est de provoquer une reconsidération des personnages types comme des stéréotypes « plats » et d'élaborer sur leurs rôles complexes dans l'histoire littéraire et dramatique.

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Contents

Introduction

I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
Upon a parchment, and against this fire
Do I shrink up.
– *King John* 5.7.32-34

King John describes himself as a collection of characters written on a parchment, shrivelling up from the fire, or fever, that consumes him. "Character" in the early modern period almost exclusively referred to the character inscribed on a page, a distinctive mark impressed, engraved, or otherwise formed (*OED* def. 1.a.). The mention of "a parchment" here may be meant to recall a famous scene not portrayed in Shakespeare's play: John's signing of the Magna Carta at the forcible behest of his barons. John, like history itself, is a mutable form, a character impressed upon his audience by an industrious playwright. What is shown and what is suppressed in the play informs the audience's perception of historical fact. John is not a stock character because he is not defined primarily by one or two social roles, but his personal reflection in the above lines illustrates the contingency inherent in both characterological and historical (re)construction. Stock characters in Shakespeare's histories often draw attention to the artificial nature of historical reconstruction, particularly in play endings, where poetic closure is imposed upon continuous historical narrative. That stock characters lack psychological "depth" is a frequent critical assumption; my dissertation aims to prove that their inscription of changing

social and historical attitudes across the face of Shakespeare's plays is an equally valid type of characterological complexity.

In his recent article on *Timon of Athens*, Anthony Dawson proposes to re-evaluate the concept of Shakespearean character, challenging the assumption that Shakespeare's characters are psychologically "realistic," that they appear to be "real people" rather than literary constructs. Dawson contends that Timon is a "partial" character, one that does not conform to conventional expectations about the "large and personal" nature of Shakespearean character (197). Rather, Timon is intensely signified by one quality: his envy. Dawson's argument reflects a basic presupposition essential to my own work: characters that seem "flat" in Shakespeare are rarely so; hence our thinking about what constitutes character "complexity" needs to be reassessed. Timon is interesting, Dawson argues, because "of the way he appeals to, and articulates, a fundamental human attribute [ie. envy], one that is typically only a part of a more complex mix that distinguishes Shakespeare's richer heroes" (199). Just so do stock characters have a long literary, historical, and cultural heritage that is imbued in seemingly "flat" figures in Shakespeare's plays. However, I do not propose to focus entirely on Shakespeare's "bit players" – M.M. Mahood's 1992 monograph deals extensively with that subject – but rather on characters that have a long medieval heritage of stock characterisation behind them. I argue that this heritage offers stock characters a different kind of complexity from the psychological depth which some critics instil in Shakespeare's characters.

Samuel Johnson's perspective on Shakespearean characters rests on the concept of the "general" embodied in the "particular." Readers of Shakespeare's plays perceive the general characteristics of human nature in individual figures:

> His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated….In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of *Shakespeare* it is commonly a species. (Johnson 4; his italics)

Johnson suggests the appeal of universality, of "common humanity," to Shakespeare's characters, thus inaugurating the debate about why the playwright's characters are so enduring and so seemingly like real people. Most importantly, Johnson argues that characters exist beyond the affairs of society, the "customs of particular places" and the "accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions." To Johnson a Shakespearean character's audience appeal exists in the individual's multiplicity of common human concerns; many people can appreciate them in various eras and locations: "The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of *Shakespeare*" (Johnson 13; his italics). To the critic Shakespeare's characters maintain strong trans-historical elements.

By the twentieth century, critics were still grappling with the concepts of character and individuality in Shakespeare's plays. A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearian Tragedy* (1904) examines character as the well-spring of dramatic action. In his

realist approach to Shakespeare's drama he interprets characters as individuals, suggesting that the playwright subordinates plot and poetry to character. In 1933 L.C. Knights complained in his famous article "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" that the Bradleian approach to Shakespearean drama treated characters too much like real people, rather than as verbal constructions. This debate, in a nutshell, describes the two extremes from which later twentieth-century character criticism developed.

Possibly the most sustained twentieth-century study of character which addresses conventional characterisation is Leeds Barroll's *Artificial Persons* (1974). Barroll's is a generic study that posits structures, patterns and models for Shakespeare's characters. He does not argue for a comprehensive, straightforward categorisation of all Shakespearean characters, but suggests a philosophy, or what one reviewer calls an "ontology" of character through which characters "all acquire shape and hence identity by means of the attitudes assumed toward transcendental goals" (Trousdale 338). However, Barroll's work applies to all forms of Shakespearean character, despite his use of a flexible categorisation rubric, and does not specifically posit a theory of stock characterisation.

Moreover, literary critics have not been able to provide a clear, workable definition of the early modern stock character. G.M. Pinciss, in his 1988 monograph *Literary Creations: Conventional Characters in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, describes stock characters as dramatic types that come "prepackaged, complete with set personalities and motivations" (1). This seems like a clear enough definition of the trope, yet Pinciss does not provide further analysis, instead giving a brief history of the genesis of conventional characterisation from

1590s satire. He promisingly argues that as "social values change during the period under study, as the prevailing norms in ethics and morals, in religion, and in behaviour became modified, so the presentation of what were traditional figures was affected as well" (8). However, without a more thorough account of the "literary creation," the reader is encouraged to accept prior assumptions about the nature of stock characters – that they are simple though useful tools in gauging social change. Pinciss's description of the conventional character is sufficient for the purpose of his analysis, but for anyone wanting a thorough consideration of the *theory* of stock characterisation, his introduction to the subject is a bit lacking.

One of the obstacles to developing a theory of stock characterisation is the tautological problem inherent in the very term "stock character." The *OED* defines character – as a term applicable to *literary* character – in two main ways: as a "person regarded in the abstract as the possessor of specified qualities; a personage, a personality" (def. 16a.) and as "a personality invested with distinctive attributes and qualities, by a novelist or dramatist; also, the personality or 'part' assumed by an actor on the stage" (def. 17a.). While the first definition emphasises a person in the *abstract* with specified qualities, the second emphasises the *distinct* personality as created by a novelist or dramatist. This tension exists in any definition of "character." We tend to think of character in the latter sense – qualities of people that mark them in a certain way. Even in the first definition above, despite the identification of the person in "the abstract," a "personage" or "personality" is defined by his or her noteworthiness and individuality (See *OED*, *personage*, definitions 1a. and 1b.) Many definitions of "character" in literary theory suggest this tension between general and specific (as we have seen in Johnson's discussion

of character). In her summary of Shakespearean character criticism, Christy Desmet argues that character "indicates a sharply drawn fictional figure, based on social, psychological, or moral stereotypes" (351). Desmet's definition acknowledges the dual sense of literary character as "sharply drawn" and "based on…stereotypes."

I have found that Elizabeth Fowler's theory of "social personhood" acknowledges and reconciles the oxymoronic components of the definition above. My analysis of stock characterisation draws upon her theorisation. While she focuses on literary, rather than dramatic, character, her argument seems well-suited to theatrical application. Her book begins with a description of a St. Thomas à Becket pilgrim badge. Fowler argues that the multivalent image creates "cultural resonances" of St. Thomas as devout worshipper, religious martyr, and murder victim in the *topoi* of "liturgical worship…public execution, and…clandestine murder" (1). The author provides a theoretical account of "the relation between the literary character and the human being"; hence, she founds her definition of "social persons" on their roles within their social contexts (5).

Fowler also asserts that social persons "in an important sense are not 'there'" but are ghostly apparitions consensually constructed in the minds of the readers, a set of expectations built by their experiences (2-3). Yet, as in Pinciss's definition of stock character, Fowler suggests that social persons provide a "shorthand notation" and exist as points of reference in the reading experience: "like chisels, scaffolding, and plans that have left their marks on a monument but since disappeared, social persons must be inferred from their artifactual traces if characterization is to be understood" (17). Social persons are reference points rather than figures composed of a list of traits; hence they are negotiable. By judging the degree of influence of

the social person over the literary figure, we determine that figure's character. The greater the number of reference points, Fowler argues, the more a character "takes on complexity and weight" (9).

One may ask, what is the difference between Fowler's concept of "social person" and my definition of "stock character"? Fowler makes a considered distinction between her own conceptualisation of "social person" and "character": social persons "participate in carefully structured ways in the process of characterization, but they are not properly referred to as among [a literary character's] identities" (8-9). In my formulation, the process of stock characterisation involves social persons, but "stock character" is not synonymous with "social person." On the spectrum between general and specific characterisation – the former representing characters broadly defined with few distinguishing traits (ie. an unnamed plebeian in *Coriolanus*), and the latter representing characters with many specific idiosyncratic features (Hamlet, Othello) – a stock character is in the middle range. The stock character is primarily identified by his or her social and theatrical or literary roles, especially by his or her function within the plot. All characters are composed of social persons, but their complexity relies on the amount of layering involved. A stock character is constituted of more than one or two social persons, but is usually typified by only one or two dominant social roles. A more psychologically complex character will be composed of many, many social persons, but the various strands of those persons are not easily unravelled and none is especially dominant. I argue that stock characters are intermediary figures between the ephemeral "not 'there'" social persons and the multiple-layered, many-role-

playing major characters which cannot necessarily be tied to only one or two social and dramatic functions.

Fowler includes a wide range of figures in her category of social person:

> "legal persons" such as the corporation, the crown, and the privy council make up an important subset of social persons….corporate entities such as guild and university; economic persons such as the alewife, merchant, and buyer, but also labor and market; kinship designations such as mother, family, and heir; races and ethnicities such as Moor, Scythian, and Briton; and literary persons such as senex amans, author, and allegorical personification (17).[1]

As this quotation suggests, to examine all of these categories that encompass the wide range of stock characters – from the literary to the socio-historical – and to do each category justice would be far too difficult even for a book-length study. Therefore, my focus is on the process of stock characterisation as it is represented in the medieval literature and drama of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England, with an emphasis on social types and the representation of their transformation from medieval literature to early modern drama. My wider focus is on the social context in which the medieval authors created their characters, and on the conventional construction of medieval characters from social persons. I excavate

[1] Fowler mentions earlier that 'bastard' is a "legal person"; in my study we have the "economic person" of the alewife Mistress Quickly, the "legal person" of Queen Isabel (under the "particular set of institutional arrangements" signified by the Crown [Fowler 24]), and we might easily include the Cardinal Winchester as a "religious person," although Fowler does not identify this subset specifically. Note also that she incorporates the senex amans classical stock type into her list under "literary persons": this inclusion suggests an equal consideration of literary and socio-historical types. Queen Isabel is also a "literary person" as a romance heroine type.

the "artifactual traces" from medieval stock characters in order to define the social persons of Garcio, alewife, Corrupt Clergyman and romance heroine. I then analyse how the medieval social person has been deployed in Shakespeare's English history plays.

Thus my dissertation accomplishes three things in its examination of stock types from Shakespeare's histories: it will propose a new way of thinking about stock characterisation; it will investigate the trajectory of the stock character in historical drama; and it will highlight social trends – contemporary social concerns – in Shakespeare's portrayal of stock characters without being reductive (ie. "here is a reflection of society in Shakespeare's plays"). The ultimate aim of this project is to discover the literary and theatrical lineage of four stock characters from various Shakespeare history plays. In the process we will see that the conventional social models these characters indicate can be both mutable and enduring.

While stock characterisation is used to different effect in medieval literature and early modern drama, it is my argument that Shakespeare consciously reflects upon the process of medieval stock characterisation in his history plays. As with almost everything he touches, he both borrows and transforms figures from the medieval tradition. Such stock characters have the effect of bringing the audience back to the reality of everyday living, to what is at stake in the near future, and eschew what François Laroque calls "the sphere of high-minded activities and discourse" (42). Robert Weimann concludes that the Elizabethan Fool, as descended from the early English folk play, owes much to his antecedent (*Popular Theatre*). The Fool, he argues, has a special relationship with the audience, an ability to mediate between the play's action and the occasion for its performance. Only on the

Elizabethan stage, however, did the Fool develop into a dramatic character. I argue that all medieval stock characters exhibit this metatheatrical ability to varying degrees.

In both medieval and early modern periods, spiritual redemption was a pressing social concern. However, this concern was reflected more thoroughly in the mystery cycles, the purpose of which was

> to provide a vivid depiction of well-known episodes of immense religious importance, among them crucial events at the *center of history*….[The actor's role] in the community would have been to help reinforce [the community's] cultural memory with regard to salvation history.
>
> (Davidson 66, my italics)

The medieval stock character, at least in drama, is essential in connecting the play-world with the current world of performance. Peter Womack describes the dual dramatic mode in which characters are created in the mystery plays:

> one [mode]…locks characters into time and into the immediate practicalities of their own play, and the other…presents them as medieval Christians, revering the saints and quoting the Latin liturgy, always already in contact with the timeless truth of the cycles as a whole. (103)

Stock characters are essential in unlocking the characters from their restrictive modes, and allow for permeability between past history and present performance. This is why Shakespeare deploys them so often in his history plays: stock characters have an overt purchase on the past – in their literary and cultural lineages – that makes history more immediate to early modern audiences.

For all their religious content and feeling, the mystery cycles heavily emphasise the significance of family and other close social relationships and, analogously, the Christian community at large. Often in the cycle plays the strength of family connections reflects the health of characters' spiritual connection to God. The York, Chester and Towneley mystery plays convey a belief that family is the root of stability in the Christian community. Time and again, the cycles show that the family is emblematic of all society. Souls suffer if the family is disrupted, for example by sinful excess in the York *Pilate* play or by governmental interference in the Towneley *Magnus Herodes*.

In the mystery plays, the family unit is a microcosm of all social activity. When Noah's children chastise their mother they appeal to the sanctity of the family unit. Jafett cries:

> Mother, wee praye you all together –
>
> for we are here, your owne childer –
>
> come into the shippe for feare of the wedder,
>
> for his love that [you] bought. (Chester *Noah's Flood*, 237-40)

The son asks his mother to consider her children, her family. In a moment of anachronism, he tells her to think of Christ's sacrifice. His words bring together the importance of family with the notion of Christ's love. He implies that the preservation of Christian society after the Flood rests on the family's unity. Even though Mrs. Noah, the matriarch of the family, is stubborn and unpleasant, future society cannot exist without her. The mystery cycles emphasise the necessary connection between parents and children, especially in their significance to medieval and biblical history.

The same is true in other works of medieval literature, especially in Malory's chivalric romance, *Le Morte Darthur*, where tensions between love and family loyalties constantly threaten to destroy the brotherhood. Underpinning medieval estates satire, homiletic literature and Langland's *Piers Plowman* (a work that defies generic classification) are assumptions about Christian social cohesion and the many vices and corrupt individuals that threaten this ideal. This is why stock characterisation from these genres is a fruitful area for study in relation to Shakespeare's history plays. These latter works are largely defined by their portrayal of England as a struggling family, where characters forward competing ideas about blood, obedience and good government, often threatening the very national integrity they seek to preserve.

Hence, stock characterisation in general is a process that focuses on social relationships, human bonds and the role of the individual in society at large. In the mystery plays, stock characterisation is embodied by the family dynamic – the family is the cornerstone of medieval Christian society. In other medieval genres, family loyalties and a sense of Christian community just as pertinently underlie the works' ostensibly didactic intents. Shakespeare's method of stock characterisation, while not identical to medieval stock characterisation, particularly in its more secular and less didactic focus, borrows heavily from the earlier tradition. Shakespeare gives the same kind of centrality to family bonds and other kinds of social relationships within a shared community. The history plays also evoke England as a protagonist in its own right, as a mother to all her people. John of Gaunt calls England "nurse" and "teeming womb" (*Richard II* 2.1.51). The Bastard chastises the French soldiers for being "bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb / Of

your dear mother, England" (*King John* 5.2.152-53). His powerful rhetoric of family cohesion evokes the terrible destruction of civil revolt while claiming France as England's rightful property.

I hope to challenge the assumption that stock characters lack complexity, or even a sense of interiority – though this complexity is created in different ways from the kind perceived in non-stock-characters. Like Pinciss, I focus on the social and cultural norms embodied by various stock characters; however, I would like to suggest that continuity, rather than change, is as valuable a concept in evaluating their theatrical and cultural impact. While there have been various studies of Shakespeare's use of classical influences in his manipulation of stock characters (Miola, Ornstein), few have attempted an analysis of his use of native stock characters – those taken from festive, occasional theatre, like the English mystery plays (Robert Weimann and Emrys Jones are of course notable exceptions), or from didactic literature, estates satire, Arthurian romance[2] and other genres. Those who have focused on native English characters tend to examine ostensibly comic figures such as the Vice (Weimann 1978 and 1999), the Shrew (Brown 2003), and the Fool (Wiles 1987), types which have their roots in such varying sources as morality plays, jesting literature and actors' comic routines. This focus makes sense: early modern English comedy owes a great deal to the Italian tradition of Commedia dell' Arte. The natural home for stock characters would seem to be comedy, where their function is to be witty, and where a kind of ironic understanding about the

[2] While Arthurian romance is not a genre "native" to England but one imported from the continent, my chapter on Isabel and romance heroines argues that Shakespeare's influence is largely the tradition as it developed in England, post-Malory.

limitations of schematic representations fuels theatrical humour. However, this ironic understanding need not be confined to comedy. In Shakespeare's historical drama, the limitations of character construction often parallel an emphasis on the limitations of historical reconstruction.

In Shakespeare's histories, stock characters are agents of scepticism, complicating any perceived nationalist, patriotic narrative of England's past. Through their thwarting of audience expectations – expectations built upon medieval social persons – the histories' stock characters draw attention to the inefficacy of narrative and poetic closure within the genre. They might even be said to destabilise generic assumptions about the history genre, suggesting that dramatic English history is not a simple chronicle of events but a narrativised account, the meaning of which is contingent and open-ended, depending on the perspectives of multiple characters, authors and viewers. Stock characters in the histories are instantly recognisable, but their identities are similarly contingent on others' interpretations.

As a way of setting "a form upon that indigest" of English history, Shakespeare frames these works as family tragedies (*King John* 5.7.26). Medieval social persons bring with them the cultural importance of community, particularly a unified Christian community. Shakespeare's conception of community in the histories is noticeably more secular; however, the paternalistic relationship between monarch and nation is inherently similar to that between God and Christian subjects. Blood ties can both help and hinder English national integrity: John has the support of his "soldier" mother, Queen Eleanor, but his nephew Arthur and followers challenge the king's claim to the throne (1.1.150). Weak King Henry VI is protected

by his uncle the Duke of Gloucester and his great-uncles the Duke of Exeter and Cardinal Winchester, but the family feud between Gloucester and the Cardinal threatens his court's integrity. Stock characters are frequently defined by their roles within the English family tragedy: the Bastard as the illegitimate and outspoken son, Mistress Quickly as the wife who remembers everything her husband has said or done, Winchester as the manipulative uncle and Queen Isabel as the would-be peace-making mother of the commonwealth. Each family relation has a role in the telling of history.

The histories' stock characters are emblematic of the social relations that exist within the country by virtue of the characters' being expressions of few social persons: they are defined largely by their social, and especially occupational, roles. They are, in a sense, foundational because they are socially immediate, often drawing the audience member into the contemporary social concerns which the stock characters raise. Mistress Quickly appeals to anyone who has had to deal with the victualing industry or has frequented a tavern. The Bastard appeals to the lower class agrarian types by virtue of his homely and comic language. Cardinal Winchester is an unscrupulous clergyman, and Isabel a frustrated and marginalised wife, an empathetic type despite her regal status.

Stock characters, and the process by which Shakespeare deploys them, are thus integral to the conception of theatre and of nation as a communal experience. Benedict Anderson contends that nations are "imagined communities" because "the members even of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communities" (6). Stock characters especially manifest the imagined community by

virtue of their easy recognisability. The histories portray England at its moments of greatest turmoil and do not offer any simple solutions to the problems which plague court and country. The staging of political conflicts, Peter Womack argues, "operates like a ritual, in which the degradation of the institutional forms of the realm generates a manifestation of the comitatus, the prior, underlying body to which all – characters and spectators – can feel they belong" (136). Hence the sense of national and theatrical unity, in the evocation of which stock characters are essential, makes the audience complicit in the history plays' action, for both good and ill. As recognisable social figures, stock characters offer an entrance point into communities represented onstage in the histories. They are more immediately identifiable than other types of "complex" figures. This recognisability may explain the histories' popularity at the end of the 1590s – the plays not only staged the regal splendour typically inaccessible to the average Londoner, but also created a sense of immediacy through their stock characters.

My examination focuses on the effects of stock characterisation, as well as the cultural and historical heritage of several individual types. Shakespeare uses enduring social types in recurrent kinds of scenes – a woman chastising her lover, for example, or a man telling a story – which I will examine as their own units of meaning. Not only are stock characters important recurring types; so too are their dramatic contexts. My dissertation focuses on the development of certain stock

types – the Garcio, the alewife, the Corrupt Clergyman and the romance heroine – within their various dramatic contexts as presented in the plays.[3]

The first chapter deals with *King John's* Bastard Faulconbridge as a character based on the Garcio figure from the mystery cycles. While Weimann and other critics have examined the Bastard's roles in relation to those of the medieval and Tudor Vice, I posit that the Garcio figure is actually a better candidate for consideration as the Bastard's antecedent. The Garcio appears in the Cain plays and the Shepherd plays in the Towneley, York and Chester mystery cycles. He puts his rustic and scatological language to irreverent use: he mocks Cain and his Shepherd masters in order to highlight a socio-economic disparity. As a young agrarian servant, the Garcio is at the bottom of the medieval social hierarchy. He complains of being hungry and of not receiving his wages. He resents serving masters who are clearly his intellectual inferiors. Thus, the Garcio is often a figure of social critique in his plays; his liminal positioning between play- and audience-worlds and between biblical and contemporary medieval time permit him to be a metatheatrical commentator on the plays' action.

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[3] To argue that Shakespeare evokes medieval stock types and their religious contexts is not to argue that exactly the same religious values obtain in his plays. Emrys Jones expresses the same concern in *The Origins of Shakespeare*: he emphasises the effect of the mysteries' *scenic* structure on Shakespeare's plays, but not their *thematic* parallels. Helen Cooper argues a similar point. She contends, for example, that Othello's arrest at the beginning of the play casts Othello as a Christ figure and Iago as a Judas figure. Othello's "echo of Christ's 'Put up thy sword', does not turn Othello into Christ; it does, however, reconfigure the balance of good and evil in the play, and imply a very different reading of the characters from the one Iago has been at pains to put over in the opening scene" ("Mystery plays" 36). Cooper's emphasis is upon the effect of medieval characterisation – the effect of the biblical utterance in the context of the scene – rather than on the utterance inviting a synecdochic relationship between Bible/mystery play and Shakespearean character.

King John's Bastard Faulconbridge is similarly marked by his comparative rusticity in relation to the other noble characters in the play. His language is irreverent and put to satirical purposes, especially in highlighting the hypocrisy of John's barons. He thus has a similarly liminal position within the play: as one who often speaks to the audience in monologues and asides and as the main proponent of John's right to the throne. Like the Garcio, the Bastard displays a potentially dangerous individualism – particularly when he promises to worship "commodity" – but he also a figure for social change. The Bastard, like the Garcios Pikeharnes and Trowle, is given a benediction at the end of his play in which he prays for England's political integrity. The audience address has the purpose of uniting the spectators – as it does in the earlier plays – as loyal English people, as Womack's *comitatus*. However, in the cycles as in Shakespeare's play, the appeal to the communal social ideal is often undercut by the Garcio or Bastard's liminal status. Each character draws attention to his play's performative conditions: thus any act of closure is solely poetic, leaving unresolved the possibility for actual closure, the realisation of actual unification, either within a medieval Christian community or within a patriotic English community.

Mistress Quickly, from *1* and *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*, is a form of the medieval alewife, and the subject of the second chapter. Hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap, she is accused of crimes typically levelled against alewives in the medieval and early modern periods: she tampers with the tavern's liquor and seems to provide a haven for illegal activity, such as prostitution. However, Quickly's actual complicity in these activities is never fully described. Many characters make assumptions about Quickly's identity and behaviour, but Quickly

herself does not necessarily adhere to all of these preconceived notions. These assumptions largely stem from her occupation as a tavern hostess, an early modern iteration of the medieval alewife. Shakespeare encourages characters and spectators alike to view Quickly as a conventionally dishonest alewife: she sells meat illegally at Lent; she is friends with a known prostitute, Doll Tearsheet; and, according to Falstaff, she puts lime in the tavern's sack supply (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.119). Yet the charges levelled against her are never proven, or if they are, they are contextualised within a larger frame. Quickly sells meat at Lent because "all victuallers do so" and it is a lesser crime than other (treasonous) activities occurring at court (*2 Henry IV* 2.4.342). The Hostess's role in procuring prostitutes is definitively shown, but the audience does not know if Falstaff's bad mood – after Hal and Poins's trick at Gad's Hill – motivates his accusation against Quickly.

Quickly is thus a "known unknown" in the histories. Shakespeare's evocative, but indeterminate, construction of Quickly's character parallels the challenging and interpretive task of reconstructing history. She is woman who is often the memorial centre of the plays by virtue of her reckoning and recollection, but she is also notoriously difficult to interpret. Other characters attempt to "reckon" Quickly and often give an incomplete or biased picture. My chapter begins with an examination of medieval alewives from Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the Chester *Harrowing of Hell* in order to determine the alewife's social personhood and her literary impact. I then analyse alewives from two Tudor farces, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Tom Tyler and his Wife*. These farces illustrate a movement away from authorial interest in the alewife's social connotations to her character's idiosyncrasies. I then examine Mistress Quickly as a reaction to the Tudor

stereotype. Shakespeare re-situates the alewife within a socio-historical frame, thereby permitting the audience to question earlier assumptions about her type. Critics likewise are not immune to the dangers of assumption-making when it comes to Quickly. Ultimately, my chapter attempts to refocus the critical discussion on Mistress Quickly in order to take into account her productive resistance to interpretation.

My third chapter examines Henry Beaufort, Bishop (and later, Cardinal) of Winchester, as a Corrupt Clergyman stock character. The chapter excavates the Corrupt Clergyman social person from medieval sermon literature and estates satire, including Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the anonymous *Plowman's Tale*, *Mum and the Sothsegger*, Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* and Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale from the *Canterbury Tales*.[4] The first four works permit the establishment of the social person, while Chaucer's Pardoner, like Shakespeare's Winchester, simultaneously raises and complicates assumptions about corrupt holy men. The medieval Corrupt Clergyman is marked by his nepotism, simony, love of worldly pursuits, neglect of moral exemplarity and manipulation of the legal process. Each of these attributes establishes assumptions the audience brings to bear on Shakespeare's cardinal.

This chapter also examines the impact of the medieval social person on the Tudor chroniclers, authors whom Shakespeare consulted directly for his portrayal of

[4] While *Piers Plowman* is usually defined as a dream vision, it also contains elements of estates satire, especially in passus V, which is the focus of my analysis in this chapter. The *Plowman's Tale* is a "Lollard poem" according to James Dean (Introduction 51). Its satire is geared politically towards clerical reformation. *Mum and the Sothsegger* is an estates satire which targets the clergy and political stagecraft, which makes it suitable for analysis in relation to *1* and *2 Henry VI*. *Mirour de l'Omme* is more comprehensive in its satire and useful in that it offers a specific critique of bishops and cardinals.

Winchester. The chroniclers use the Corrupt Clergyman social person to provide motivation for his acts in English government, to make sense of his individual role within the wider narrative of English history. They supply causation for specific historical events involving Winchester. In the process, they frequently make him the scapegoat for a huge range of problems. Shakespeare's Winchester, like Mistress Quickly, raises audience expectations based on his recognisable type. From the beginning of the play Shakespeare encourages spectators to perceive the cardinal as the villain of the piece.

However, Shakespeare severely undercuts these expectations in *2 Henry VI*, mostly by having his death occur at the play's midpoint. Winchester cannot be the primary antagonist of the first "tetralogy" because he is gone relatively early in the narrative. Moreover, Winchester is one of the remaining representatives of the older generation, a generation allied with the famous victories of Henry V. With his death begins in earnest the Duke of York's treasonous machinations, supported by the new generation which includes his son, Richard of Gloucester. He is a "meddling" English clergyman, but his ancient dispute with Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, appears to keep more serious competing political interests at bay.

The fourth and final chapter focuses on Queen Isabel in *Richard II*. This chapter is slightly different from the others in that rather than analyse the queen as a social type, I examine her as a literary type as established in the romance tradition. The romance heroine's literary function does subsume various socio-historical functions, however: those of queenly peacemaker, progenitor of the family line and husband's or knight's helpmate. My analysis combines Isabel's political roles within the play – roles with immediate social application in Elizabethan England –

with roles valorised within Arthurian romance. Shakespeare's portrayal of chivalric romance ideals within *Richard II* draws attention to the malleability of those ideals and to the conflicting purposes to which those ideals are invoked. Some characters embrace the ideal of chivalric combat to settle disputes; others, peaceful and courteous verbal resolution. Isabel upholds Richard's right to the throne through an appeal to his inherent nobility and gentle blood; recognition of these attributes is a theme that runs throughout Arthurian romance. Unknown knights are often recognised by their bearing, courteous words and valorous actions. Isabel is frustrated throughout the play because other lords refuse to perceive and acknowledge Richard's inherent birth right.

This chapter is also different from the others in that it examines a character type which is not, strictly speaking, developed from a "native" tradition. My late medieval source is Malory's *Morte Darthur* (ca. 1469-70) a work that generally reflects the Arthurian romance tradition as it developed in England throughout the centuries. Moreover, Isabel's French heritage – both as an historical figure and as a signifier of a French literary tradition – is essential in her dramatic function as a potential peacemaker between two oft-warring factions. If the historical drama is a distinctively "English" genre in the 1590s, then Isabel's French nationality, as created through her association with chivalric romance, belongs to the process of broadening the history play's focus to create an Anglo-French mythos.

Isabel's character both raises and complicates the possibility for the creation of such a mythos. She is an example of a failed progenitor: she can only conceive sorrow and has not produced an heir, an alternative monarch to the usurping Bolingbroke. She has not created peace in England. Whatever powers of

intercession she has have been overlooked. Her only success is in her powerful backing of Richard's right. Her chastisements in 5.1 spur Richard to sharpen his wits and rage against his would-be murderers, even though he is struck down in the end. Like the powerful heroines in Malory's romance, Isabel engages in a quest, embraces her verbal agency and upholds the bonds of kinship so important in chivalric romance. Indeed, like Shakespeare's histories, Arthurian romance is a "family tragedy," one which details the destructive infighting of a political family, but which ends with the shadowy promise of future redemption.

My dissertation acknowledges that stock characterisation is not a simple process of employing stereotypes which are fixed and do not change according to social and historical circumstances. My aim is to revise ways of thinking about stock characters and, using Fowler's social person theory as a jumping-off point, to encourage greater precision when discussing their effects in literary and dramatic works. I am also continuing the efforts of other critics in emphasising the continuity between fourteenth to sixteenth century literature and drama. Shakespeare's medieval heritage continues to be an important area for further critical analysis.

1 • The Medieval Garcio and *King John*'s Bastard Faulconbridge

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the influence of the native tradition of medieval English drama on Shakespeare's portrayal of the Bastard Faulconbridge in *King John*. Specifically, I will identify a tradition of characterisation from the medieval mystery plays and apply this mode to Shakespeare's characterisation of Faulconbridge. The medieval tradition concerns the Garcio figure from two Cain plays and two shepherd plays in three mystery cycles. I look specifically to the mystery plays' exemplification of the native tradition for a variety of reasons. First, despite Emrys Jones's encouragement to consider the mysteries' relationship to Shakespeare in his 1977 monograph *Origins of Shakespeare* only a small (yet growing) number critics have taken up his cause. Among those are Helen Cooper, Sarah Beckwith, Naomi Conn Liebler, Rowland Wymer and Karen Sawyer Marsalek.[1] These important and thoughtful analyses have done much to further the argument about the continuities between the medieval and early modern eras, but there still remains much to investigate.

While Robert Weimann has posited a convincing case that the Bastard shares a dramatic lineage with the Vice in "Mingling Vice and Worthiness in

[1] The analysis of Shakespeare in relation to the mystery plays is part of wider critical interest in Shakepeare's indebtedness to medieval culture. 2009 saw the publication of *two* works with the title *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*: one edited by Curtis Perry and John Watkins and one edited by Martha Driver and Sid Ray. In 2010 Cooper published the important *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* hoping that the work would "give extra momentum to a movement already gathering speed" (8).

King John," my argument suggests a more direct antecedent in the Garcio figure from the biblical mystery plays. There is certainly overlap in the Vice's and Garcio's dramatic functions: both are somewhat liminal figures, bridging the gap between play world and audience world; both are mischievous figures who subvert authority, especially through parody and wordplay; and both are rooted in "empirical experience of the world" (Weimann, *Popular Tradition*, 120). However, early morality-play Vices are allied with the Devil. In these allegorical dramas, the Vices, under direction of the Devil, wage war on the Virtues in order to capture the Everyman figure's soul. In the late-fifteenth-century *Mankind*, the Vice Mischyff and his companions musically herald the appearance of the devil Tytivillus. Mischyff tells his fellow Vice Nought to "Blow a-pase! & þou xall brynge hym in with a flewte" (l. 446). The Garcio, however, represents a kind of isolated individualism. He may serve Cain or the shepherds, but he often works in his own self-interest. His isolation is further figured in his distance from the historical narratives in which he takes part: the playwrights insert the Garcio into biblical history. He is of course not mentioned in Genesis or the gospels. From this position he can comment critically on the play's action from a privileged position. He incorporates contemporary medieval concerns – such as poverty, land enclosure, and poor or neglectful masters – into the biblical narrative.

The Garcio is similar to the Cunning Slave figure of classical drama: he rails on the difficulties of the servant's life, often complains of hunger, and is insolent towards his master and social superiors. However, the Garcio is a distinctly medieval variation on the Greco-Roman type. In the mystery play context, he is an unhistorical figure inserted into the biblical narrative. His

language is bawdy and subversive, like the cunning slave's, but it is also laden with rural references. He is firmly situated within a country setting as either a shepherd or farmer's servant.

The Vice is also marked by this narrative liminality. He interacts with characters onstage and with the audience, at home on the *locus* or the *platea*. However, unlike the Vice – or the Cunning Slave for that matter – the Garcio does not manipulate the dramatic action to any great degree. The Vice "exercises an inordinate amount of control over the course of the plot" (Weimann, *Popular Tradition* 157). The Garcio exists only to comment on the play's action, but he does not provoke major change. His agrarian background in particular connects the play's concerns with those of his audience.[2] In the Towneley *Mactacio Abel* Pikeharnes's use of direct address at the beginning and end of the play frames Cain's story. Contrary to the Expositor and Nuntius figures in the Chester cycle (plays 4, 5, 6, 12, 22; plays 4, 6) the Garcio is firmly entrenched in the play's action and themes. Where the former figures "enclose the action…in frame of commentary" (Kolve 27), Pikeharnes easily co-inhabits the audience world and the play world, what Hans-Jürgen Diller calls the "First" and "Second Worlds."[3]

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[2] Barbara D. Palmer convincingly argues that the Towneley plays were not in fact performed in Wakefield as numerous twentieth-century critics have supposed. She argues that the manuscript is likely "a regynall of a West Riding [Yorkshire] cycle, a cycle of accretion preserved in manuscript at unknown date to unknown purpose. A brief survey of what already is known of West Riding dramatic activity does not contradict this theory, nor does the amount of cultural and artistic production" (336). West Riding did have a thriving agricultural industry. See Faull and Moorhouse.

[3] Diller argues that this form of "histrionic" audience address is more typical of later mystery plays. In the later Towneley plays, for example, there is a greater awareness of "play-sphere" and "audience-sphere." The aside is used to different effect here than it is in Shakespeare. In early modern drama, when a character speaks an aside, the audience assumes a critical position toward other characters onstage. In mystery play 'asides,' biblical figures articulate familiar life

In this model, Pikeharnes represents a link between medieval audiences and the play world – and even between audiences and Christian history. However, his extra-historical situation in the play signifies his ultimate impotence in terms of altering the course of events. This certainly does not mean that the Garcio lacks dramaturgical or thematic significance. His social immediacy turns the mystery plays into works that complicate any simple conception of salvation history. The Garcio inserts a spirit of youthful, rustic, and often scatological exuberance into well-known biblical tales. He frequently highlights other characters' folly and effects critique in the world of the play. He unifies the audience with humour. Dramatic irony also serves to heighten the sense of the Garcio's superior or outside perspective on the characters or play events.

King John's Bastard Faulconbridge similarly represents a kind of isolated individualism, signified by his non-courtly and illegitimate birth, his linguistic rusticity and his tendency to soliloquise onstage. Early on in the play he tells Queen Eleanor, "I am I, howe'er I was begot" (1.1.175),[4] and later in the play promises to follow "commodity," or self-interest, like the other lords at court (2.1.598-99).[5] As with the Garcio, the Bastard is a spirit of impertinent youthfulness: his mother scornfully calls him "thou unreverent boy" (1.1.227). The Bastard is complicatedly aligned with King John's faction against the barons who correctly surmise John's malicious plot to kill the young Arthur. As

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experiences during which "spectators are drawn closer to the sacred events reproduced before them" (130).

[4] Quotations are from A.R. Braunmuller's edition of *The Life and Death of King John*.

[5] See "Commodity, n." *OED* def. 2.c.

Pikeharnes serves Cain, so the Bastard serves a similar kin-killer, though King John does not, perhaps, carry quite as much moral freight as Cain. The Bastard unifies the audience in mockery against the French and in his satire of the disloyal and self-interested English lords. At the end of the play, he speaks to characters and audience alike in his invocation of a unified England which remains true "to itself" (5.7.118). However, the Bastard's loyalty to John and to the ideal of a unified nation is as complicated as the Garcio's supposed loyalty to the salvation narrative.[6] Both the Garcio character type and *King John*'s Bastard evoke the idea of unification – dramatic, spiritual or political – in order to question its possibility in contemporary life. My argument posits that Shakespeare had no need to look to the Vice character type when in the Garcio he had before him a social person better suited to his dramaturgical purposes.

Language and its Effects: Rusticity, Scatology and Irreverence

The Garcio's rustic, scatological and irreverent language is first and foremost an indicator of his dramaturgical difference from Cain and Abel. Pikeharnes's playful appearance at the beginning of the Towneley *Mactacio Abel* marks him as an intermediary between the First and Second Worlds. His lines are both dramatic and metadramatic, introducing him as a character and performing the necessary function of silencing a noisy crowd. His initial salutation is joyous: "All hayll, all hayll, both blithe and glad / For here com I, a mery lad!" (1-2). However, he quickly threatens anyone who is not quiet with the punishment of "blaw[ing] my

[6] Morey and Speyser argue for the theological centrality of the Garcio figure.

blak hoill bore, / Both behynde and before, / This his tethe blede"; that is, they must blow into his anus until their teeth bleed (2; 7-9).[7] It is a remarkable introduction to a play about the world's first murderer – the grotesque image of blowing into an anus prepares the audience not only for the Garcio's later irreverence towards Cain, but also for Cain's misanthropic appearance. The Garcio's initial joviality coupled with this ostentatious threat sets the play's tone: Pikeharnes remains "mery" despite serving an infamous man. The Garcio exists on the boundary between the play-world and the audience-world; he can maintain his humour because he functions as an expositor of the biblical narrative rather than one who partakes directly in it. He is a fictional creation, but the spectators are Adam's (and Cain's) fallen descendants. Pikeharnes teases the crowd: "I trow, bi God on life, / Som of you are his (ie. Cain's) men" (ll. 18-19). The Garcio can only invoke his blithe critique from this extra-historical position, outside Cain's immediate spiritual and social influence, which was perceived to be very real at the time.

Pikeharnes's language also delineates his relationship to Cain and to the audience. When Cain asks Pikeharnes to help him drive his plough team, the boy shouts to the horses, "Harrer, Morell! io furth, hyte! And let the plough stand" (57-58). He tells the horses to go, but hopes that the plough will stay still – a paradoxical invocation that undermines his master's orders. Earlier, Cain has suggested that the reason the horses will not pull is that they are hungry, to which Pikeharnes replies, "Thare provand, syr, forthi, / I lay behynd thare ars, / And tyes

[7] All references to the York *Mactacio Abel* are to the Stevens and Cawley edition.

them fast by the nekys" (46-48). Pikeharnes pays lip service to Cain by addressing him as "syr" but his real attitude is one of retaliation: since Cain has not fed his servant, the servant will not feed the plough team. Here we might identify an instance of what Ricardo Quinones calls Cain's "deleterious social effect" (56). If Cain is a poor master then not only does his servant suffer, but so does his harvest, which creates a disruption in food production for the larger community. Moreover, when Cain strikes Pikeharnes, the boy retaliates:

> Cain: I am thi master. Wilt thou fight?
>
> Garcio: Yai, with the same mesure and weght
>
> That I boro will I qwite. (52-54)

The master-servant relationship is not one of equal reciprocity, but here the Garcio acts as if it were. Significantly, when Abel arrives onstage, he blesses both: "God, as he both may and can, / Spede the, brother, and thi man" (59-60). While this blessing does not necessarily suggest equality between Cain and his servant, Abel does recognise the importance of being kind to his social inferior. Thus Pikeharnes's language furthers an immediate social critique about the importance of good mastery. Many viewers likely sympathise – through their laughter – with the Garcio as a recipient of ill-treatment. For the medieval spectator Cain represents the evils of the uncompassionate master, from an individual and communal perspective.

As for young Trowle in the Chester *Shepherds' Play*, his language is similarly rustic and marks his physical and social separation from his shepherd masters. Trowle enters after the shepherds summon him with a horn. The latter have just laid out a feast and decide that they should invite their servant. Rather

than join the shepherds immediately, Trowle stands apart and delivers a "prayer" that is in actuality addressed to the audience. Initially he thanks God for having fed him and his flock, but he seems to take pride in a kind of isolated individualism. He has only his sheep and his dog, Dottynolle (ie. "Blockhead"). If any man approaches him for directions he says, misanthropically, that he will misguide him:

> Yf any man come mee bye
> and wold wytt which waye beste were,
> my legge I lifte up wheras I lye
> and wishe him the way east and west where. (180-83)

In typically scatological terms, he says he will show the traveller the way by urinating in the appropriate direction. This bestial image also allies Trowle with the animal world rather than the human one. Like any animal, he will follow his own will and look after his own immediate needs. Later in the play Trowle will prove his similarity to his dog, who "is nothing cheeffe of his chydinge," that is, he doesn't care who he barks at (l. 179). Trowle declares his intention to ignore authority,

> For kinge ne duke, by this daye,
> ryse I will not—but take my rest here.
> Nowe wyll I sitt here adowne
> and pippe at this pott like a pope. (186-89)

Not only does the Garcio indicate that he will rebel against authority figures if they attempt to move him, but he also suggests that he will drink from his cup ("pippe at this pott") like a pope.[8] Thus Trowle's irreverent and animalistic language introduces him as one at odds with human society and allied with bestial society. From this position outside of authority and even of normative human relationships he can critique his shepherd masters for their neglect.

Jack Garcio in the Towneley *Prima Pastorum* likewise uses rustic and animalistic language to effect his critique of his shepherd masters.[9] He makes explicit the connection between the play-action and the folktale on which it is based, "The Fools of Gotham."[10] Jack's insults are rooted in the language of animal husbandry:

> Wo is hir that yow bare!
>
> Youre syre and youre dam,
>
> Had she brought furth an hare,
>
> A shepe, or a lam,
>
> Had bene well.

---

[8] Because he does not use the definite article here, the boy likely means a bishop or, more generally, a person with great authority.

[9] While his occupation as shepherds' servant is never mentioned directly, it can be assumed by his name that he is their boy. Cawley argues that Jack Garcio is likely the same character as the third shepherd, owing to a cross in the left margin at line 268, possibly indicating that "Ye thre [shepherds]" should be "Ye two." (See Cawley). However, I find that critics, such as Suzanne Speyser, provide convincing arguments to the contrary.

[10] The tale begins with a man who travels to market to buy a sheep. He comes to cross a bridge and on the bridge is a man who promises not to let him return over the bridge with his new-bought sheep. They argue as though there were a hundred sheep between them. A third man arrives on horseback carrying a bag of grain. He intervenes in the argument by emptying the grain into the river, showing the men that they have as much sense as there is grain left in the bag. The third man, while attempting to convey his wisdom, shows that he is as foolish as the other two. In the play, Jack calls the three shepherds the "foles of Gotham" (l. 260).

Of all the foles I can tell,

From heuen vnto hell,

Ye thre bere the bell;

God gyf you vnceyll [ie. Misery]! (261-69)

"Syre" and "dam" are terms for male and female sheep (and other livestock). The hare, the sheep and the lamb were frequently typified in proverbs as overwhelmingly timid creatures.[11] Jack seems to be saying that it had been better if the shepherds' parents had birthed quieter, less offensive children, not ones so overt in their foolishness. His last jibe, that the three "bere the bell," is another term from shepherding. The bell-wether was the ram of the flock, thus the Garcio accuses the three men of leading humankind (anachronistically, Christ's flock) in folly. The humour of the lines relies in part on a parody of Matthew 20:16: the last (in common sense) will be the first (in foolishness).

In *King John*, the Bastard's homely language takes on a new dimension. It is not put into the service of agrarian social critique, as in the Garcio plays, but it does indicate his social difference. Shakespeare's audiences were urban, though many would have travelled to London from the provinces during the city's population boom in the 1590s. For these audiences, the Bastard's language marks him as a social and political outsider, even if his (relative) poverty is not as marked as the Garcio's. Indeed, the Bastard seems to come from the landed gentry, but his language is much more rustic and bawdy than one from that class.

[11] See Whiting. For hares, see C250, H120, H122, H123, H129, M751; for sheep, see S204, S205, S211, S215, S221; for lambs, see L28, L29, L30, L31, L32, L36, L38, L43.

If Robert Faulconbridge is able to prove Philip's illegitimate birth, "a pops me out / At least from fair five hundred pound a year" (1.1.68-69). The slang usage of "a" for "he" and "pops me out" are examples of Philip's irreverence before the king and his mother. The spectators are more likely to be within the poor to moderately wealthy pay range, so the Bastard's combination of rusticity and gentle birth makes him more sympathetic to a wider range of audience members. Like the Garcio of earlier drama, the Bastard provides a "way in" to the play of history, bridging the gap between everyday experience and the grand narrative of the past.

Immediately upon entering the play the Bastard claims his role as servant to the king, and then proceeds somewhat to undermine this statement through irreverent language. After being knighted Richard Plantagenet, the Bastard refuses to answer Eleanor directly, but offers wordplay and bawdiness:

Eleanor: I am thy grandam, Richard; call me so.

Bastard: Madam, by chance but not by truth, what though?
Something about a little from the right,
In at the window, or else o'er the hatch;
Who dares not stir by day must walk by night
And have is have, however men do catch;
Nea'er or farre off, well won is still well shot,
And I am I, howe'er I was begot. (1.1.168-75)[12]

[12] The "Venus and Adonis" stanza (rhyming ababcc), represented here, is used in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost* "to produce dramatic stylization to of an almost operatic kind" (Cuddon 963). Here it appears to be used in concert with the Bastard's impertinence to produce a parodic effect of aphoristic moralising discrete from the play's plot and dialogue. Jones argues that

The Bastard confirms his identity through language of liminality and difference. Each of the Bastard's lines in the above passage, except the last, suggests alterity among binary options of legitimacy: chance versus truth; off-centred versus centred; direct entrance versus side entrance; moving by day versus going by night; catching versus having;[13] being nearer to or farther from one's target. Using all of these metaphors, the Bastard simultaneously valorises his "by-hatch" – or illegitimate – birth and discards binary definitions.

Many of the Bastard's allusions come from the domestic and rustic realms, which create for the character an affective and sensory appeal that does not belong to anyone else in the play. Jones writes that the Bastard's speech "has a dense folk-quality: proverbial, elliptical, gestive, it communicates on a primitive level through powerful abrupt suggestions rather than the finished syntactical forms proper to public utterance" (248). He refers to rebel Salisbury's sword as a "toasting-iron" (4.3.99) and to Time as an old "clock-setter" (3.1.324). Much of the Bastard's speech revolves around war, yet even when describing battle his words return to homely aspects. Boasting of the English army's prowess, he imagines the French forces' cowardly retreat:

> That hand which had the strength, even at your door,
>
> To cudgel you and make you take the hatch,
>
> To dive like buckets in concealèd wells,

---

the Bastard's language has an "archaic strain" and that his use of couplets here and throughout the play reflects this (248).

[13] "Catch" here could be the *OED* def. 5, suggesting "to ensnare" or "entrap." Thus line 166 could mean, along with the proverbial first part, "ownership is ownership, regardless of the indirect means by which something is ensnared."

To crouch in litter of your stable planks,

To lie like pawns locked up in chests and trunks,

To hug with swine, to seek sweet safety out

…….

Shall that victorious hand be feebled here,

That in your chambers gave you chastisement?

(5.2.137-42; 146-47)

Hatches, buckets, litter, stables and swine all relate to farm life. Very often this rusticity is used to satirise the prevailing social order. In this passage, the Bastard envisions the French soldiers as workmen, even as household objects, in order to challenge their masculinity. Moreover, the commonplace "to come to it at the hatch (or window)" is a metaphor for illegitimate birth. It is noteworthy that the Bastard refigures a colloquialism that he has earlier evoked in respect to himself (1.1.169) to describe the French soldiers' cowardice. Illegitimate birth in the French is a detriment, but in himself a license to speak as he desires.

This language, employed for more than mere comic effect, reflects the Bastard's distaste for empty, bombastic words employed in the political realm. His words are rooted in real, everyday, commonplace experience. His wisdom is largely proverbial and accessible to a wide range of audience members. From Faulconbridge's perspective, these allusions are more rooted in real action than high-sounding metaphors. He is "bethumped" when Hubert's elevated language actually provokes the English royalty to compromise. In the Bastard's understanding, language is more experiential, more expressly functional. To

Hubert's suggestion that Blanche and the Dauphin marry in order to circumvent war (one that would raze Angiers), the Bastard replies,

> … Here's a large mouth indeed
> That spits forth death and mountains, rocks and seas;
> Talks as familiarly of roaring lions
> As maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs
> ……
> Zounds, I was never so bethumped with words
> Since I first called my brother's father Dad. (2.1.458-61; 467-68)

The Bastard reacts mockingly to Hubert's metaphoric language with his own homely-sounding neologism,[14] colloquialisms ("Zounds" and "Dad"), and a humorous reference to his own illegitimacy. However, this speech has no effect on the scene's dialogue: in the next passage Eleanor addresses John with no suggestion that she has heard Faulconbridge. Thus the Bastard's lines function as an aside that targets elevated language and reveals another aspect of his distaste for political expediency. Hubert's words are empty because there is no real experience behind them; however, they "give the bastinado" to the English nobility: "Our ears are cudgelled; not a word of his / But buffets better than a fist of France" (464; 465-66). The Bastard's lines express a frustration with words, as words can be manipulated in ways that actions cannot. They have an efficacy that actual battle cannot rival. This frustration is a metatheatrical reflection on the

[14] Braunmuller notes this is the earliest use of the term "bethumped" – in the sense of "soundly beaten" – as cited in the *OED* ("Bethump, v.") (Braumuller n. 467, p. 162).

Bastard's own role within historical drama and ultimately a signifier of his inability to provoke the political changes England needs.

Finally, the Bastard's language introduces his difference from the world of other onstage characters and asserts his individualistic authority. As Weimann puts it,

> [the Bastard's] answer to Queen Eleanor [1.1.169-75] is, in both senses of the word, impertinent because, in its impudence, it refuses to acknowledge pertinent, that is, referential uses of dramatic dialogue. His words preclude the illusion of dramatic dialogue as a dramatic representation of actual exchange and communication….[His use of language] presuppose[s] a verbal, social, and spatial apartness from the sites of authority customarily represented in the dominant discourse of Renaissance conduct. ("Mingling Vice" 119)

His last line in the earlier-cited passage – "And I am I, howe'er I was begot," – indicates a rejection of legitimacy and illegitimacy for the "thing itself" (his existence), and indicates that he still maintains his individual subject position or "individual conscience" (Slights 221).[15] However, unlike Cain's destructive individualism, the Bastard's self-fashioning powers are put into the service of King John. As Cain in the Towneley play can only conceive of things in binary form from a personally individualistic perspective, Pikeharnes exists to remind Cain of contingent and pragmatic issues, such as feeding his servants and taking

[15] Gieskes writes, "[the Bastard's] decision to claim bastardy and relinquish the land and its considerable income [in 1.1.]… appears motivated by his personal desire, not by the influence of some force recognized as external to his will" (784).

care of them in times of crisis. Weimann's description of the Bastard as one who can "(re)moralize meanings in the play's thematic concerns with sin [and] social mobility" (119) might equally apply to the Garcio: each figure disrupts binaries – especially the social hierarchy of high- and low-born. In the *Mactacio Abel* Pikeharnes redefines loyalty: his mockery of his superior, an act of disobedience, is acceptable when the master is Cain. Trowle's insults are a social critique of his poor masters; even though these masters are the Nativity shepherds, they are not immune from attack. Jack Garcio's mockery of the shepherds encourages their conversion from folly to enlightenment. In each case, the character's individualism facilitates a perspective that is essential to each play's project of ideological critique.

Social Critiques

Fundamental to these overall ideological critiques are the plays' anachronistic social critiques. These moments of social satire present enduring problems in contemporary society which are not easily resolved by the plays' poetic and narrative closures. The Bastard's anger at Hubert's language – indicating that Hubert's knowledge is not supported by experience – is such an example: its relevance is not restricted to the period of King John's twelfth-century reign. The Garcio's social immediacy relates to issues of service and obedience, as indicated earlier. His satire is directed at the difficulties and moral complexities of remaining loyal to a bad or neglectful master.

The Garcio's role as agrarian servant in the York *Cain and Abel* emphasises Cain's disregard for proper master-servant relationships and his

neglect for proper tithing practice. In this way, the Towneley and York plays are similar, yet the playwrights emphasise the theme differently in each play. The Brewbarret scene in the York play is incredibly brief and of unknown origin, though it was likely transcribed during the life of John Clerke, one of the manuscript's mid-sixteenth-century owners.[16] In its current state, the manuscript records Cain and Abel's disagreement over God's "need" of sacrificial offering – a debate that occurs in the Towneley play as well. The missing leaves appear to contain Abel's murder and a dialogue between God and a messenger angel who is later sent to chastise Cain. The last two lines of this dialogue are extant. The scene switches abruptly to the Garcio Brewbarret, Cain's boy, who enters bearing more sheaves for the sacrifice: "what shaves bring I, / Evyn of the best for to bere seyd" (73-74). Quinones argues that the servant

> seems to be mocking Cain for the obviously unfavorable reception that his poor offering has merited. When the drunken Cain invites him to come within arm's reach that he may be more properly repaid for his jesting, Brewbarret pretends that he has broken his toe. (56)

It is possible that the boy pretends to have broken his toe in order to avoid punishment. However, the critic neglects to mention that Brewbarret has apparently just entered from the fields and probably has not witnessed Cain's insufficient offering. There is nothing in the boy's dialogue to suggest that he is speaking ironically. In fact, Brewbarret creates strife for Cain by performing his servant's role *well*. Cain's angry outburst – "Ye will not come but ye be prayd"

[16] See Meredith; Frampton, "Wakefield Master"; Beadle 16 and 76.

(77) – is absurd because his servant is merely performing the correct task of waiting to be called before he arrives. Cain then beats the boy for his perceived error.

Unlike Pikeharnes, Brewbarret scrambles to do Cain's bidding: "To the feylde I wyll me hye / To fetch you moo [sheaves], if ye have neyd" (75-76). In arguing that these lines are spoken ironically, Quinones has likely been influenced by Pikeharnes's role in the other play. However, the York dramatist presents another type of Garcio character who nevertheless performs the same kind of thematic role as Pikeharnes. Rather than illustrate Cain's "deleterious social effect in the rebellious side-kick servant," the York play depicts a loyal, long suffering servant (Quinones 56). Whereas in the Towneley play the Garcio suggests that it is only necessary to be a good servant when one has a good master, in the York play Brewbarret shows that good service on earth is in the eye of the beholder. However, the play also suggests that obedience to God is absolutely necessary.

The main lesson of the dramatised story, as in the medieval liturgy, seems to be that "obedience to God will be rewarded and recalcitrance punished" (King 58). Much of this idea is conveyed through a thematic parallel between the Cain/Brewbarret relationship and the God/angel relationship. Significantly, God does not curse Cain himself as he does in the Townley and Chester Cain and Abel plays, but sends his servant. The extant fragment of the angel's lines is a response to God, an acceptance of his mission: "It shall be done evyn as ye bydd, / And that anone" (71-72). A few lines later, Cain curses Brewbarret: "the devyll the speyd, / Ye will not come but ye be prayd" (77-78). The words "bydd" and "prayd," used in close proximity, emphasise the angel's acceptance and Cain's

rejection of obedience. By contrast, Cain's lines are parodic and absurd: he chastises Brewbarret for coming when he is summoned. The real source of Cain's anger is of course that Brewbarret has actually brought good sheaves from the field, whereas traditionally (though not extant in the play's text) Cain offers rotten sheaves. Earlier, when Abel tells Cain that God "byddis vs þus" to the offering place, Cain angrily replies, "Nowe fekyll frenshippe for to fraste [ie. discover] / Methynkith þer is in hym sarteyne" (63-64). Cain typifies God's relationship to man as one of "fickle friendship," arguing that God, he that is "moste in myghte" (l. 65), does not need burnt offerings and that Cain himself will not profit from tithing. Abel mildly corrects Cain: this is not the point of tithing; its purpose is to "please hym principall" (68). Obedience to God is a virtue in itself, not a means to an end.

After Abel's murder, the angel curses Cain with the phrase "*maladictio dei*." Cain replies with physical aggression: "Take that thyself, evyn on they crowne, / *Quia non sum custos fratris mei*, / To tyne" (88-90). Cain wields his Latin like a weapon, using the phrase as a perverse offering to requite the angel's curse. The angel rebuts angrily: "God has sent the his malyson, / And inwardly I geve the myne" (91-92). While the angel is on a mission from God he must officially curse Cain, but the man is so morally repugnant that the angel curses Cain on his own behalf. In other words, Cain's boisterous evil provokes the angel to go beyond his official function as messenger. The angel becomes a curser in his own right. Cain thus disrupts the master-servant hierarchy between God and his angel, just as he has previously disrupted good master-servant relations with his boy.

Cain's anti-communalism is a destructive force. In the medieval period "[t]he mutuality of Christendom…was central to much of the preaching and pastoral care of these centuries: the notion of Christianity as fraternity and community, as society" (Swanson 63). Quinones agrees, identifying Cain as an unapologetic individualist whose values run contrary to the Christian ideal of a community unified under God (57). Lynn Forest-Hill summarises this critical perspective: "Cain's evil nature is characterized through his use of transgressive language and his rejection of the social and religious norms which were familiar to medieval audiences" (63). Thus the Cain plays stage what is at stake when men are disloyal to God and to the community. Cain's destructive individualism is far more serious than the kind the Garcio displays in other plays, and definitely worse than the blind obedience that Brewbarret illustrates. Taken together, the Garcio plays demonstrate various models of obedience. They suggest, finally, that obedience to God is essential. However, in the extant fragments of the York *Cain and Abel* Brewbarret's minor plotline is never given any conclusion. If God rewards obedience to himself, then it is unclear whether he rewards the good servant's obedience to the bad master. Ultimately the socially immediate concern about the proper treatment of servants remains unresolved.

In a variation of the Chester *Shepherds' Play*, Trowle announces his intent to battle with his superiors.[17] He addresses the audience: "you shall here sone in

[17] Diller emphasises the significance of these lines (243), which are not included in the Mills and Lumiansky edition. Diller cites the lines from MS Harley 2124 (1607), occurring after line 176 in the Mills and Lumiansky edition. Strangely, Mills and Lumiansky gloss 173-76 (p. 111, vol. 2) as though they had included "of small hannes that to me needen" in the body of the text rather than in the textual notes.

sight, / of small hannes that to me needen." Trowle promises spectators that soon will be performed a needful display of little fights ("small hannes").[18] Diller argues that these lines "indicate what the coming quarrel is in truth: not a change in previously existing interpersonal relations, but a demonstration before the spectators which Trowle himself feels a 'need'" (Diller 243). Trowle turns from his monologue and addresses the shepherds: "nay, yee, lades, sett I not by yee. / For you have I manye a fowle fitt. / Thow fowle filth, though thow flytt, I defye thee" (195-97). Though the shepherds invite him over, Trowle will not sit by them because he has had many a bad time (ie. "fowle fitt") on their account. He threatens them with retribution if they quarrel ("flytt") with him. He later reveals that he will not eat with them until he has been given his pay (218-21).

Trowle also knows that a specific action is necessary. Though he wrestles with the shepherds from a sense of being personally wronged, he is also the catalyst for the shepherds' spiritual transformation. Trowle may use "ritualistic" language in the "traditional" flyting scenes (Diller 243); however, the Garcio figure works beyond religious and social convention. Even though the shepherds are not directly responsible for his plight – they are little better off than he is – he blames them. The Garcio's perceived sense of social injustice motivates the overthrow of his masters. He accuses them of being "traytors attaynt of [their] tache" (285) – traitors tainted by their sins, by their lack of being good masters.

[18] Mills and Lumiansky gloss "hannes" as an error for "harneis", meaning *MED* 3(a) "personal apparel" or 3 (c) "provision or ware for traveling." The editors believe that the line continues an earlier reference to Trowle's "necessaryes" (l. 174) (Mills and Lumiansky n. 173-76, p. 111, vol. 2).

The irony here is that the audience never witnesses the shepherds being bad masters, or depriving Trowle of his wages. They offer to share their feast with the boy, asking him to "take keepe" (ie. a reward) for looking after their livestock (211).[19] Yet, in this post-lapsarian world, Trowle is correct: they are all stained by Adam's sin. He refuses to eat with the shepherds because where they sit "the dyrte is soe deepe, / stopped therin for to steepe (ie. soak)… the grubbes theron do creepe" (214-16). By wrestling with his masters, Trowle shows the audience that this is a world where one attempts to redress wrongs with wrongs. Trowle is instrumental in showing the fallen nature of the pre-Incarnation world.

This cycle is only broken by Christ's birth. The ultimate "reward" that Trowle seeks actually rests in the Incarnation. "Wages" in this period could mean "reward" or "recompense" (MED "wage", def. 3.). Here, the wages of sin is not death, but birth. The third shepherd interprets the lesson Trowle has just given them: "Ofte wee may bee in thought wee be now under. / God amend hit with his makinge" (298-99).[20] God's ability to "amend" is the deity's redeeming power that will transform their fallen states or, more specifically, Jesus Christ's ability to redress their sins.[21] Immediately following the third shepherd's lines, the star appears as if in answer to his invocation. God will now "amend" the shepherds'

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[19] Diller argues that this seeming incongruity between Trowle's "rude aggressive tone" and the shepherds' friendly invitations results from the play's collaborative authorship and the "heavily revised state of the scene" (241). However, the gracio's lines are in keeping with his earlier established misanthropic behaviour. It would also make sense if line 285 was directed out toward the audience, in an attempt to remind the viewers of their own spiritual situations.

[20] Mills and Lumiansky translate this line: "We are often on top, although on this occasion we are beaten", and suggest as a comparable proverb, "every dog has his day" (114, n. 298, vol. 2).

[21] *MED* defines "makinge" as the "act or process of making" (def. 2(a)) and as a "created thing" (1(b)).

sinful states. Christ's arrival heralds a transformation of shepherds of sheep to shepherds of men. While Diller argues that Trowle's role is solely ritualistic (243), it is also important to keep in mind that this "ritualism" is also connected to a very real social critique that would have appealed to the play's audience. Christ's arrival creates a new spiritual environment, but Trowle's social satire remains intact. Medieval spectators could not expect such literal transformations in everyday life.

Moreover, Trowle's last social interaction – his address to the audience – is superseded by the boy's avowal to become an anchorite, one shut off from ordinary communal living. Richard Axton notes that Trowle's promise to "wach and wake" in his new holy life is reminiscent of his earlier proclamation: "On this would with this will I walke; / all the world wonder on the wache" (668; 286-87; Axton 190). Thus, in Trowle's decision to forsake his craft and to enter a religious life, "the didactic and devotional movement of the whole drama is epitomized" (190). The post-Incarnation world is filled with song and a renewed form of pastoral care: each shepherd becomes a different type of clergy member. The first shepherd becomes a mendicant friar (671-72); the second shepherd becomes an evangelist, "Singinge awaye hethen will I" (656); the third shepherd becomes a preacher, telling the birth of Christ "in every place" (659). However, the vocations of mendicant, preacher, evangelist and anchorite are not viable options for the majority of the audience (particularly women). It is significant that the dramatist chooses the anchorite vocation for the boy. Earlier, as I have argued, Trowle represents a kind of isolated, yet proud, individualism. His loneliness, enforced by his vocation, is transformed into a voluntary sequestration. His life,

initially devoted to himself, becomes devoted to Christ alone, not to the wider Christian community, as in the other shepherds' more social clerical vocations.

Trowle's disobedience and individualism facilitate the shepherds' transformations, so his self-interest is not all bad. Nevertheless, the play illustrates that unless individualism is yoked to the service of Christ, one needs to pursue the ideal of communalism. The Garcio is not a model for behaviour, nor does the play's resolution resolve all of the social issues brought up earlier. Shepherds' boys must still live in the dirt, be underpaid and maintain a generally isolated existence. He represents the poverty and thanklessness of being a lowly agricultural worker. Trowle seems to embrace his loneliness and his animal companions, but the same may not be true of others – shepherds or other agricultural labourers – in the audience.

The core of social critique in the *Mactacio Abel* is the problem of serving a bad master. Pikeharnes's subversion of Cain shows the audience that a master-servant relationship that does not contain charity or protection is doomed to failure and rebellion. Even when Cain offers "in the kyngys name" to declare his servant's "peasse [ie. protection] / Thrughout this land" (421; 410-11),[22] it is not the same protection that Pikeharnes actually desires, nor does it demonstrate an obedience to God. Cain's "proclamation" is actually a perversion of God's decree that no man may kill Cain without being "punyshid sevenfold" (375).[23] The boy,

[22] "Peasse" is a double entendre – as the king's "peace" and as the foodstuff "peas." Pikeharnes would rather have food than the king's protection.

[23] Bennet A. Brockman's detailed analysis of legal parody within this speech is essential reading for anyone wanting a clearer picture of the period's socio-legal context. Brockman argues that to be cut off from God's grace (or God himself) has a meaningful irony "in the light of the formulae

on the other hand, merely wants to be fed, a theme running throughout his commentary on Cain's "proclamation" (420-40):

> Caym. I command you in the kyngys nayme
>
> Garcio. And in my masteres, fals Cayme.
>
> Caym. That no man at thame fynd fawt ne blame,
>
> Garcio. Yey, cold rost is at my masteres hame.
>
> ….
>
> Caym. The kyng will that thay be safe.
>
> Garcio. Yey, a draght of drynke fayne wolde I hayfe.
>
> Caym. At thare awne will let tham wafe;
>
> Garcio. My stomak is redy to receyfe. (421-24; 431-34)

Cain creates an image of himself as monarch. Anthony Gash writes, "[a]s the grandiloquent voice of the king intertwines with the earthly rejoinders of his starving subject laughter must have been fuelled by social scepticism" (77). More importantly, the Garcio perceives Cain's perversion and creates his own: the boy's comments suggest a parody of the Mass.[24] To Cain's audience invocation, "At thare awne will let tham wafe [ie. let them stand in wonder]," Pikeharnes plays on the word "wafe" (as in Communion wafer) and replies, "My stomak is redy to receyfe." Rather than merely spouting a terrible blasphemy, Pikeharnes helpfully perceives Cain's own blasphemy and amplifies it in order that the

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of the pardon to which Cain alludes: the king through his 'special grace' can pardon the man who refuses the grace of God, and the king can restore 'to our firm peace' the man who has forever severed himself from 'the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding' (Philippians iv 7, Douay)" (707). Gash also notes that the practice of royal pardoning was a "cause of corruption, and hence of resentment" during the medieval period (77).

[24] See Cawley and Stevens' note to line 468, p. 447.

audience might better comprehend Cain's dual folly and evil. The Garcio connects spiritual corruption with social disruption.

Dramatic irony has a similarly important role in the social critique of the *Mactacio Abel*. Cain as a play-world character is unaware of his larger, sinister role in biblical history. Pikeharnes, on the other hand, straddles the play- and audience-worlds. His winking humour at Cain's expense facilitates a critique of Cain as poor master and as an infamous sinner. The viewer is meant to identify with the Garcio because both recognise Cain's evil before he does. Gardner provides a cogent analysis of the effect of dramatic irony in the *Mactacio Abel*. Pikeharnes's comedic undermining stems in part from the audience's foreknowledge of Cain's story. Gardner puts it succinctly: "when Cain speaks of God as a 'hob-ouer-the-wall' [l. 299] the audience simultaneously perceives that Cain is right and that he is perilously wrong" (520). The actor who portrays God is a mere "hob,"[25] perhaps standing hidden on an upper platform, but is also an imperceptible-yet-tangible presence in the heavens. The Garcio's close relationship with the audience heightens the play's dramatic irony. That he stands part-way between biblical history and the contemporary medieval audience protects him from the same kind of censure Cain receives. Cain himself tries to access this protective function of audience address in his "royal proclamation," but because he cannot extricate himself from the play world or from biblical

[25] The *OED* defines "hob-over-the-wall" as "Robin Goodfellow" or "hobgoblin" (def. 2.a.) "Hob" is also a "familiar or rustic variation of the Christian name *Robert* or *Robin*. Hence formerly a generic name for: A rustic, a clown" (def. 1.). While Cain overtly refers to God as a kind of bogeyman, the term could also refer metatheatrically to an actor from the town or surrounding area, taken in a general sense to mean "guy" or "bud" (in modern slang).

history in the same ways that the Garcio can, he is doomed to wander the earth and "to the dwill [ie. Devil] be thrall" (468). We do not know if Pikeharnes leaves Cain at the end of the play or accompanies him into exile – the servant must weigh the advantages of having a bad master with the disadvantages of not having one at all. Without a performance in front of us, we cannot tell the extent of the Garcio's loyalty. We do know that he climbs out of Cain's reach after his master threatens him. Since Cain ends the play with an audience address and not further harassment of his servant, we may suppose that Pikeharnes has "take[n] yond plogh… / And weynd [himself] furth fast before" as Cain commands (454-55).

Cain's mistreatment of his loyal servant – largely due to the master's self-interest – contaminates other relationships, illustrating a disruption in social and spiritual hierarchies. *King John* is largely a discourse on loyalty between subjects and rulers, and between blood relations. The Bastard vilifies self-interest ("commodity") as a disruptive force that destroys young and old alike and propels governments from proper courses of action. Likewise the Bastard's loyalty to King John is certainly problematic. Despite recognising Arthur as "The life, the right, and truth of all this realm," Faulconbridge is still faithful to John (4.3.144). The audience is left wondering how such a seemingly principled character can follow a king like John. But as the Bastard himself observes, divided loyalties can result in civil war. The Bastard reflects during the lords' rebellion that England "is left / To tug and [scamble], and to part by the teeth / The unowed interest of

proud-swelling state" (4.3.145-47).[26] This comment comes after John's plot to murder his nephew – a child with a strong claim to the throne – and the lords' suspicion of John's involvement in the child's death, which, ironically, occurs not on John's command but during Arthur's attempted escape from captivity. Not only is the Bastard's association with John's crimes problematic, but John's complicity in his own crimes is under question.

Unlike Cain's murder of Abel in the *Mactacio Abel*, John's complicity in his kinsman's death is indirect, and his moral character rather more ambiguous. It is true that the audience witnesses John's command to Hubert to murder his nephew and "with hot irons [to] burn out" Arthur's eyes (4.1.39) and his motivation to commit such a grotesque punishment is based on jealousy rather than reason. However, the audience is left to examine the weight of each crime: John's transgression was intended rather than committed; does it then follow that the lords' rebellion is excusable? To the Bastard's eyes, at least publicly, it is not. He advises the lords, "Whate'er you think, good words I think were best" (4.3.28). Admittedly he does not know of John's plot with Hubert. If he suspects it, he places responsibility for the sin on Hubert's shoulders rather than on John's:

> If thou didst but consent
>
> To this most cruel act, do but despair,
>
> And if thou want'st a cord, the smallest thread

[26] Braunmuller converts the Folio's "scamble" to "scramble," but I prefer the original word. "Scamble" seems in keeping with the Bastard's lexis of neologisms and rustic phrases, although the term seems to have been in common use until the late seventeenth century (*OED* "Scamble, v." def. 1.a.).

That ever spider twisted from her womb

Will serve to strangle thee… (4.3.125-29)

This dialogue illustrates that Shakespeare was concerned about complicity between subjects and their masters, particularly when a subject was commissioned to commit murder. This issue of moral accountability in *King John* predates by several years Henry V's famous interchange with Michael Williams about the king's responsibility for his subjects' souls during wartimes (*Henry V* 4.1.134-202). The Bastard suggests that, regardless of his role as king's agent, Hubert must answer for the crime personally. Like Pikeharnes, the Bastard, from a dramatic standpoint, is complicit in John's actions.[27] However, he has no choice but to remain loyal to John or to become a traitor.

All of the plays rehearse various reactions to poor masters. The Garcios and the Bastard deal with the problem in different ways, none of them particularly practical. Trowle wrestles with the shepherds to prove his superiority and to gain his wages. He later becomes an anchorite, a solitary position that accords with his isolated individualism. Pikeharnes climbs out of his master's reach and may or may not accompany him in exile. The Bastard, finally, can only invoke rhetoric about staying true to England. Like Kent in *King Lear*, the Bastard disappears from the stage heralding the new order under a new king, but the reliability of England's upcoming master is left unclear. The plays' social critiques participate in their larger complication of simple ideological and providentialist solutions.

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[27] One critical perspective on the Garcio suggests that he is Cain's minion and a collaborator in his master's crime: Quinones, for example, argues that Pikeharnes is Cain's companion in a fallen world.

Liminality and Dramatic Effect

I have already touched on the Garcio and Bastard's position on the margins of the play action and on their effect as extra-historical figures, but would like to treat the subject in greater depth here. In the Chester play, though he is the most socially inferior shepherd onstage,[28] Trowle is given the final benediction, just as Pikeharnes has in the *Mactacio Abel*. The boy addresses the audience:

> Well for to fare, eych frend,
>
> God of his might graunt you;
>
> for here now we make an ende.
>
> Farewell, for wee from you goe nowe. (693-96)

This is a more straightforward benediction than Pikeharnes's, but by having the troublemaker Trowle give these lines, the playwright introduces the possibility of irony and parody. The formerly misanthropic boy addresses "eych frend" in the audience: this alteration of character could be a representation of Christ's transformative effect on the fallen world, or it may be that the Garcio (rather than the actor) puts on the role of epilogist. Without a performance in front of us, it is difficult to know. However, it would likely be difficult for an actor to give up his previously subversive performative power onstage.

In the Towneley *Prima Pastorum* Jack Garcio's metatheatrical role is fundamental to the play's spiritual meaning. Jack's role is an overt one: to reveal

[28] There are other shepherd boys who give gifts to Christ, but they only have a significant role at the end of the play.

the shepherds' foolishness to themselves and to the audience. By identifying the shepherds with the "Fools of Gotham," Jack brings folk wisdom to bear on another well-known narrative. Jack tells the shepherds that in arguing over imaginary sheep they are just like the infamous fools from the story. Stevens and Cawley argue that the shepherds' "absurd quarrel over imaginary sheep has a realistic background in the endless disputes over rights of common that are recorded in the manor-court rolls of the period" (485, n. 146 f., vol. 2). Thus the Towneley dramatist uses the Garcio to raise the contemporary concerns over enclosing common land. Moreover, the Garcio imbues the story with theological significance.

The dramatist does not rely on the folk narrative speaking for itself. The first and second shepherds do not criticise the third shepherd for emptying his grain sack on the ground. Thus the dramatist runs the risk of having his audience make the same mistake the first two shepherds appear to have made – mistaking a fool for a wise man. This is why he introduces Jack Garcio into the play. Jack, like the other Garcio figures, acts as intermediary between play world and spectator world, but he also facilitates the teaching of a spiritual lesson on the nature of miracles. Suzanne Speyser argues that the *Prima Pastorum* "dramatizes and explicates the doctrine on the reality of miracle and examines the nature of faith" (2). She argues that the debate over imaginary sheep is actually an argument about Real Presence in the Eucharist. The imaginary sheep are a lost flock, symbolic of fallen humankind. When the shepherds treat the imaginary sheep as real, they "invest what is invisible with substance and reality, and in so doing, show themselves to be receptive to the possibility of a miracle" (10).

However, the third shepherd enters to show the other two the error of their ways: his actions show that he denies both the possibility of Real Presence and the efficacy of the Sacrament to save fallen humanity (Speyser 11). The Garcio enters to correct the shepherds' perception of genuine miracle. When the first shepherd asks where his sheep are, Jack replies, "If ye will, ye may se; / Your bestes if ye ken" (274-75). Speyser interprets these lines to mean that perception of reality is partly a matter of intent. The Garcio's lines have metatheatrical import – the audience may see the sheep if it so wishes – his purpose being to convey the idea that miracles exist through belief, not through empirical evidence.

The Garcio thus combines folktale, social realism, homily and metatheatre within the play. It is only by virtue of his liminal position, straddling the *locus* and *platea*, that he can facilitate this mingling of perspectives. While Speyser is correct in her assessment of Jack as a facilitator of spiritual vision, the conditions of performance also somewhat undercut this role. The perception of a miracle, as in the viewing of a play, rests in the suspension of disbelief. The play furthers the idea of faith as a performance and rehearses the performative aspects of belief. After Jack encourages the shepherds to see the sheep "If ye will" he disappears from the play, as an almost literal *deus ex machina*. Jack's dramaturgical function as a liminal figure combines social realism and the artificiality of performance: he raises issues of loyalty to foolish masters, conventional folk wisdom and the doctrine of miracles within a dramatic frame. Concerns about loyalty and folly are enduring and, at least within the setting of medieval England, not easily resolved by miraculous intervention. Unlike the spiritual contract between God and his flock, the performance contract between an audience and actors is limited and

finite. *King John*'s Bastard, another liminal figure, may aspire to this role of miraculous resolution, but he can only gesture towards it. He can only appeal to conventions of performance that require a narrative and poetic resolution.

From 1.1 onwards, the Bastard's position at court as illegitimate son of Richard Cordelion indicates his liminality: one with royal blood, but without inheritance rights, either to land or to the throne. "By denying traditional genealogical identification here," James Saeger writes, "Philip ultimately exempts himself both from the dramatic and political world in which those struggles take place" (10). This act of denial permits the Bastard to comment on the play's action from outside its dramatic, political and historical narratives, just as the Garcio is exempt from biblical history. The Bastard, like the Garcio, is also the connection point between play world and audience world: "[the Bastard] provides us with the human scale by which we assess the activities of others as well as… giving in himself an example of how to act, how we ourselves should act if we were in his situation" (Jones 247). In a monologue the Bastard rails against the destructive force of hypocrisy and self-interest, figuring Commodity as a "smooth faced gentleman,"

> he that wins of all,
>
> Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids –
>
> Who having no external thing to lose
>
> But the word 'maid' – cheats the poor maid of that –
>
> (2.1.574; 570-73).

He emphasises Commodity's horribly democratic nature. Commodity is a force that disrupts every class, regardless of wealth, and provokes governments to move

away from "all direction, purpose, course, intent," meaning that those in power lose their administrative faculties, their resolution, their progress, and their proper mental functioning (2.1.581).[29] For the most part, the play bears this truth out: self-interest makes John broker a marriage pact with France; it makes France, under pressure from Rome, break its oath to England; it makes Constance push Arthur forward as rival throne claimant when Arthur himself is unwilling, and so on. Ironically, after claiming his intent to "worship" Commodity, the Bastard rejects self-interest for loyalty to John. The Bastard is instrumental in clarifying for the audience what is at stake when self-interest dominates over ruling figures.

In one way, the Bastard's liminal status as an extra-historical creation permits him to comment from the side-lines, to make explicit the play's cynical view of Anglo-French politics. However, this status also limits the Bastard in his efficacy within the plot: he is unable to effect real change (except for Austria's murder, which is chronicled in Holinshed). He cannot prevent the politically expedient marriage from occurring; he cannot convert John to a life of good policy; he cannot protect Arthur from death; he cannot keep the English ships from sinking in the Lincoln Washes. Like Brewbarret (and Pikeharnes), the Bastard cannot stop evil from happening; each can only reflect on why this evil has occurred and can suggest a different approach – in each case this approach has much to do with loyalty and being a good subject. In the cases of Pikeharnes and Brewbarret, they do not so much reflect on Cain's evil as play a role in revealing it through words and actions. They reveal why Cain is a poor master and what

[29] See *OED* "direction," (def. 2); "purpose," (5.b.); "intent," (4.).

impact that can have in medieval agrarian societies. Being a good servant to one's master is always analogous to being a good servant to God. Therefore, in the mystery plays' Christian context, the Garcio figure has a real function that translates from play sphere to spectator sphere even though he has no power to intercede in Cain's act of murder. In *King John*, the Bastard's function may be similarly moral, but his inability to change world events is greater cause for dismay and disappointment.

Like Trowle and Pikeharnes, the Bastard delivers a kind of benediction at the end of the play. He presents the audience with an appeal for national integrity:

> This England never did, nor never shall,
>
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
>
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
>
> ….
>
> …Naught shall make us rue,
>
> If England to itself do rest but true. (5.7.112-14; 117-18)

In form, at least, the Bastard's lines reinforce a patriotic agenda for England, just as Pikeharnes's lines reinforce the biblical agenda of the mysteries. However, in comparison to the energy of his other speeches, these lines fall flat. Shakespeare's twist on the Garcio figure is that while the Bastard's lines also function as a benediction, instead of being comic and positive, they are dark and ironic. The Bastard does not really offer any useful advice for the governing of the state. His loyalty to John does not alter England's bad fortune, and there is no hint that his loyalty to Henry III will do so either. The idea of England "resting true" to itself is vague and, contrary to all of his pragmatic language throughout the play, does

not offer a plan of reform. Shakespeare suggests that, in the end, the energy of the Bastard Faulconbridge, of the subversive Garcio figure, cannot maintain itself throughout history. The Bastard even foreshadows his own demise. In an apostrophe to the dead King John, the Bastard asks,

> Art thou gone so? I do but stay behind
> To do the office for thee of revenge,
> And then my soul shall wait on thee to heaven,
> As it on earth hath been thy servant still. (5.7.70-73)

Like the other Garcio figures, the Bastard is introduced to perform a specific function, and then disappears from the play. The Bastard declares his intent to follow John to heaven, an assertion surprising on many counts: his indication that John's soul will fly to heaven rather than hell; that his loyalty is loyalty primarily to John, though he later evokes the importance of being loyal to England; and that he intends to die when much good remains to be done in England. His desire for personal revenge is at odds with his later statement on the importance of remaining true to one's country.

Models of Individualism

The Bastard's individualism is problematic: on the one hand, in the service of the nation, it defeats England's enemies, such as the Duke of Austria. On the other hand, it promises destruction according to misled personal interests (it is doubtful that John needs to be revenged at all). While the Bastard makes explicit the evils of his age, his loyalty to John cannot overcome them. His avowal of imminent death and his rather insufficient "benediction" at the end of the play reveal his

ultimate failure. He facilitates understanding through his liminal dramaturgical position, but he cannot facilitate change to a court corrupted by others' self-interests. As Camille Slights argues, the Bastard's independent conscience is attractive but ultimately futile and potentially dangerous (230). Indeed, the Bastard represents in part an individualism which, while here yoked to loyalty, in another less altruistic person might be disruptive in more negative ways.[30]

In the Garcio plays, this less altruistic individualism is represented by Cain. The Garcio may look out for his own interests – such as feeding himself and getting paid properly for his work – but Cain represents a more insidious form of selfishness. As mentioned earlier, in all the mystery plays, Cain is marked by his anti-communal nature, an aspect which went against the grain of normative medieval values: the cycles' existence as a religious and civic enterprise attests to this ideal. Indeed, Cain's exile (to the land of Nod according to the Hebrew Bible) literalises his existence outside of social bonds. That he was believed to have founded the first city does not alter his extra-social state, as by popular account this city was the source of all future nomadic tribes, not an urban locale by any means (Reilly). In the York play, Cain is initialy repentant and laments that he has been cast "oute of my kyth," exiled from kindred and neighbours (123). However he soon returns to his old behaviour: "Sethen I am sette þus out of seill,[31] / That curse that I have for to feill, / I giffe you þe same" (137-39). His malediction is

[30] Slights also argues that, "[u]nlike the other characters in *King John* who exhibit conscience by judging themselves on the basis of moral standards articulated in religious and political traditions, the Bastard judges and condemns society on the basis of a personal sense of right and wrong that develops as he self-consciously constructs an identity" (220).
[31] The general sense is "since I am thus out of luck" (ie. out of wind, a sailing metaphor).

directed towards the angel and the spectators. The seven-fold curse on Cain's descendants is of course biblical; however, Cain's lament followed by his own curse is the playwright's creation. Its effect is to intensify the representation of Cain's fallen state: he is a man who revenges wrongdoings rather than accepts them. He kills Abel because his own offering is not sufficient; he strikes his servant because the boy performs his job correctly; and he curses the audience because he is powerless to avoid his fate as an exile. His anger is thus an expression of his essential isolation from any sense of community, whether fraternal, agrarian or dramatic.

Like Cain, King John represents a dangerous, even childlike, selfishness. Onstage, also like Cain, he is enjoyable to watch: he blusters, shouts, plots murder and shows irreverence towards normative ideals of good kinship and religious principle. Morally, they are unlikeable and dangerous. Dramatically, they can be engaging villains. John's dialogue with Hubert exemplifies this attractive Machiavellianism:

Hubert: …I'll keep him so
That he shall not offend your majesty.
John: Death.
Hubert: My lord.
John: A grave.
Hubert: He shall not live.
John: Enough.
I could be merry now; Hubert, I love thee. (3.3.64-68)

The lines are often interpreted as a tense exchange between a loyal servant and a politic king who does not want to verbalise the imperative, "Kill my rival." In Gregory Doran's 2001 RSC production, the passage was played with a pragmatic brusqueness, so that Hubert's casual "He shall not live" elicited laughter.[32] The audience appeared to be drawn in by John's diabolic attractiveness, momentarily forgetting the seriousness of John's intended crime, or otherwise surprised by the insertion of a comic moment in an ostensibly tragic scene. Although the circumlocution in his dialogue with Hubert (3.3.19-64) shows that John is aware of the wide-ranging political consequences of Arthur's murder, his simple "I could be merry now" illustrates a childish individualism in which only his own pleasure matters. Hence in King John and the Bastard, Shakespeare's play rehearses two different kinds of individualism, one more sinister than the other, but each capable of severely damaging the nation. As in the Garcio plays, individualism is ambivalent in *King John* and complicates any simple evocation of loyalty to God or country.

The resolution to the mystery play (and to all cycles) rests in an endless deferral to Judgement Day which, while imaginatively presented in the cycles, has yet to occur according to Christian ideology. Similarly in *King John*, resolution can only be indicated via poetic means, what Barbara Hodgdon cleverly calls "*principe ex machina*" – the arrival of John's son Henry at the end of the play

[32] The reference to Doran's production is from a video archived at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, catalogue reference: RSC/TS/2/2/2001/KJ01 (Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon). There is no recording date on the tape, but the performance must have been recorded sometime during the production's Stratford run, between 21 March and 13 October 2001.

(31). Henry is meant to impose "a form upon that indigest / Which [John] hath left so shapeless and so rude" (5.7.27-28). The Bastard evokes the *idea* of national integrity. However, all the Bastard can offer is the same kind of political rhetoric of which he has been so critical elsewhere in the play. Both mystery play and *King John* impose poetic closure on irresolvable social and political fragmentation. The image of a united England, which the Bastard evokes, is a construction much like that of the Kingdom of God promised to those who resist Cain's anti-social ways and embrace the shepherds' new commitment to the Christian community. This new community is like "England to itself," except that the social functions of the mystery play and of Shakespeare's histories are quite different. The mystery play audience is expected to share a religious ideology, whereas Shakespeare's audience is encouraged to question political machinations. Where the mystery play offers a more or less comprehensive "mirror for Christians," *King John* offers a "refractory… mirror for subjects" (Hodgdon 32). Hodgdon argues that the Bastard projects forward into the future, rejecting past Tudor ideology and embracing a "specifically Elizabethan configuration in which the need for security in the matter of succession breeds a unity called 'England to itself'" (32). However, it would have been simple for Shakespeare to indicate political improvement since John's time, emphasising the ideologically positive aspects of Elizabeth's rule. But as Hodgdon herself remarks, the Bastard addresses himself not to Henry III onstage nor to the reigning queen, but to England – including the play's spectators – as "body politic" (32). The play has just illustrated the difficulties and dangers of self-interest in government policy, and the only figure who has shown loyalty among the infighting has been reduced

to pat phrases about national unity. Self-interest exists as a problem that cannot be confined to any one period of time. The Bastard may hope for national unity free from the detrimental effects of "commodity." However, his comment that "England never *did* nor never *shall*, / Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror / But when it first did help to wound itself" suggests a cyclical nature to the nation's problems, one that evokes the possibility of defeat even in the suggestion of its opposite, making "England to itself" an indefinitely deferred concept.

2 • Called to a Reckoning: Mistress Quickly and the Medieval Alewife

> Now what is the message there? The message is that there are no "knowns." There are thing[s] we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know. So when we do the best we can and we pull all this information together, and we then say well that's basically what we see as the situation, that is really only the known knowns and the known unknowns. And each year, we discover a few more of those unknown unknowns.
>
> It sounds like a riddle. It isn't a riddle. It is a very serious, important matter.
>
> -- Donald Rumsfeld, NATO press conference,
> 6 June 2002, Brussels, Belgium

Donald Rumsfeld's now-famous, seemingly nonsensical speech at a 2002 NATO press conference is an appropriate epigraph to a chapter that deals largely with the establishment of "knowns" in medieval literature and their subsequent mystification in Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly, one of the playwright's most famous "known unknowns." The "knowns," in my analogy, are stock alewives as developed in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century literature and drama. The characters' functions are dependent on "known" qualities of women and ale sellers: loquacity, allure and incontinence, both sexual and economic. The theatrical functionality of these "known" alewives relies in turn on their didactic roles, which are socially and culturally constructed in relation to poets' and playwrights' concerns. The stock alewives' didactic power is rooted in specific social, economic and political issues. Over time, especially in Tudor drama, playwrights became more interested in the alewife's comical social characteristics, separate from larger and more specific moral or political

concerns.[1] Shakespeare inherited both of these alewife literary traditions; in Mistress Quickly he does not sacrifice the social and the political connotations in his creation of a comic hostess.

To pursue the analogy, "unknowns" are qualities or actions gestured toward but never fully revealed; these are most fully employed in Shakespeare's characterisation of Mistress Quickly, which rests crucially on ambiguity. Rumsfeld's statement is Quickly-esque in that the speaker seems to become mired in confusion while attempting to clarify his ideas. Despite this apparent confusion, the Secretary of Defence manages to convey a complex epistemological idea: that military intelligence – and, one supposes, the comprehension of any particular historical moment – rests problematically upon the binary of "known" and "unknown" facts. There are always limits to understanding the past. In his attempt to articulate this idea, Rumsfeld replicates the often confusing and contradictory project of historical reconstruction.[2]

Medieval alewives exist within the frame of supra-historical time, their authors assuming a spiritual component to the alewife's literary function. My argument begins from the position that the alewife stock character is never static, but that in her functional literary and dramatic roles she gains social and political

[1] Elizabethan Theophrastan character writing, of course, similarly relies on an emphasis of character over social and political context, though a satiric strain runs through the genre.
[2] Rumsfeld concludes speciously, "the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence… Simply because you do not have evidence that something exists does not mean that you have evidence that it doesn't exist." Opponents to the 2003 invasion of Iraq cited this problematic belief as the underlying impulse behind an unnecessary war. Rumsfeld released his autobiography, *Known and Unknown* in 2011, a title which overlays the difficulty of fully understanding a man's character with a key moment in the genesis of the Iraq war. The title suggests the challenge of separating personal identity from the particular historical moment. Less intellectually significant, perhaps, Rumsfeld's book also attempts to appropriate and to validate a speech that has become synonymous with dubious political rhetoric.

significance. Even in comic farces like *Tom Tyler and his Wife* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, alewives Typple and Chat can speak to us about the alewife's near-legendary role as centre of female communities (especially since, by the time these plays were written, historical alewives had mostly disappeared from the English cultural landscape). However, speaking in terms of social persons, their characterisations embody only that of rural gossip, separate from larger social interests. By contrast, in Mistress Quickly, Shakespeare develops an alewife/tavern hostess who is central to the construction of English history. Shakespeare creates a parallel between the epistemology of the individual and the epistemology of history, in life as in literary works. *1* and *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* focus attention on how various people – from many social strata – interpret others' actions, and on how they make sense of moments of great political significance. As we will see, Shakespeare conceives his alewife/hostess figure as an amalgamation of earlier medieval tropes: the alewife as both reckoner and recounter.[3] Reckoning and recounting are actions fundamental to the construction of history as represented in these early modern plays. Quickly is thus central to this project.

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[3] Although "reckon" and "recount" derive from separate etymological roots, they are linked aurally. "Reckon" can also mean "to count" (see below) and there are several overlaps between the evaluative and descriptive meanings of both words. Reckon, v.: "Cognate with Old Frisian *rekenia*, *reknia*to calculate, reckon up, to distribute… Middle Low German *rēkenen*, *reknen*, *rēken*, *recken* to count, calculate, reckon up, to include, take account of, to assess, evaluate, to think, judge, to say, Old High German *rehhanōn*, *rehhenōn* to arrange, prepare (Middle High German *rechenen*to count, reckon up, German *rechnen*)" (*OED*).
Recount, v.: "Partly < Middle French *reconter* to relate, tell, describe (12th cent. in Old French; < *re*-re-+ *conter* count v.), and partly < Middle French *raconteur* (French *raconter*) to describe in all its details, to relate, tell, describe (12th cent. in Old French; < *re*-re- prefix+ *aconter* account v.)" (*OED*).

The alewife was an important literary figure in the middle ages. Most extant examples we have are from literature, though there is one early dramatic example (the Chester cycle's *Harrowing of Hell*).[4] Her popularity is attested throughout the Tudor period, even as ale-brewing gave way to beer brewing and what was formerly a female-dominated industry (in certain parts of England) increasingly came under the auspices of the largely male guild system. There are quite a few plays and poems from this period which portray the pre-decline figure of the medieval alewife, though eventually the alewife becomes supplanted by the tavern hostess and the genre eventually gives way to the extremely popular "Good Gossip" literary genre (though the latter was well-established by the turn of the sixteenth century).

I use the term "alewife" in the title of this chapter for simplicity; some of the figures I consider are not true alewives. Narrowly construed, an alewife is a woman who brews and sells ale from her own household, usually to supplement her husband's income, particularly in times of economic crisis. In the medieval and Tudor periods we also find brewsters (women who brew ale), tapsters (women who draw and sell ale), taverners (men and women who sell wine and other liquor in taverns), and tipplers (alehouse-keepers of both sexes), among other occupations.[5]

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[4] Robbins's article provides a long list of alewife poems and "Good Gossip" ballads from the late medieval period.

[5] Peter Clark notes a three-fold division between drinking establishments in the medieval and early modern periods: alehouses, taverns and inns. Alehouses were smaller establishments containing anywhere between 2 and 9 rooms (Clark 65), serving ale and basic food to the poorer classes, occasionally providing rudimentary lodging to travellers. Taverns sold wine predominantly, had larger premises and served more well-to-do customers. During the early modern period they

The terminology is not always precise in medieval and early modern records, but these are the general distinctions. Betoun the Brewster, the Chester alewife, Elynour Rummynge, Dame Chat, and Typple are all alewives, while Rose the Regrater is an ale retailer and Mistress Quickly a hostess. The former brew their own ale; the latter do not. While I do not wish to elide the important distinctions between these occupations, I do examine the characters in relation to their common thread – the brewing of ale and the trade in ale and other liquors. The censure on women in these trades had little to do with the individual particularities of the various occupations; contemporary critics often simply found women and the liquor trade to be an infelicitous mixture. For the influx of provincial migrants to London in the later sixteenth century, representations of the tavern on Shakespeare's stage might well have recalled anti-alehouse sermons, literature and drama from their native counties.

In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the ale market expanded, owing in part to the Hundred Years' War and the disruption of wine and liquor trade lines. Mercantile and aristocratic households switched to ale-drinking and consequently the industry became more and more professionalised (Mate 40). Throughout this time, a greater distinction occurred between producers (brewers) and retailers (tapsters, tipplers, regraters) of ale. By 1500 in most parts

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became venues for business and political dealings (Clark 13). Where alehouses were located in town and country, taverns were found mostly in towns and more developed urban areas. Inns were large establishments serving the affluent, their owners members of the economic elite. They frequently provided entertainment and lavish feasts for nobles and gentry. Inns sold wine, ale and beer (Clark 7-8). There were such things as ale-taverns, which sold both ale and wine, though some London taverns, it seems, were forbidden from selling ale (Clark 11). These ale-taverns could be found in Oxford, Bromsgrove and Kings Norton, the latter in Worcestershire (Clark 23; 29).

of England, "the old system in which people took turns to brew their own grain had been replaced by a specialized, commercial system in which brewing for sale became a full-time occupation" (Mate 40). Women who had brewed occasionally to supplement their own or their family's income eventually faded from the craft. This process was more gradual in villages than in towns, and in the north and west of England than in other parts of the country.

In the fourteenth century, as women's role in brewing gradually diminished, we find records that brewsters "were often married to butchers and/or bakers and towards the end of the fifteenth century husbands and wives managed some kind of general shop, selling meat, bread and ale" (Mate 41). Mistress Quickly, we might note, similarly engages in multiple activities besides selling liquor: she buys shirts for Falstaff, sells meat (illegally, at Lent), and performs the impromptu service of nursemaid, washing Falstaff's "green wound" (*2 Henry IV* 2.1.96) and caring for him while he is on his deathbed.

Despite their increasing marginalisation, women in the brewing industry strike powerful figures in the literature and drama of the period between 1350 and 1600 (and beyond). Herman notes that by the time Skelton's "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummynge" was written, Elynour's type, the "independent female producer of ale and beer," was an "endangered species" (159). If this is so, why does the alewife character type persist into later early modern literature? I wish to suggest that anxieties present in medieval portrayals of the alewife subsist in later early modern portrayals of the taverner and hostess, particularly in Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly. Quickly embodies various traditional alewife traits: she is a

wife, a widow (both of whom were more likely to be involved in the ale trade than single women), and is associated with temptation, bawdiness and crime.

Since alewives lost much of their commercial power with the advent of professionalised beer-brewing over the course of the fifteenth century, it is curious that their type remained current in literature up until the eighteenth century. Bennett theorises that authors employed the figure to denigrate women and to suggest that the ale industry was passé: "by the sixteenth century, when male brewers and beer competed for customers with brewsters and ale, alewives were also represented as old-fashioned women who marketed foul drink" (123). There are more reasons for her literary longevity than this, as I will argue below, but what we can know for certain, as other critics have noticed, is that the alewife remained an important figure not just historically, but culturally as well.[6] She became a locus for anxieties about female behaviour, about alehouse economies more generally, and even about English national identity. Thus it is not surprising that Shakespeare employs Mistress Quickly in three of his history plays (and one of his comedies) in order to interrogate this locus. Significantly, besides Falstaff, Mistress Quickly is the character who appears in the greatest number of Shakespeare's plays. This makes her the most prolific stock character in the playwright's corpus.

As a dramatic character, Mistress Quickly is difficult to pin down. Is she the keeper of a bawdy house, or is she the victim of unfounded innuendoes and

[6] See Judith Bennett, Ralph Hanna III, Elizabeth Fowler, Pamela Allen Brown, Peter C. Herman, Linda Woodbridge (on "Good Gossips" genre), Katie Normington, Mary Wack.

accusations? Is the fact that she breaks the laws of the victuals trade – selling meat during Lent – indicative of more widespread moral corruption, a marker of her literary antecedents? Her character is of course more ambiguously drawn than these questions permit; however, it is clear that Mistress Quickly is the focus of many cultural assumptions, a figure that consciously represents many of the past medieval anxieties about the alewife and her position within society. Shakespeare uses the conventional figure of the alewife, itself a palimpsest of various social persons, in order to deconstruct some assumptions of the alehouse economy while leaving others intact. Since most information about Mistress Quickly is reported rather than actually shown – significantly, her introduction to *1 Henry IV* occurs in comic dialogue between Hal and Falstaff (1.2.38-53) – her character is especially prone to being overdetermined while being simultaneously underdetermined by a lack of exact information.

Cultural Anxieties about Alewives and Tapsters

Critics such as Peter Clark and Judith Bennett have thoroughly researched the ale industry in medieval England, and the alewife's decline within it. Clark argues that in the early history of alehouses, the small-scale, amateur and decentralised operations of local alewives, one of the reasons they did not obtain widespread social significance was that church festivities and general hospitality negated the need for the alehouse to be a central social institution. But by the early sixteenth century, "the alehouse was in the process of assuming, both in towns and to some extent in the countryside, a number of the wide-ranging, economic and social, as well as victualling functions, which were fundamental to its importance in popular

society in early modern England" (Clark 31). During this period, as we have already seen, the alewife figure was gradually receding in importance from the ale industry. However, literary representations continued to be important markers of ideas about women in the drinking trades. Clark himself notes the emergence of the "archetypal figure" of the "shrewd landlady, always keen to make an extra penny whenever the opportunity arose" (30). Early literary and dramatic works portray alewives as socially and economically central to rural and increasingly urban communities.

Anxieties about female behaviour in alewife portrayals have also been well documented in literary criticism. Bennett argues that while early alewife portrayals focus on duplicity – especially woman's "natural" duplicity – later representations betray "sexual anxieties (especially about single women or widows still in the trade), social conventions (especially about witches, scolds and other undesirable women), or a combination of these and other factors" (136). Bennett documents cases where slander against alewives had a significant negative impact on their trade (135-36). It seems probable that as women, and often as widows, alewives were particularly at the mercy of community censure.[7] As women who assumed a more public persona than others, even if they sold ale privately from their homes, alewives were especially at the mercy of detractors.

[7] Owst points out a common critique of women, especially widows, as those who love to walk out of doors. Rather than remain in their rightful place within the home, they indulge in being gossips and busy-bodies (388-89). He cites Franciscan preacher Nicholas Bozon (fl. 1320) and references Robert Mannyng's discourse on the deadly sin of pride in *Handlyng Synne*: "wymmen þat go fro strete to strete, / One or oþer for to mete, / Of prydë comþ swychë desyre" (ll. 3449-51; citation here is from Furnivall's edition, digitised by the University of Michigan).

Bennett also argues that the increased presence of widows, rather than non-married women, in alehouse-keeping in later sixteenth-century England reflects an anxiety about women's potentially illicit sexual behaviour: "[w]orried about prostitution and similar activities in alehouses, magistrates judged an older widow a better risk [as an alewife] than other women" (56). She cites, as an example of this anxiety, a court leet record from Manchester in which unmarried women were censured for pursuing baking, brewing and other trades.[8] The jury protests that women are a "gret vnconvenyance" to the town and that

> se[ngle] women beinge vnmaried be at ther owne hands and doe backe [ie. bake] & brewe & vse other tr[ades] to the great hurte of the poore Inhabitants havinge wieffe & children As also in abu[sing] them selves wth yonge men & others having not anny man to controle them to the gret Dishonor of God and Evell ensample of others. (*Court Leet* 241)

Women found keeping "anny housse or chamber" could be fined 6s. 8d. or imprisoned at the discretion of the steward or constables (241). Of course, this example illustrates only part of a greater concern about independent women *and* men;[9] indeed, in the paragraph preceding the above quotation the Manchester jury censures both "strange beggars" – the out-of-town destitute – and "women gotten wth child & cominge vnto vs fourth of other places." This line helpfully summarises some of the cultural anxieties mentioned above: wariness about independent folk who may become burdens on the municipality; moral and

[8] Bennett regularises spelling and punctuation. Rather than cite her transcription, I refer directly from the 1884 publication: *The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester*.
[9] See Beier and Fumerton.

financial concerns about pregnant (and presumably unmarried) women; and general fears about civic disruption. Significantly, however, God's censure is only invoked in relation to sexually promiscuous women and the poor moral example they provide to the community.

Moreover, many critics have noted the increasingly stringent legislation against female ale sellers in 1540s Chester. Under Mayor Henry Gee's new laws, women between the ages of 14 and 40 were not allowed to sell ale; in subsequent laws, women were prohibited from spending extravagantly on child birthing and churching celebrations.[10] It was traditional to give gifts of food and drink to new mothers: the law was introduced, apparently, to limit what was seen as wasteful excess. Women were also prohibited from wearing ostentatious headgear, particularly to distinguish between single women and married women. This anxiety about material excess is reflected in the Wife of Bath's "coverchiefs," which "ful fyne weren of ground; / I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound / That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed" (General Prologue 453-55). Elynour Rummynge is similarly described wearing

> clothes upon her hed
> That wey a sowe of led,
> Wrythen in wonder wyse
> After a Sarasyns gyse. (71-74)

[10] Churching is the "public appearance of a woman at church to return thanks after childbirth, *esp.* in accordance with the Anglican ritual" (*OED* 1.).

The comparison between Elynour's headwear and the pagan's turban implies a cultural wariness of exotic and inappropriate excess.

Women's decline in the brewing industry was certainly felt in other social areas. The loss of personal income for wives meant greater reliance on their husband's wages. For single women in rural areas the lack of economic opportunities in brewing meant that they had to move further afield – to larger urban centres – to make a living. This trend also had an impact on marriage rates: "[w]hen brewing as a source of supplemental income disappeared, couples in rural areas where other bye-employment was limited may have married at a later age than they would have done so earlier" (Mate 46). These facts suggest that the disappearance of the traditional alewife was keenly felt in numerous geographical areas, especially in rural ones, making her late medieval and Tudor literary representations even more poignant. That Henry Gee and other legislators went to such drastic measures to suppress women's visibility in brewing and other female-dominated spheres suggests the great impact of their social roles. This centrality is represented in literary alewives, tapsters and gossips; the tradition of their portrayal exists into the early modern period, as we shall see with Mistress Quickly.

Bennett argues that while the Chester "cups and cans" procession did not cause Gee's harsh legislation directly,[11] both the procession and the laws were

[11] Patric Collinson describes the "cups and cans" procession – part of the Chester Midsummer Show – as a relic of the Chester *Temptation of Christ* mystery play. The festive procession included befeathered devils "preceded by women with cups and cans" – presumably symbols of their deception and sin (38).

"imbricated within a complex discourse that drew heavily on misogynistic ideas" (143). Yet Bennett also argues that representations of alewives more or less directly "worked to inhibit commercial brewing by women" (123). I argue that a more polyvalent perspective of alewives was open to medieval readers and viewers. Alewife characters, while often founded on misogynistic assumptions,[12] could also participate in wider temporally contingent, or socially immediate, discourses, such as marital concord, sin and personal agency, as well as nationalist concerns. Misogyny is of course *not* temporally contingent, for it implies that women everywhere are always and forever the same.

Alewife and gossip literature could offer a "model of community" that challenged traditional "masculine marital and civic authority" (Wack 35). Crucially, Wack argues for the political and social significance of these kinds of literature, that they could perform positive functions such as mediating the "divisive effects of legislation" in Chester "that changed women's lives and places in that civic body" (36). Contrary to Bennett's perspective, she argues that these literary representations could well have performed a subversive function. Wack focuses especially on the relationship between drama and the social body. She performs a careful analysis of how medieval drama does more than reify misogynistic perspectives of women's work and roles in society. The "idea" of

[12] Linda Woodbridge argues that Good Gossip literature is an "unsubtle attempt" to censure women's idleness, their tendency to criticise their husbands and their desire to drink their husbands' money away (234-35). Conversely, Mary Wack argues that the alewife and gossip scenes in the Chester mystery plays embody a tension between women and/or women's communities and the patriarchal order of both Biblical history and the city of Chester. In both scenes this tension is expressed through references to communities of women structured around drink (35).

the medieval alewife – the alewife social person – thus evoked contradictory associations: both the economic savviness of the "shrewd landlady," and fear over females' sexual (and victuallers' economic) incontinence. She was a figure who could draw the community together, but who could also create moral and spiritual divisiveness. The alewife social person could serve as a didactic negative "ensample," but could also illustrate the positive importance of community – especially female communities – in medieval society.

Literary Representations of Medieval and Tudor Alewives

As we have seen, medieval moralists often passed judgement on historical alewives as temptresses and corrupt businesswomen. In literary and dramatic representations of the figure, alewives often retaliate by reckoning men's accounts and their souls. Usually they are implicated in their own reckoning, however. Writers often use the alewife stock character to make a larger point about male agency, the state of the Christian community, and the burgeoning national economy. This is not to say that the medieval alewife character is unworthy of analysis in her own right. However, I wish to emphasise that her literary and social meanings are always contingent on particular historical contexts. This contingency begins to change over the course of the sixteenth century.

"Alewife literature" represents only a fraction of what may be called "tavern" literature in the late medieval and Tudor periods, in sermons and homilies against gluttony and sloth (Robert Mannyng's *Handlying Synne*), saint plays which stage the tavern as a place of evil worldliness and fleshliness (The Digby *Mary Magdalene*), mystery plays (the Chester *Harrowing of Hell*),

morality drama (The Winchester *Occupation and Idleness*, *Mankind*, *Tom Tyler and His Wife*), narrative poetry (The Prologue to *The Tale of Beryn*), dream-visions (Langland's *Piers Plowman*), and later ballads ("The Industrious Smith," "The Kind Beleeving Hostesse," "The Trappan'd Maltster, or the Crafty Alewife" [all 17th-century examples]), character-writing (Thomas Overbury's *Characters*, John Earle's *Micro-cosmographie, Or, A peece of the world discouered* [1628]) and Good Gossip literature (Rowlands' *'Tis Merry When Gossips Meet* and *A Whole Crew of Kind Gossips* [early 17th-century]). As evidenced by this wide variety of texts, the alewife social person finds renewed expression and utility in stock characters across literary genres, modes and themes. In fact, each text mentioned above has an explicit argument about various discourses – from the corrupting power of women, to the instability of the tavern world, to more abstract notions of spiritual salvation. Even (or especially) texts that are written in primarily comic modes, such as the ballads, are often strongly morally positioned.

The alewife begins her literary existence in William Langland's narrative dream-vision poem, *Piers Plowman* (1360-87). However, anti-drinking and anti-tavern sentiments occur much earlier in sermon literature: "[i]n sermons…we have ample evidence that, from the beginnings of Mendicant oratory, as in patristic literature, the follies of the inebriate both ludicrous and tragical, were held up to audiences in all their grim reality" (Owst 426). Early on, preachers and other clergymen were aware of the widespread dangers of drinking, and were eager to elaborate on its local, national and spiritual ramifications: "of

dronkenesse cometh warre, pestilence and hunger. For, there-as dronkenesse and glotenye regnyth, ther falleth most suche dyverse pereles."[13] While references to women brewers in England exist as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, the proliferation of alewives in literature seems to have occurred much later, in the fourteenth century. The earliest English examples I have found are Langland's Betoun the Brewster and Rose the Regrater.[14] Betoun (or "Betty") is actively engaged in brewing, while Rose is a figure who, while not necessarily involved in the manufacturing process, makes profit from the ale trade.

Piers Plowman

Langland's Rose the Regrater and Betoun the Brewster are chronologically the first alewives in this study, and they exemplify the religious concerns about alewives that recur in later figures. I primarily examine Rose and Betoun not as exemplars of misogynistic sentiment, as it seems to me far from Langland's purpose throughout *Piers Plowman* to satirise gender distinctions.[15] Instead, I analyse the characters largely in terms of religious, economic and social themes of

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[13] From MS Harley 2398, fol. 33, quoted in Owst 432. MS Harley 2398 is a collection of instructional tracts for priests.

[14] "Brewster" was the contemporary term for female brewer. "-ster" was a suffix, as in "tapster" and "seamster," which in southern England "continued to be predominantly feminine throughout the ME. period. The OE. formations, *baxter*, *seamster*, *tapster*, were in southern English usually feminine before 1500" (*OED* "-ster, *suffix*"). A regrater is an intermediary salesperson who buys goods (usually food) in order to sell them afterward for profit; in other words, a retailer. See *OED*: "regrater 1."

[15] For example, Wrath instigates gossip in the Prioress' convent. While gossip is typically portrayed as an aspect of women's behaviour, Wrath, a male figure, is here responsible. Moreover, of the Seven Deadly Sins, only Pride is female. At 5.164-66 Wrath defends Pope Gregory's assertion that women should not be priests because of their inability to keep counsel (ie. confession), but as this is one character's assertion as described by the narrator, we should be wary of ascribing the sentiment to Langland himself. See Schmidt n. 164-66, p. 316.

passus V, particularly in light of Langland's critique of idleness and dishonest labour and its impact on communities. Rose and Betoun are measured or "reckoned" morally for their individual roles within a broader social satire.

Passus V begins narrator Will's second dream vision. Reason, a bishop, proclaims that the commons should reform their ways. He identifies figures by name in order to give direct advice. He bids "Wastour go werche what best he kouthe" (24) and tells Bette to beat Betty, her daughter or servant, "but if [ie. unless] she would werche" (33). Reason also counsels "the Kyng his commune to lovye" (48) and prays that the Pope give grace to the Holy Church (50-51). The Bishop foreshadows later action when he encourages all "that seke Seynt James and seyntes of Rome" to "Seketh Seynt Truth, for he may save yow alle" (56-57). Later in passus V Piers the Plowman offers to take some people on a "pilgrimage" to St Truth, though the pilgrimage consists in staying at home and doing honest labour (Simpson 67-71).

The allegorical figure of Repentance then encourages the people to confess their sins. Personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins give voice to the people's vices in the order Pride, Lechery, Envy, Wrath, Covetousness, Gluttony and Sloth. Simpson argues that the second vision in *Piers Plowman* is a critique of penitential practice: while the institution of the Holy Church is not attacked, various ecclesiastical forms of penance – such as confession, pilgrimage and pardon – are. Very often, this critique is illustrated through abuse of these practices. The Sins' confessions provide a long list of weaknesses in the ecclesiastical tradition (Simpson 65-66). Coveitise, or "Avarice," describes his education in dishonest practices, first in the local cloth trades, then in more exotic

usury markets. Throughout his confession, Coveitise emphasises his learning: he is apprenticed to "Symme-atte-Style" (l. 197); he learns from a book "Wikkedly to weye" merchandise (ll. 199-200); then among the drapers he learns his "grammar" of cheating (205-6); finally, he is instructed in usury and coin-clipping by the Lombards and Jews (238-40). For all of his extensive education, Coveitise does not know the basic concepts of theft and restitution. When questioned, he tells Repentance, "I wende riflynge were restitucion… for I lerned nevere rede on / And I kan no Frenssh in feith, but of the Fertheste ende of Northfolk" (234-35).

Within this critique the reader is introduced to Coveitise's wife, Rose the Regrater. Coveitise invests in her capital, barley, so that she may "brew it to selle" (l. 215). Even though she is labelled a "regrater" Rose is obviously a brewster as well. Significantly, Rose's main profession is weaving – this is how she initially meets Coveitise, who has learned the drapers' trade – and it seems that she takes up brewing in order to supplement their household income. This family organisation suggests that Coveitise and Rose are collaboratively involved in sin.

Among the dishonest drapers Coveitise learns how to stretch cloth – weakening the fabric, but making it longer so as to sell it by the yard – in order to make a profit. Rose buys wool using a false weight, paying for a pound of wool when its actual weight is 1¼ pounds (ll. 213-14). Her deception persists into the home industry: she has an elaborate system for cheating her alehouse customers. She sells ale by the cupful, mixing it secretly in her chamber. After letting the customers taste the good strong ale – sold at 4d. per gallon, as dictated by the

Assize of Bread and Ale, Rose then offers them the secret mixture, an adulterated combination of strong "puddyng" ale and weak "peny" ale (216).[16] As indicated by the latter label, the Assize decreed that weak ale was to be sold at 1d. per gallon; however, Rose sells this mixture at the strong-ale price. Thus Rose reckons her clients' accounts falsely. She represents popularly conceived anxieties about female inability to keep measure and about women's "natural" deceptiveness. Moreover, even though Rose does not judge men's souls herself she participates in Coveitise's penitential reckoning to Repentance. Rose is also involved in Langland's greater project of reckoning corrupt or ineffectual ecclesiastical practices.

Coveitise declares that "The beste ale lay in my bour or in my bedchambre" (l. 218). He implies that Rose plies her trade to benefit her husband directly. In an incongruous way, Rose is being a good wife, using her skills to please her partner. It is also likely that Coveitise and Rose enjoy the strong ale together in bed, as both "bour" (inner chamber) and "bedchambre" suggest intimacy away from the busy ale-room; thus lechery is added to their sins of greed and deception. Importantly, Rose seems willing to pay her conjugal debt. Hence Rose and Coveitise present a couple which parodies the medieval husband-and-helpmate conception of marriage.[17] Rose is obviously avaricious in her own right:

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[16] The Assize of Bread and Ale is actually a collection of various thirteenth-century statutes, likely created during the reign of Henry III (1216-1272), which are difficult to date exactly. Bennett states that these decrees "drew on local ordinances and relied on local enforcement" (99).

[17] R.N. Swanson argues that in the late medieval period women were encouraged to have strong roles within domestic labour and education. Of the latter, he writes, "[t]he family, instructed by its mother, [became] another type of 'discourse community' among the many which made up medieval catholicism" (305). Conor McCarthy compiles an account of the numerous roles within

why else would she be attracted to the personification of greed? However, most of her sinful activity benefits her husband in terms of economic gain and physical pleasure. We know that Rose is a successful brewster and regrater because she has been plying her trade for eleven years (l. 223). The stability of their marriage is morally unsavoury because it is based on sinful behaviour, yet the underlying concept of the marriage – namely, social and economic cooperation – points to an essentially positive marital model.[18]

As I have mentioned, Piers the Plowman creates a community around pilgrimage, a pilgrimage which paradoxically involves staying at home, ploughing the fields and creating a society in which all levels – from nobility to the commons – engage in work equally. Langland redefines the concept of penance, Simpson argues, as the performance of labour "not merely by reference to the ecclesiastical realm, but rather by reference to the essential relationships of an agricultural, feudal society" (70). In the sinner's world belonging to Coveitise and Rose each member of society does not participate equally in labour, offer restitution when required, nor honour social bonds. Rose keeps the poor-quality weak ale apart for "laborers and lowe folk" (l. 217), even though she makes them

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marriage women were expected to take on. Mary Wack details the numerous social and economic roles women played in English medieval society.

[18] Bennett argues that Langland's portrayal of Rose is "much more riveting than his other comments about victuallers or brewers; he names Rose, he locates her within a household, and he details her trickery with careful specificity" (131). These may be true; however, Langland individually names many figures, both male and female, in this passus. He details Coveitise's usury practices with much more specificity than he does Rose's ale-selling trickery, as he does with other characters, such as Envy's undermining of friends and neighbours (93-116) and Wrath's infiltration of the friary and the convent (135-66). Even in Gluttony's "Black Mass" in the following section, satire is more directed towards those who frequent the tavern than those who run it (but I will return to this point in a moment). Rather than see Langland's depiction of Rose as a pointed attack against women in the ale industry, I perceive her, with her husband, as representing corruption of the ideal Christian community.

believe they are buying the good-quality strong ale. The "full spirituality of the kind Langland is committed to," Simpson argues, "can be realised only through 'true' social relationships of interdependent labour" (71). Coveitise and Rose offer an inversion of this type of mutually beneficial labour.

However, they also, as I have argued, present a parodic version of marital cooperation. Here, the personification allegory is a flexible rather than static mode of representation. It may be part of Langland's ecclesiastical satire that Rose and Coveitise have ostensibly the perfect marriage in terms of marital concord. As with Gloton's parodic mass, the *form* of the marriage sacrament retains its shape while the *spirit* of it is broken.[19] Simpson argues,

> [n]ot only are the forms of the confessions, and many of their details, based on the model of ecclesiastical penitential manuals, but the sinfulness of the sins is often defined against their abuse of standard ecclesiastical forms which could have saved them from sin. (65-66)

So it is with the institution of marriage. During the mid-eleventh through early thirteenth centuries, a large group of monks and theologians agreed that a wife could use her speech and perhaps even her sexuality to influence her husband's economic and moral behaviour (Farmer 543).[20] Langland does not critique this

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[19] Rose and Coveitise also follow the letter, if not the spirit, of the law: "And because many sound beggars do refuse to labour so long as they can live from begging alms, giving themselves up to idleness and sins, and, at times, to robbery and other crimes-let no one, under the aforesaid pain of imprisonment presume, under colour of piety or alms to give anything to such as can very well labour, or to cherish them in their sloth, so that thus they may be compelled to labour for the necessaries of life" ("Statute of Labourers; 1351"). The couple are certainly not idlers as they prefer (though dishonestly) to "labour for the necessaries of life."

[20] Farmer discusses an emergent theological debate in the thirteenth century about the conversionary powers of wives over their non-Christian or usurious husbands (526-34).

helpmate conception of marriage as such, but he does illustrate how a sinful marriage can rest upon the technically domestic responsibilities of holy wedlock. Moreover, Rose and Coveitise's intended pilgrimage would be useless because Coveitise does not know the meaning of restitution (nor, probably, other forms of penitence), and because the entire concept of pilgrimage is challenged by Piers's invention of field-labour as pilgrimage.

Rose's behaviour represents typical perspectives on the alewife in the medieval imagination – as temptress, deceiver, corrupt ale seller. As a sinner, within Langland's concept of mutually beneficial labour, she dishonours bonds of Christian good-neighbourliness. As we will see in Mistress Quickly's characterisation, the hostess is deeply concerned with following Deputy Tisick's advice about being a good neighbour. In Langland's Rose, as in other literary and dramatic alewives, the figure is under social pressure to play a larger positive role within the rural or urban community, though she frequently fails in this because of her "natural" inability to keep measure and her "natural" inclination to corrupt men. Moreover, the amount and vitriolic nature of the clergy's conventional censure of alehouses and taverns cannot be underestimated. While historically the alehouse could be an important centre for social and economic interactions,[21] in

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Theologian Robert of Courson (d. 1219) argued that a wife could soften her husband's heart and induce him to return stolen property (Farmer 532). Another theologian, Thomas of Cobham (c. 1265-1327), was a notable advocate of women persuading their husbands to moral action, such as alms-giving. Though he does not follow this potential thematic avenue, Langland may have had the debate in mind in characterising Rose and Coveitise.

[21] Clark denies the cultural centrality of alehouses in market towns and argues against the idea that alehouses were used for business deals. He asserts that there is "nothing to suggest that… [ale]houses provided a focus for other economic, social and communal activities" like marketing goods or celebrating parish rites (23). While we should be wary of using literary works as

sermons and in literature it served as a symbol for communal disorder. Rose and other medieval alewives operate as moral exempla within a greater narrative about the "reckoning" of men's lives to their confessors and ultimately to God. As figures of reckoning themselves, alewives serve as powerful reminders that no one is immune from divine judgement.

Betoun the Brewestere

The trope of the alehouse as the "Devil's School" or the "Devil's Chapel" places Betoun in the metaphor as a head teacher or head priest, if not a kind of Antichrist.[22] Langland chooses not to portray her as such, though; he focuses instead on human agency rather than on divine or demonic agency. In Langland's formulation of the alehouse as "anti-church," Betoun is rather a subdued gatekeeper than evil temptress. However, as the first figure Gloton, or "Gluttony," meets in his narrative, Betoun has an important place as presider over the action in the tavern, even though she does not reappear after the early exchange. Although she plays such a minor role in the confession narrative of passus V, Betoun and her relationship to Gloton participate in Langland's larger argument about the problem of human agency in relation to the nature of sin. Langland's innovation is to thwart the reader's expectations: rather than a powerful, devilish

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straightforward historical documentation, Langland's portrayal of the alehouse suggests otherwise. In Glutton's narrative Langland emphasises customers' professions. Moreover, some are engaged in what appears to be economic activity: "Tho risen up in rape and round togideres, / And peised the penyworthes apart by hemselve" (5. 326-27). They also barter for Clement Cobbler's cloak and hood (5.320-25).

[22] See Owst 437-441 for an examination of this homiletic commonplace.

agent compelling others to sinful behaviour, Betoun presents herself as a catalyst, converting potential sin into actual sin.

As Cooper argues, personifications in *Piers Plowman* operate not allegorically, but metonymically. Personifications are simultaneously relational or attributive to individuals, *and* external concepts to those individuals ("Gender" 39). Gloton is thus an internal attribute of humanity and an idea that exists external to the body. Gloton is also a representation of the dreamer's own gluttony ("Gender" 43). Betoun thus represents not only a "realistic" alewife type, but also the dreamer's – that is, Will's – inclination to indulgence. In deflecting Gloton from Mass, Betoun represents an obstacle to the dreamer's and, by extension, the reader's spiritual salvation via physical indulgence. That she does not force Gloton, or tempt him by means other than verbal, suggests that humankind's capacity to sin actually arises within itself rather than from external forces. Langland critiques not a conventional temptress figure – an expression of external motivations to sin – but humankind's own internal tendencies to participate in sinful behaviour.

The tension between external incentive and internal will arises in the first lines of the account:

> Now bigynneth Gloton for to go to shrifte,
>
> And kaireth hym to kirkewarde his coupe [ie. his sin] to shewe.
>
> *Ac* Betoun the Brewestere bad hym good morwe
>
> And asked of hym with that, whiderward he wolde.
>
> (5.297-300; my emphasis)

The minor insertion of "Ac" or "But" in these lines is important. On the one hand, Betoun is targeted as the source of Gloton's temptation, in the sense of "Gluttony was going to shrift to reveal his sins, but *Betoun* the alewife said 'Good morning,' and asked him where he was going." Given this emphasis, Betoun becomes Gloton's main obstacle to confession and spiritual salvation. However, the line could just as likely be interpreted with the emphasis on Gloton: "Gluttony was going to Mass, *but* Betoun the alewife said 'Good morning.'" In this formulation, the emphasis is on what is known about Gloton (his tendency towards physical indulgence) and on what such an interruption of his purposes would entail. Is it Betoun who diverts Gloton or is it the very *excuse to divert* from his path that compels him? Does Gloton voluntarily enter Betoun's alehouse? What power has he to refuse the temptation of the woman or of her ale? Are his motivations internally or externally driven? Fowler argues that *Piers Plowman*'s allegory "treats agency as a concept of social obligation that recognizes not only acts but also intentions, not only faculties but also social relationships" (103). The question in this scene is whether or not Gloton's social obligations to the alewife mitigate his personal intentions to any great degree.

Gloton's "black mass"[23] takes place within a larger narrative recounting the Deadly Sins' confessions to the figure of Repentance. Gloton's confession repeatedly raises the issue of accepting responsibility for one's sins. Gloton is rarely ever treated as primary agent of his own actions. He is nearly always acted upon by other figures or objects: he receives ale as a bribe (l. 319) and as betting

[23] See Wilcockson.

pay-outs (ll. 335-36); he can only stand with the use of a staff (346); his "restitution" only occurs through the literal physical support of Clement Cobbler (351-55); and his wife and maidservant help him to bed after his evening of heavy drinking (358-59).[24] His wife "edwyte[d] hym [ie. reproached him] tho how wikkedly he lyved"; her encouragement, rather than Gloton's own sense of regret, seems to spur him to Repentance (364). In this scene alcohol further compromises his already limited personal agency, thus Betoun is a secondary or even tertiary figure in Gloton's spiritual denigration.

Betoun interferes with Gloton's plan to attend Mass; however, Langland's emphasis is on Gloton's passive lack of agency rather than Betoun's active agency in obstructing Glutton. The narrative critiques the conception of sin as an independent, active and external force which exists outside of the individual. Gloton, at the end of his confession, "shewe[s]" shrift "with [his] mouthe" as Repentance declares, but he has not shown any with his actions. He only promises to perform penitential acts in the future, and then only at the behest of another.

This section shows that sin is contingent, even though the sinner must take responsibility for it. Yet confession has no way of accounting for the simultaneously contingent and non-contingent nature of sin. Thus, if the passus is, as Simpson argues, a critique of the effectiveness of the specific church practices, Langland illustrates that an internal and external, active and passive, notion of sin cannot be treated by standard confession practices. Besides Gloton's agency in pissing and farting, the only other notable time he shows agency is at the

[24] Unless otherwise noted, all *Piers Plowman* line references in this section are to passus five.

beginning of the scene when he "kaireth hym to kirkewarde his coupe to shewe" (l. 298). His intent – carrying himself to church to reveal his sins – is corrupted by Betoun's interference, yet she presents the most minor of obstacles. She does not command Gloton to the alehouse, but calls him "gossib" and asks if he will try her ale (303). She breaks no laws by proffering spices that can be chewed on fasting days to abate hunger and nausea (Schmidt n. 305-6, p. 317). Again, she merely answers Glutton's question without forcing him to try her ale and spices.

While Langland no doubt relies on the conception of the alewife as provider of drink and sustenance, he portrays her in surprisingly morally neutral terms. The onus of sin and failed agency is placed on Gloton. For preacher John Bromyard and other clergymen of the period, "[t]emptation by another does not… excuse the man's sin" (Karras 244). When viewed in the larger context of Langland's commentary on spiritual (and other kinds of) agency, Betoun's role as "tempting alewife" argues less about the corrupting nature of women and alewives than it does about the problematic nature of man's spiritual will and intention.

I hope to have shown here that Langland relies on conventional concepts of social personhood to make arguments about sin, the economy and the efficacy of religious institutions. Rose and Betoun do not reckon men's souls directly, but they are involved in Langland's reckoning – and recounting – of men's sins and of ineffective clerical practices. The next figure in my analysis is *directly* involved in calling sinners to account, both on her own terms as a "bad soul" in hell and as part of the anonymous playwright's didactic project in proving that women are more inclined to sin as alewives than as most other labourers.

The Chester Alewife

The Chester *Harrowing of Hell* introduces the relatively recent alewife social person into a story that has ancient origins. The *Harrowing* mystery plays have their beginnings in *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, which was a well-known apocryphal text in the Middle Ages and translated into many vernaculars. The *Gospel*'s second part describes the descent of Christ into hell where he releases Adam, the patriarchs and other good souls into the terrestrial paradise.[25] The Chester *Harrowing* owes much of its design to the Middle English *Stanzaic Life of Christ,*[26] although Robert Wilson suggests that the playwright merely used the latter for embellishment and that the extant *Harrowing* is actually descended from a now-lost play (432). Katie Normington and others have tried to date the alewife section based on social concerns of the time period, believing that it "reflect[s] local attempts to curb female brewing" (120), though it is difficult to know for certain. The *Harrowing* alewife does bear a strong resemblance to the alewife figure in the Innkeeper company's "Cups and Cans" procession that was staged during the Chester Midsummer Show.[27]

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[25] See Zbigniew Izadorczyk 5-6 for a more in-depth description.

[26] The precise date of the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* is not known, although Hardin Craig follows Frances Foster in believing it was composed in the fourteenth century, though all extant manuscripts date from the fifteenth. The *Life* is a redaction of Ranulph Higden's Latin work, the *Polychronicon* (first edition, 1327; extended edition, 1342).

[27] The Midsummer Show was a "great civic event in which the city and its constituent companies processed ceremonially" (Mills 88). There is conflicting opinion on which tradition predates the other; what does seem clear is that the Midsummer Show was never put on in the same year as the mystery cycle.

Regardless of whether the Chester alewife is an earlier or a later addition to the cycle, she has obvious historical significance within the play, marking a point when brewsters were looked upon with disapproval. Speaking at the end of the *Harrowing of Hell*, after Jesus has released all of the good souls, the alewife explains why she has been left behind: "Of kannes I kept no trewe measure. / My cuppes I sould [ie. sold] at my pleasure, / deceavinge manye a creature" (289-91). One of the tricks of which alewives were commonly accused was putting false bottoms in their cups, thus giving their customers less than what they paid for and keeping "no trewe measure" of ale. Normington argues that the Cooks' guild – which put on the play – was traditionally in competition with the alewives; therefore, the guild's vilification of the alewife is directed at shaming the enemy. Judith Bennett notes that after 1540, when the Chester mayor put tighter restrictions on women in the brewing industry, the civic environment changed to one of greater hostility against them (168).[28] The alewife's comic lines are therefore charged with greater significance: she "transcends the boundary of comedy, and her appearance shows a real fear of working women's threat to the market" (Normington 120). The seemingly incongruous insertion of a comic figure thus points to a serious moral lesson: ale brewing permits women to leave the domestic sphere and enter the male-dominated public sphere.

It was believed that the alewife figure combined the transgressions of the brewing industry with the inherently feminine sin of unrestraint: "[w]omen's

[28] The legislation prohibited women between the ages of 14 and 40 from selling ale, presumably to curb the public presence of sexually available women (Bennett 122); it also put greater restrictions on celebrations of childbirth and churching (Bennett 142-43).

conspicuous role in the selling of ale linked them to a myriad of societal sins… the formulaic phrase 'withouten mesur' classes the crime of incontinence" (Fowler 154). Therefore, the alewife was perceived to be already predisposed toward the sins she commits. In the medieval "public imagination," the female brewer had a poor reputation; however, the brewing industry was itself considered disreputable separate from women's involvement in it (Fowler 153). The Brewers' Company of London was never a front-running livery company, partially because the ale trade was notoriously difficult to regulate, even after the standardization of weights and measures in the city in 1267 (Fowler 153; 149). Fowler also posits that the Cooks' guild may have acted in concert with the Innkeepers', Tapsters', and Hostlers' guilds, implying that the play's social satire is a poke at the industry from within rather than from without. The idea that the guilds were comfortable with satirising themselves suggests that the scene was played equally for humour and as a cautionary tale.

The comic scene in the traditionally serious "Harrowing" narrative has caused numerous critics to consider the relationship between the two tonalities.[29] Lumiansky justifies the scene as merely a concrete example of a point made earlier in the *Harrowing*. He argues that the alewife scene "presents an illustration, using appropriate contemporary conditions in Chester, of Christ's second point in the opening scene: He removed from Hell only those who lived

[29] Lumiansky enumerates the reasons that critics have found for the incorporation of the alewife's scene and for its seemingly unusual subject: "because it may be a later addition, because the play is short, because the metrical pattern in the scene is somewhat irregular,… because the scene is realistically comic [in contrast to the rest of the play]" (9).

righteously on earth" (12). The critic suggests that the playwright simply wanted to appeal to a local audience. However, I would like to complicate the notion that the scene is merely a moral exemplar intended only to disparage female ale sellers.

Greed was considered a primary attribute of those who practiced the trade, in addition to the sin of incontinence. Again, the lack of strong regulation made it tempting for ale sellers to vend poor quality drink at outrageous prices. They would also over-water, "misspending much malt, bruynge so thynne, / selling smale cuppes money to wynne," as the Chester alewife describes (ll. 307-8). But just as "inherent" female greediness makes the alewife the perfect spokeswoman to exemplify its evils, so too was greed viewed as synonymous with the trade: "avarice…is attributed to individuals, attributed to the class of the female and fairly poor, but simultaneously attributed to the brewing of the ale itself" (Fowler 154). The *Harrowing of Hell* playwright employs the image of the alewife to emphasise enduring moral concerns that were applicable to both men and women. From a theatrical perspective, the marriage between the alewife and the second demon is a parody of a festive comedy. The infernal marriage and call to the feast is a carnivalesque inversion of the traditional happy wedding that concludes comic plays. Northrop Frye argues that closing a play with a festive party or banquet goes back as far as Greek Middle and New Comedy, including the works of Plautus and Terence (163-4). The Chester playwright may be recalling this

tradition.[30] Mills and Lumiansky note that the call to celebration at the end of the play suggests "Lucifer's feast," another term for the "torments of hell [and] destruction" (n. 336, p. 276, vol. 2). The third demon cries that their entertainment will be "Usynge cardes, dyce, and cuppes smale" (334). He equates ale-selling crimes with those of illegal gambling: "[u]nder the 1533 Chester regulations, taverners had to give surety against permitting unlawful games in their establishments" (n. 334-5, p. 276, vol. 2). The demon's lines are a final warning against crimes associated with taverns and inns.[31]

The reason for making the ale seller female is therefore potentially more significant than merely illustrating the well-known sins of women. The alewife needs to be female to create the parody of the wedding feast. Her marriage to the demon suggests a vivid scene, one that is likely personally relevant to the medieval viewer, and it is the last image left in the minds of the audience. Frye notes that, at the end of Roman comedies, actors invited the viewers to partake of the festive environment through applause: the plays encouraged the "audience to form a part of the comic society" (164). Instead of anticlimactically undercutting the divine matter that precedes the alewife's scene, as Rosemary Woolf suggests (271), the woman's situation intimately connects the audience to her damnation, placing it in socially familiar matrimonial terms. The comedy is transcended, but not only in the ways Normington and others suggest. The audience may laugh at

[30] The plays of the tenth-century nun Hroswitha are evidence that New Greek Comedy was known in monastic circles of the early medieval period (through the Roman plays of Terence). That Plautus and Terence's plays were used for grammatical instruction throughout the Middle Ages, well into the sixteenth century, is perhaps a more convincing argument that New Comedy was known to the mystery plays' authors.

[31] See Bennett for more on "Cups and Cans" tradition (125-26, 130, 142-44).

the alewife, but it is also uncomfortable because the dramatic convention turns them into invitees to a hellish feast. The play is not just about the sins of the alewife and of brewers generally, but about the temptations, like gambling, in which the ordinary tavern guest may indulge.

The play also relates nationalism to the integrity of the brewing industry. The alewife warns the audience menacingly:

> Tavernes, tapsters of this cittye
> shalbe promoted here with mee
> for breakinge statutes of this contrye,
> hurtinge the commonwealth,
> with all typpers-tappers [ie. alehouse keepers] that are cunninge.
>
> (301-5)

Breaking ale-brewing and ale-selling statutes, as well as transgressing the nation's laws more generally, damages the "commonwealth" itself. Fowler notes that ale-brewing was seen as a typically English industry; just as beer-brewing and wine-fermenting were perceived as Dutch and French industries respectively (154). The alewife is therefore a spokeswoman who reminds the audience of what is at stake by maintaining socio-economic order and the integrity of English industry. This role has historical as well as economic implications. Her lines mark the continuation of nationalist pride in a culturally defined English trade. The alewife brings together historical and cultural concerns under the umbrella theme of the soul's salvation.

The Shift from Medieval to Tudor

Medieval writers were often suspicious of women as alewives and tapsters, but their main concerns were moral and religious issues beyond women in the liquor industry. Authors censured the ale and victualing industries using the shorthand trope of women's incontinence. Moreover, "alewives-as-reckoners" stood as a metaphor employed to make larger arguments about Christians' purchase on salvation. The alewife's conventional loquaciousness also made her an excellent "recounter" – just as the Chester alewife recounts her sins and warns her audience against suffering a similar fate. Her character brings together major aspects of the alewife's conventional literary roles: she recounts her sins, is involved in the reckoning of bad souls, and implicates the audience in that reckoning.

The Chester alewife's placement outside of earthly time provides an apropos transition to the subject of my next section. Even though the Chester alewife is represented in a post-apocalyptic location outside of human time, the playwright is at pains to show her firmly rooted in culturally relevant concerns of his period. The authors of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (ca. 1550-53)[32] and *Tom Tyler and his Wife*,[33] on the other hand, drain the cultural specificity from the alewife social person – that is, from the *idea* of the alewife – using her character

[32] See Fraser and Rabkin (35) for theory of composition date.

[33] *Tom Tyler* is a more difficult play for which to determine a date of composition. The title page of the 1661 edition declares it to be a version "As It was Printed and Acted about a hundred Years ago" (Sig. A1r). After much consideration of numerous dating theories, Felix E. Schelling finally seeks the advice of C.P.G. Scott, who writes, "To state the matter in few words, and saving any points that might be made on individual words or constructions or spellings, the text of 1661 is evidently a fairly good but not exact reproduction of the words of a text first written or printed between 1540 and 1570 – to guess more closely, about 1550-60 – but with the spelling for the most part altered to the most advanced style of 1661" (Schelling 257). Schelling quotes from his personal correspondence with Scott, for whom he gives no bibliographic information.

type to make generic claims about female communities and the adverse effects of alcohol. *Gammer Gurton's* Dame Chat and the appropriately named Typple from *Tom Tyler* are each instantly recognisable alewife figures: both are loquacious, both have reputations for selling good ale, and both are central to female communities within their rural towns. There have been several recent studies on "Good Gossip" literature in which the alewife plays a central part;[34] however, none of them to my knowledge deal with the issue of the alewife's perceived timelessness or her lack of cultural specificity. The purpose of this section is to show a shift from medieval authors' overt interest in the alewife's ideological rootedness to Tudor authors' overt interest in the alewife's character *qua* character.

While one could never claim that *Gammer Gurton* and *Tom Tyler* are not rooted in cultural assumptions of the times and places in which they were created, one *could* argue that the authors attempt to naturalise their characters' behaviour in order to elide differences between past and present (and, by extension, future) conceptions of social persons. The result of this elision is caricature and stereotype. David Bevington argues that *Gammer Gurton*

> is a college-man's indulgent laugh at unlearned country folk, and the parody is hyperbolic even in its name calling and abuse…. Such virtuosity of vituperation [between Dame Chat and Gammer Gurton] is

[34] A select list: Brown (56-82); Herman, Woodbridge (224-43) and Wack. See also Bernard Capp's extensive historical study, *When Gossips Meet*.

> not to be met in the truly popular drama before Shakespeare; here it has the exaggerated aspect of caricature. (*Mankind to Marlowe* 33-34)

Bevington implies that parody of rustic living implicitly involves a flattening of character in the service of comedy. *Gammer Gurton* and *Tom Tyler* suggest a general movement from concern about social institutions to concern about diffuse social characteristics.[35] This project also involves removal of the alewife social person from her earlier defined cultural context and the concretisation of her social roles within a dramatic character. Bevington's assessment of character as "caricature" is accurate; Dame Chat and Typple embody few social persons, few "arguments of personhood," as Fowler would term it. The multiple social, political and religious perspectives present in medieval alewife stock characters are here erased; in these Tudor farces, the alewife becomes more uniform, a shorthand figure for female rebelliousness and incontinence without recourse to the earlier moral framework.

While it may appear that the Chester play foreshadows or even lays the groundwork for the Tudor alewife caricature, there are some major differences between the characters, particularly in each play's use of atemporality. In the

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[35] An exception from Tudor literature is John Skelton's "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummynge." It belongs to a genre of grotesque realism that nevertheless invokes a wider critique of monetary exchange. See Fowler, Ch. 3: "The Temporality of Social Persons: Value in 'The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummynge'" (134-77). See also Herman.

One could also argue that this lack of cultural specificity is found in pre-Tudor literature, since some carols and ballads exist, possibly as early as the late fourteenth century, that "poke[…] fun at women for their proclivity for deep drinking; these ale-wives' tales (which may be extended to include such general satire as 'The Fraternity of Drinkers') are light-hearted realistic vignettes" (Robbins 12). This gentle attack on women's "natural" tendency to overdrink while in the company of their gossips is an early expression of Tudor drama's atemporal characterisation of "good gossips" and alewives. However, even in the late fourteenth century real alewives (as opposed to literary representations of them) had lost a great deal of their social significance as purveyors of necessary staples.

Chester play, which occurs outside of human time, the author places the specific alewife character within the generic category of "the bad soul." The audience is implicated in the play's mixture of religious didacticism and civic social critique. Rather than have the audience laugh at coarse caricatures (of the kind that inhabit *Gammer Gurton* and *Tom Tyler*), the mystery playwrights create a comic character who is specific enough to flout town liquor laws, but who also threatens the audience's political and spiritual well-being. The difference of course is one of genre, not only between *Gammer Gurton* and *Tom Tyler* and the Chester *Harrowing*, but between the Tudor plays and the earlier medieval works I have referenced. The medieval works discussed above are didactic and hence must relate morally to their intended readers or audiences, while the Tudor plays discussed below are broad farces which are intended to entertain more than to instruct.

Gammer Gurton's Needle

The alewives in *Gammer Gurton* and *Tom Tyler* tend to be foolish, garrulous, strife-causing members (or leaders) of disruptive female communities. Dame Chat from *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is a rural non-commercial alewife. She brews from her home and offers ale to her neighbours and friends. Diccon the Bedlam targets Gammer and Dame Chat because he knows they are easily incited to strife; women's communities (here, cottage industries) are subject to envy, anger and vitriolic name-calling. At the play's beginning, Diccon claims to have taken advantage of female hospitality frequently:

> Many a gossips cup in my tyme have I tasted

> And many a broche and spit, have I both turned and basted
>
> Many a peece of bacon haue I had out of hir balkes
>
> In ronnyng ouer the country, with long and were walkes.
>
> (1.1.3-6)[36]

Diccon promises to make "good sporte" between Gammer and Chat, predicting that the outcome will be a reward of "two pots of ale" (2.2.18; 1.1.24). Indeed, Chat does thank Diccon with "a cup of the best ale" in exchange for his intelligence on Gammer (2.2.80). While stirring up contention between the two women, Diccon describes Chat's scolding: "Her tonge it went on patins [ie. her tongue clattered like clogs], by hym that Judas solde, / Ech other worde I was a knaue, and you [ie. Gammer] a hore of hores" (2.4.35-36). Even though Diccon describes a verbal exchange which never occurred, the actual meeting between Chat and Gammer is a conventional gathering of abusive scolds, confirming the bedlam's fancy:

> Gammer: Come out hogge, and let me haue right.
>
> Chat: Thou arrant Witche.
>
> Gammer: Thou bawdie bitche, chil make thee curse this night.
>
> Chat: A bag and a wallet.
>
> Gammer: A carte for a callet.
>
> Chat: Why wenest thou thus to preuaile,
>
> I hold thee a grote,

[36] Quotations are from *Gammer Gurtons Nedle*, ed. H.F.B. Brett-Smith. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1920. I have regularised the spelling of the play's title throughout.

I shall patche thy coate. (3.3.22-29)

The typically female insults ("Witch," "bitche," "bag," "callet") are indicative of a generic "catfight"; Chat's threat to "patche" Gammer's "coate" is an ironic metaphor considering Gammer's occupation as seamstress, and suggests female jealousy and rivalry.

The play's farce also relies on a comic representation of rural dearth. Helen Whall argues that there is "pathos to the poverty of Gammer's village – a pathos made effective because it is neither sentimentalized nor mocked" (163). However, the villagers' lack of material possessions actually intensifies comedic effect. Gammer has only one good needle; Chat has only one prize rooster; Hodge has only one good pair of breeches in which he can court Kirstian Clack. Each loss pushes each character into hyperbolic behaviour: Gammer noisily laments the loss of her needle; Chat rages over her missing rooster; and Hodge frets anxiously about his unmended trousers. The characters' paucity of resources makes them put greater importance on the meagre possessions they do have. Their overreactions are the very essence of theatrical farce.

The rural alewife figure helps to locate the play in a vaguely rustic "past" away from Cambridge, where the play was first performed (according to the 1575 and 1661 title pages) and from London, where it was first printed. It is worth remembering here that by the mid-sixteenth century historical alewives had mostly disappeared from the English landscape. Any satire in the play – perhaps anti-clergy sentiment in the form of Doctor Rat, the inept country curate – lacks teeth because the play decidedly does not target those who would have been in its original audience. What Bevington writes about the play being "college-man's

indulgent laugh at unlearned country folk" is probably true. Diccon, as Whall argues, is allied with the audience perspective; our experience of the village and characters is mediated through him. His position, like the viewers', is amoral: "he cannot deliver a meaningful homily on Vice or Mischief to his co-conspirators, the audience" (162). The play is thus unmoored from temporal, geographical and moral exactness. The rural alewife is another signifier of this vague situation.

Unlike her medieval counterparts, Chat's role in the play is in the service of broad farce and in furthering the idea of an alewife as rurally remote, quaint, and exceedingly *female*. Where misogyny is under-emphasised (or merely taken for granted) in medieval representations of alewives, in *Gammer Gurton* Chat exists overtly as part of an ongoing anti-female discourse, the idea that women are everywhere and always the same. Again, this is an example of stereotype rather than stock character. The humour in her representation relies upon her detachment from social realities rather than in an engagement with them.

Tom Tyler and his Wife

Tom Tyler and his Wife[37] is an example of shrew-taming drama in the same category as the anonymous *The Taming of A Shrew* (1594), Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1596) and Chettle, Dekker and Haughton's *Patient Grissel* (ca. 1600).[38] The play's use of abstractions – occupational (Tyler, Taylor, Tipple)

[37] Felix Schelling determines the date of composition to be between 1540 and 1570, or "to guess more closely, about 1550-60 – but with the spelling for the most part altered to the most advanced style of 1661 [the date of the second printing]" (257).
[38] Woodbridge discusses the genre at length in her *Women and the English Renaissance*. See especially Chapter 8: "Saints of Sonnet and the Fight for the Breeches."

and conceptual (Strife, Destiny, Desire, Sturdy) – signals its investment in a homiletic tradition and in personification allegory, even though the Prologue calls the work a "merrie sport" (4). Its use of allegory is quite different from that of *Piers Plowman*. In the dream vision, Will's "will," or volition, is emblematic of the reader's. Where in Langland's passus V the reader is invited to view human attributes such as gluttony as internal, in *Tom Tyler* personifications remain external forces that influence or torment the characters, with little associative power directed toward the audience. The play is set in a non-specific location: most of the action occurs in the Swan alehouse in an unnamed, presumably rural, village. The opening psychomachic discussion between Desire and Destiny – each an internal and an external motivation to marriage – frames the action's "universal" import. The play ends, somewhat jarringly, with a moralistic song that celebrates the virtues of reason and patience.

The alewife Typple provides refreshment and a meeting place for gossips Strife and Sturdy. Ale is not figured as a universal evil in the play: it is the reviving drink that Tom Tyler seeks during a dry summer's day at work (ll. 186-89).[39] However, in conjunction with loquacious and ungovernable women, ale becomes a provocation to marital strife. Typple is part of the community or "school" that supports Strife's spousal abuse. Tom Tyler complains, "She is to well schooled with too many shrowes / To receive any blowes, never think so" (342-43). Typple provides the means and opportunity for Strife's complaints

[39] Quotations are from *Tom Tyler and His Wife*, ed. G.C. Moore Smith. London: Malone Society Reprints, 1910.

against her husband. She also provides the ale which intoxicates Strife, causing her to beat her husband. However, Typple also criticises the shrewish wife: she laughs at Strife when Tom Taylor, in disguise as Tom Tyler, beats her. "Belike," the alewife exclaims, "[Tyler] hath learned in a new school / Whereat I cannot chuse but laffe" (519-20). When Strife returns black and blue from Taylor's beating, the gossips swallow their laughter and criticism to become seemingly compassionate friends. Typple comforts Strife: "I am sorrie to see you here / In such unhappie case, but take some heart of grace, / Good Gossip I pray you" (549-51). Typple and Sturdy's quick attitude reversal suggests a conventionally backbiting and insincere female community.

The numerous songs featured in the play serve the function of memorialising the action even as it is ongoing. The song, "Tom Tiler was a trifeler" (693-717) recounts the play's narrative before the play is even over. Sturdy, Typple and Strife seem to be composing the story for posterity, blurring the play's generic lines between drama and ballad, between present performance and future commemoration. The play also ends with an awkward analogy between the concept of chance on a domestic and on a royal scale: an axiom about the ill fortune of marrying a shrew leads to a prayer for the future preservation of the Queen from "perilous chance" (925).[40] Proverbial wisdom of the past is recounted for consideration of the state's future. The anonymous author's attempt to yoke

[40] Of course, the final song is likely a later addition; if the play was indeed written in the 1540s or 1550s, then Elizabeth would not yet be on the throne. Also, the final song follows another song, one which ends – more pertinently to the play – on the necessity of relying on reason in times of marital suffering.

together homiletic narrative and historical moment illustrates the unsuitability of the dramatic work to the endeavour. In this confused temporal situation, Typple the alewife becomes merely instrumental in presenting the "moral" of the "merrie sport." The play purports to be didactic, though any precise moral reflecting the concerns of contemporary society about the deleterious effects of the alehouse upon marital relationships is mitigated by song-singing, disguise-donning, and comic brawling.

The alewife's atemporality and tendency to caricature reveals itself in several ways in these Tudor plays: through the authors' use of abstraction, generic confusion and through the playwrights' concerted efforts to naturalise characters' behaviour. The authors' representation of women's communities and of the conflicts within those communities creates a stagnant portrait of the alewife, rather than a complex "argument" of the alewife. This way of envisioning the alewife as merely a comic butt may have informed Shakespeare's audience's initial assumptions about Mistress Quickly when she first steps on stage in *1 Henry IV* 2.4.

Mistress Quickly

Mistress Quickly returns the alewife social person to social and cultural prominence. Quickly is central to various discourses throughout the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, most importantly the discourse of history and historiography. As suggested in my epigraph, there can be a strong relationship between the epistemology of the individual and the epistemology of history, in life as in literary works. The plays focus attention on questions such as "how do

we interpret human actions?" and "how do we make sense of history, particularly moments of great political import?" The latter question is crucial to most if not all of Shakespeare's histories. While many late twentieth-century critics have rescued Quickly from "Mistress-Quickly-as-comic-butt" school of thought, most have not gone far enough in analysing her significance to the plays' discourse of historiography. While I do not wish to deny the importance of her comic function, I would like to reinvigorate studies that suggest Quickly is a merely ridiculous figure exhibiting Shakespeare's anti-female bias.

Writing about "timeless women" in Shakespeare's histories, Phyllis Rackin argues that anachronisms "interpellate the women in the audience with identities that are defined solely by their gender – identities constrained by usually hostile and always restrictive stereotypes" (*Shakespeare and Women* 117). While gender bias is of course inherent in women's portrayal in the histories, this is not to say that Shakespeare leaves this bias uncomplicated by political circumstances and exigencies. Nor do these so-called "restrictive stereotypes" merely suggest that women are "immune to the historical contingencies of time and place" (*Shakespeare and Women* 117). Rackin tells only part of the story. She neglects to point out that this potential timelessness, this existence outside "historical contingencies," can mean that female characters, especially Quickly, have a useful marginality within the telling of "official" history.[41]

[41] Pat Parker writes of women generally in the history plays, providing a counter-perspective to Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin's *Engendering a Nation*. Parker argues, "[m]arginalized in the plots of these histories, [women] are paradoxically central as the very bearers of legitimacy and right, as well as figures of the threat of adulteration or bearing away" (*Shakespeare from the Margins* 172).

Critics, like the men Falstaff imagines, know not what to make of Mistress Quickly: "She's neither fish nor flesh; a man knows not where to have her" – that is, disregarding the bawdy pun, he knows not how to understand her (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.122-23). Critics like Howard and Rackin and Jyotsna Singh conclude that she is a "comic butt," a "source of humor and derision" (Howard and Rackin 183; Singh 33). Mistress Quickly bears the burden of past associations between alewives and criminal and immoral behaviour. Though Howard and Rackin identify her marital status as "increasingly ambiguous" (177), they chart her descent into criminality very clearly:

> [Quickly's] close association with Doll Tearsheet colors the audience's perception both of her and of the tavern, now not only a refuge for male criminals and a wayward prince but a place as well for female criminality: prostitution and violence against a man…. The women of the tavern are increasingly presented as preying on the commonwealth, endangering its (male) citizens and diverting its wealth from authorized purposes. (178)

I would like to put pressure on the idea that Mistress Quickly is a "common whore" as Howard and Rackin argue (180) and as Singh states without qualification from the beginning of her section on *Henry IV*.[42] Surely the point of creating Mistress Quickly as a deeply ambivalent figure – largely constructed by

[42] Singh similarly argues, "Names like Overdone and Quickly are meant to stir instant humor through sexual innuendo – producing nods and winks among audiences both within and outside the play" (33). Howard and Rackin's conclusion about Quickly being a merely humorous "comic butt" is confusing, as they provide one of the most detailed analyses of Quickly's dramatic roles in all of Shakespeare character criticism.

cultural context, others' assumptions and her social associations – is to defer resolution endlessly. In refusing to settle the question of Quickly's "true" nature, Shakespeare metonymically suggests a larger epistemological problem in English history.

Mistress Quickly embodies a tension between the "realism" of her character and the indeterminacy of her moral character and social status. Many critics have noted her shifting marital status throughout the four plays in which she appears. They also acknowledge an assumption that Mistress Quickly is a procuress and criminal in the second "tetralogy." Even as critics identify this as assumption, their arguments frequently still rest upon it as fact. Grene avers,

> [t]here may be a strategic blackening of Quickly along with the other Eastcheapers to distance them from the reformed Prince/King. But it is not consistent or systematic, and leaves Shakespeare free to deploy her to quite other ends in *Merry Wives*. Mistress Quickly has neither a logically developed moral character nor a coherent *curriculum vitae*.
>
> (201)

However, Grene leaves his analysis there, with Shakespeare's intent to create an ambiguous figure. My argument, as I state at the beginning of this section, connects Quickly's indeterminacy to issues concerning the indefinability or even unknowability of history. Paul Yachnin argues that the *Henry IV* plays are exceedingly concerned with the issue of self-definition, and with characters revising history to suit their own political machinations ("History"). What results is a critique of "official" history, whether conceived of in circular or linear terms. Yachnin identifies various points in the plays where characters are at pains to

construct or revise history for their own purposes, and this explains in part the sequential nature and "structural problem" of the *Henry IV* plays. Read in this light, Mistress Quickly becomes another figure concerned with revision and definition, both of herself and of English history.

Reckoning, knowing, indeterminacy

Before we meet Mistress Quickly, Prince Hal and Falstaff give us a brief sketch of her character:

> Falstaff: …is not my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench?
>
> Prince Henry: As the honey of Hybla, my old lad of the castle.
> And is not a buff jerkin a most sweet robe of durance?
>
> Falstaff: …What a plague have I to do with a buff jerkin?
>
> Prince Henry: Why, what a pox have I to do with my hostess of the tavern?
>
> Falstaff: Well, thou has called her to a reckoning many a time and oft.
>
> Prince Henry: Did I ever call for thee to pay thy part?
>
> Falstaff: No, I'll give thee thy due, thou hast paid all there.
>
> Prince Henry: Yea, and elsewhere, so far as my coin would stretch, and where it would not I have used my credit.
>
> (1.2.38-53)

The reference to the alewife/tavern hostess spawns a line of bawdy puns combined with jokes about coins and credit. "Reckoning" of course had the multiple meanings: it was an "account of behaviour," the "settlement of a tavern

bill," and an illicit tryst "in which the tavern wench is to show her worth" (Bevingon n. 48, p. 136).[43] All of the medieval works that I discussed earlier in some way call the alewife "to a reckoning," that is, situate her or make an account of her position in relation to society – a society which includes figures such as her husband, customers, neighbours, and institutions such as the guilds and the government. There is also the implied meaning of moral and spiritual judgement in "reckoning." It is an appropriate term because alewives (in literature and in legal proceedings) were frequently called to account for their potential to corrupt the soul – by way of liquor or promise of sexual favours.[44]

Mistress Quickly is called to account again in *2 Henry IV*. When she brings a complaint against Falstaff for his false oaths and unpaid bills, she offers the Lord Chief Justice a long series of circumstantial details in order to corroborate her account of Falstaff's marriage proposal. She is specific about time ("Wednesday in Wheeson week"), place ("in the Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire") and action (she washed his wound, after "the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor") (2.1.85-91). Falstaff's reply skirts the issue entirely, claiming that Quickly has become insane from the constraints of poverty, and that she spreads false rumours about having given birth to the Lord Chief Justice's illegitimate son. Falstaff resorts to a

[43] All references to Bevington from this point onward are to his edition of *1 Henry IV*.
[44] Bennett notes that "in court records, keepers of alehouses were regularly admonished to be 'honest' and tolerate no whores. In 1380, for example, Robert Lovington and his wife, Amy, welcomed whores into their alehouse in Bridgwater and thereby lost their license to tipple" (141). This attitude is also reflected in Henry Gee's 1540 laws forbidding fertile women from selling ale. The critique of sexualised alewives occurs in the literature (usually post-1500) as well: in the Chester alewife's marriage to devil (a possible temptation theme); and the seductive Kitt from the *Tale of Beryn* Prologue.

common anxiety about alewives – that they are sexual temptresses – but he adds that they also threaten good social order by disrupting patrilineal descent. As we have seen, social disruption is commonly associated with alewives in medieval and early modern literature. What is different in Shakespeare's play, however, is that the audience never discovers Quickly's inner motivations. Despite being based on a conventional figure – though, as we have seen, one that is not "flat" in any sense of the word – Mistress Quickly maintains a large degree of "invisible personhood" (Yachnin, "Eye" 78). [45] When Falstaff convinces Quickly to lend him more money (by pawning her plate and tapestries) he asks, "Dost not know me?" (2.1.147) It is a question to the audience as much as to Quickly, and it applies equally to Quickly as it does to Falstaff. In the moment of detailed exposition, Quickly reveals herself in contrast to other received notions (of both characters *and* literary critics)[46] about her personality; in this passage she is sharp and precise (if periphrastic). She is not the alewife as developed by past literary associations. In this way, Shakespeare creates a sense of depth by suggesting that Quickly is not what others in the play perceive, nor what audience members may expect from encountering the alewife in other literary and dramatic places.

Falstaff and Quickly's exchange in *1 Henry IV* capitalises on the notion of "knowing" each other. While much critical attention has been given to the carnal

[45] The term is from Yachnin's "Eye to Eye Opposed" – though he does not discuss Quickly in the chapter.

[46] See Linda Hopkins: "Shakespeare's text suggests a degree of conflicting evidence about the respectability of the tavern and its Hostess, given the dichotomy between her fervent protestation about her 'good name' and her apparent role as procuress of Doll's services" (564). For another discussion on how a character develops a life outside of the text, see Edward Pechter.

implications of "knowing," few critics have noticed the central themes of recognition (and reckoning) of identity in this passage:

> Falstaff: …Go to, you are a woman, go.
>
> Hostess: Who, I? No, I defy thee! God's light, I was never called so in mine own house before.
>
> Falstaff: Go to. I know you well enough.
>
> Hostess: No, Sir John, you do not know me, Sir John. I know you, Sir John.You owe me money, Sir John, and now you pick a quarrel to beguile me of it. (3.3.58-65)

Quickly is, of course, quite right. Sir John does pick a quarrel in order to trick the hostess out of money. Quickly attempts to bring the argument back to its central issue – that Falstaff owes her money – and away from Sir John's digressive focus on her womanhood. Moreover, Quickly's repetition of "Sir John" has not only accumulative rhetorical force as a direct "reckoning" but is also a critique of Falstaff's mock religious sententiousness: "Sir John" was a contemptuous epithet for a priest (*OED* "John" 3.). Quickly rejects Falstaff's conventional misogyny – one supported by religious ideology – by identifying him as a foolish dissipated priest. Quickly requites Falstaff's assumptions about her character with her own, illustrating the malleability of identity within the play – a point that coincides appropriately with Hal's manipulation of his own character.

Mistress Quickly and Alewife-anxiety

The long-associated anxieties about alewives' economic corruption and their attendant opportunism can be found in several places in Mistress Quickly's

characterisation. Falstaff complains of lime-adulterated sack in *1 Henry IV* (2.4.119). Bevington notes that this is a common complaint in the period, but Falstaff's objection continues the long tradition of targeting alewives for selling poor-quality liquor. Falstaff also accuses Quickly of trying to pass off "filthy dowlas" shirts as fine holland shirts, which Quickly claims she has bought for "eight shillings an ell" (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.67; 69-70). Bevington notes that "Mistress Quickly exaggerates the cost of her linen, just as Falstaff disparages it…even fine linen could be had for 4s per yard" (n. 70, p. 234). The true quality of the shirt fabric lies somewhere between Quickly's exaggeration and Falstaff's disparagement. The argument is an instance of each character calling the other to a "reckoning": Falstaff operates on the common assumption that all hostesses attempt to cheat their customers; Quickly identifies Sir John as a consummate debtor, and as such, one who will do anything to get out of paying his bills. Deception is a long-standing complaint about alewives (and about women generally, of course), as we have seen illustrated in Betoun, Rose the Regrater, and the Chester alewife. We also see the alewife's traditionally savvy nature in her business dealings, even though Falstaff eventually gets the upper hand on the hostess.

Quickly also admits to selling meat during Lent, arguing that "All victuallers do so" (*2 Henry IV* 2.4.342). While Catholic practices were of course under extreme censure in the Tudor period, Quickly's transgression of Privy Council regulations recalls earlier critiques of taverners and alewives who

encouraged sloth, gluttony and blasphemy. Robert Rypon, a preacher writing in the time of Chaucer,[47] targets violators of Lent: "Most of all on feast days, also for the nights following, they go off to the taverns, and more often than not seek food such as salt beef or a salted herring to excite a thirst for drink" (qtd. Owst 435).[48] By Shakespeare's time several royal proclamations had been pronounced against the selling of meat at Lent, but for different reasons. On 16 January 1548, Edward VI proclaimed that anyone selling meat would be fined ten shillings and ten days' imprisonment:

> This curious document, which begins by a strong assertion of the equality in point of cleanliness and holiness of all days and meats alike, goes on, in consideration of abstinence being a mean to virtue, and to the subjection of the body to the soul, as also to the maintenance of sea-fishers, and to the saving and increase of flesh by the eating of fish, to forbid all persons of what degree soever…to indulge in any form of meat, not only during Lent, but on Fridays and Saturdays and the Embering days and vigils, or other formerly accepted holidays in the year. ("Sunday and Lent" 4)

Under Elizabeth's reign, the fine went up to an exorbitant twenty pounds for butchers who infringed upon the law.[49] The Tudor rulers apparently did not want their decrees to be interpreted as supporting Catholic practice; thus they

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[47] Owst describes Rypon as "a contemporary of Chaucer" from Durham. He was a Benedictine monk who studied at Oxford and became a Doctor of Theology in 1406; he died sometime after 1419. This manuscript dates from the early fifteenth century (Wenzel, *Latin Sermon* 66).
[48] British Library MS Harl. 4894, fol. 28.
[49] See Elizabeth's proclamation against the eating of flesh in the time of Lent (second leaf).

emphasised moral and economic implications as much as they did religious ones. Elizabeth's 1560 decree encourages the clergy to regulate lay people:

> her maiestie requireth, and in gods name chargeth all Byshoppes, curates and other eccleciasticall persons hauing the cure of soules, or the charge of preaching, to exhort and perswade the people to forbeare this carnall licence and boldnes to breake common order, and to let them plainly vnderstand the great daungers of the wrath of almighty god, that hath and will alwayes light vpon such rebellious and obstinate people, that more regard their bellyes, and appetites, then temporaunce and obedience. (second leaf)

As in Rypon's critique, the Queen targets those who seem to care more about their appetites than their souls. However, it becomes apparent when reading Elizabeth's document in full that the operative phrase in the above passage is "common order." The decree is more about social and economic regulation than about spiritual maintenance. It requires the Mayor of London "euery fortnight priuie searche to be made by honest and trusty persons of the houses of Bochers, Pulterers [ie. poulterers], table keepers, tauernes, victuellers, and other suspected houses, for the better vnderstanding whether they or anye of them do offende in the premisses" (first leaf). Punishments included public shaming at the pillory, disenfranchisement and large fines, to be divided between the royal coffers and parish relief of the poor. Of course, Rypon and Elizabeth are writing in very different genres – those of sermon and of royal proclamation; however, both are concerned with the maintenance of social order. The former appeals to spiritual

matters; the latter appeals to physical correction and restraint, though she also couches her terms in religious ideology.

Quickly's admission of guilt is significant for various reasons: first of all, it is a point of anachronism in the play. In this scene, the breaking of Catholic rule – and consequent physical and spiritual corruption – becomes a more secular indictment against the victuallers of Shakespeare's day. Rackin argues, "the multiply conflicted site designated by anachronism was…the point where historiographic representation, whether in narrative or dramatic reenactment, could take on a dangerous present relevance" (*Stages of History* 92). Quickly's illicit meat-selling practice is likely a direct (though not "dangerous," per se) statement on the inefficacy of government regulations. The dialogue throws into relief Reformation tensions between past religious practices and decrees passed for the commonwealth's economic well-being. The anachronism does indeed represent a "conflicted site" of past and present relevance, though we are dually aware that Quickly's potential indictment of the authorities' legal laxity is a rhetorical move to protect herself from further censure. That "all victuallers do so" lessens the degree of her specific crime.[50]

Perhaps most significantly, Shakespeare capitalises upon the various associations of the alewife – as temptress, violator of food and drink regulations, and predator on the commonwealth – in order to raise social concerns precisely at

[50] Significantly, Quickly admits *only* to violating victualing laws, not to Falstaff's other more severe indictments about her being a bawd and a bad soul. She aligns herself with the lesser of three evils in order to deflect attention away from the other accusations. It is important to note again that this is the only direct proof readers and viewers are given about her legal culpability in all three plays. Assumptions are her identities as procuress and possible murderer are never fully determined.

the moment when Hal is poised to take control of the realm. It is in Quickly's tavern after all – through Quickly's ambiguous identity and Falstaff's equivocations – that Hal learns how to call his own subjects "to a reckoning."

Falstaff and Quickly's exchange about mutton-selling occurs during a scene in which Hal calls Falstaff to a "reckoning" concerning the fat knight's abusive behaviour in the tavern. Not realising that Poins and Hal are present and disguised as drawers, Falstaff calls Hal a "good shallow young fellow. A would have made a good pantler; a would ha' chipped bread well" (2.4.236-36). After the noblemen reveal themselves and charge Falstaff with "abuse" of their persons, Falstaff rationalises his words *ex post facto*: "I dispraised [Hal] before the wicked that the wicked might not fall in love with thee; in which doing I have done the part of a careful friend and true subject, and thy father is to give me thanks for it" (2.4.316-20). Hal asks Falstaff to explain his labelling of the tavern folk as "wicked"; regarding the women, Falstaff says, "For one of them [ie. Doll Tearsheet], she's in hell already, and burns poor souls. For th'other, I owe her money, and whether she be damned for that, I know not" (334-36).

Again, as with all alewife stock characters, economic reckoning is conflated with spiritual reckoning. Falstaff's spiritual reckoning also recalls issues raised in the Chester *Harrowing of Hell*, with that play's thematic conflations of sin, economic regulation and national identity. The trade in flesh – in the sense of

meat-selling – was a staple of the Southwark (and Eastcheap) economy.[51] Of course, "flesh" and "mutton" have sexual double entendres – both meaning "prostitute's flesh" and signifying the sex trade more generally.[52] While he is unsure about the extent of her damnation for being his creditor, Falstaff does argue that Quickly will "howl" in hell for "suffering flesh to be eaten in [her] house" (340). Falstaff's reckoning of Quickly is part of Hal's reckoning of Falstaff. Thus Quickly is central to Hal's "education" in Eastcheap. It is at the Boar's Head Tavern – over which Mistress Quickly presides – that Hal learns how to "reckon," that is, how to understand, identify and manipulate character.

Hal's Education: Quickly as Mistress in the "Devil's Schoolhouse"

After the death of his father, Hal assures his apprehensive brothers and followers,

> This new and gorgeous garment, majesty,
>
> Sits not so easy on me as you think.
>
> Brothers, you mix your sadness with some fear.
>
> This is the English, not the Turkish court;
>
> Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds,
>
> But Harry Harry. Yet be sad, good brothers,
>
> For, by my faith, it very well becomes you.
>
> Sorrow so royally in you appears

[51] Eastcheap was the site of a great meat market in the medieval period (Jenstad). "Cheap" or Old English "céapian" was a verb meaning to "barter, buy and sell; to trade, deal, bargain" (*OED*, *cheap*, vb. 1).

[52] Falstaff's hypocrisy is obvious, as he has just been enjoying Doll's pleasures; at the end of the scene he regrets that the "sweetest morsel of the night" will be left "unpicked" (2.4.362; 363).

> That I will deeply put the fashion on,
>
> And wear it in my heart. (5.2.44-53)

The sartorial metaphor represents a process of transfer – Henry IV's royal mantle is passed down to his son, which becomes "new and gorgeous" to the young king. Moreover, Henry V describes "sorrow" as a piece of attractive clothing which he will borrow from his brothers and subjects. Jones and Stallybrass suggest that rather than having accepted the metaphor as "a sign of Hal's emotional shallowness," early modern viewers would have understood that fashion can indeed be "deeply" donned:

> …clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within. This notion undoes the opposition of inside and outside, surface and depth. Clothes, like sorrow, inscribe themselves upon a person who comes into being through that inscription. (Jones and Stallybrass 2)

This piece of rhetoric is effective not only because it emphasises mutuality of experience over domination, putting his subjects at greater ease, but because Henry V destabilises the categories of the *seemingly* known and of the unknown. His rhetoric relies on the "known" attributes of the Eastern kingdom, counterpointing them with the seemingly known attributes of the formerly wild Hal.

His rhetoric also relies simultaneously on the stability and instability of "known" qualities. Henry V's intention seems to be the re-establishment of himself as a "known" identity, to persuade his brothers and subjects that he embodies all the austerity and royalty of his dead father. A regal Harry will follow a regal Harry, just as a fratricidal Amurath will always follow a fratricidal

Amurath. He redefines the English court by comparison with the Turkish one, and measures his projected success as a Christian ruler in comparison with popular associations of "Amurath" the Muslim ruler. The "Turk" social person carries with it many assumptions of otherness, paganism, tyranny and general immorality.[53] Harry's analogy relies on the solidity of these assumptions.

However, by disavowing resemblances between English and Turkish courts, Henry V simultaneously raises the possibility of comparison. Just as Mistress Quickly unwittingly implies the opposite meaning in her many disavowals of illicit sexual behaviour, so too Henry V suggests the possibility of tyranny even by rejecting it. Arguing for a "subversive doubling of Henry [V] with Mehmed [II]" (188), Richard Hillman avers,

> one of the 'odorous' properties of comparisons is that they are impossible to control, proliferating associations beyond their context, and doing so even if they are made in negative terms—in fact, denying a comparison is an especially efficient way of introducing one.
>
> (Hillman 162)[54]

Quickly's malapropisms simultaneously provide comic effect and defer clear understanding of her character; either Henry's introduction of the Turk's image likewise gets away from his rhetorical intent, or he more calculatingly raises the

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[53] See Draper.

[54] Mehmed III succeeded his father Murad III (aka "Amurath") in 1596, after having his nineteen brothers strangled. Weis argues that this is the "topical reference" to which Shakespeare refers (n. 5.2.48, p. 254). However, Hillman focuses on the historical succession of Mehmed II from Murad II in the mid-fifteenth century as one of the sources for the *Henriad*. Hillman's article "rehistoricize[s] the concept of Turkish tyranny as … it figures in the *Henriad*—as a powerful subversive emblem of the shadow-side of English monarchy" (167).

idea of tyranny to subdue his subjects. On the surface, Henry's meaning is simple: succession in England means fruitful duplication – a Harry for a Harry. Goodness follows goodness, where for "the Turk" wickedness follows wickedness. But as Hillman points out, Henry's "proliferating associations" carry threatening implications. Henry recalls the idea of Turkishness as an "Other" in order to dismiss it; however, the king's rejection of tyranny only reinforces its presence (167).

Pat Parker similarly focuses on the unintentional undercurrents of Henry V's speech: "[o]ne of the questions…this juxtaposition of 'Harry' with 'Harry' raises is whether this particular succession will mean a fruitful and copious development…or a simple copy, quotation, or repetition of his father or original" (*Literary Fat Ladies* 73). While Henry believes that he has used and discarded his Eastcheap "misleaders" (5.5.63), he is unaware that he cannot rid himself of their linguistic habits. Or, more disturbingly, he has learned to harness slippery language in order to better control his English subjects. Medieval sermoners often decried the alehouse as "the Devil's School" (Owst 438). While Hal is certainly not a fiend, nor does the play belong to a straightforwardly moralistic genre, Shakespeare seems to be relying on earlier conceptions of the alehouse as a locus of alternative education.[55]

[55] Roy Battenhouse's "Falstaff as Parodist or perhaps Holy Fool" examines the knight as Christian "allowed fool," teaching Hal "charitable almsgiving of brotherly self-humiliation and fatherly truth-telling" (32). Battenhouse persuasively roots Falstaff's characterisation in numerous medieval discourses and similarly sees the Boar's Head as a place of education.

"Time's Subjects" and "Timeless Women"

My final section examines Mistress Quickly and earlier alewife figures in relation to time and memory. Many critics have tended to overlook Mistress Quickly's connection to political history, primarily I suspect as a result of her seeming unreliability as a recounter of the past due to her comical malapropic language and emotionality. But it is in fact her language and emotionality that provides for her privileged connection to the historical moment.

I have already suggested that Langland's alewives and the Chester alewife gain literary significance by virture of their relationship to various historically rooted social concerns. Kastan argues that in the mystery plays human time is circumscribed by "supra-historical" divine time – that is, events that occurred before Creation and after the Final Judgement (264). We may examine *Piers Plowman*'s events in a similar way; Langland constantly measures (temporal) human institutions against their ideal (spiritual) forms, and often finds them lacking. As such, human activities take on particular moral and spiritual weight within a providentially ordained history. By contrast, Shakespeare's histories resist providential framing. Discussing Richard II's uncertain role Woodstock's murder, Kastan argues,

> if the resulting moral opacity helps characterize the political world of the play, it also serves to emphasise the inability of the [dramatic] structure to internalize the process of time. Events that take place before the play begins exert relentless pressure upon the dramatic action, and the uncertainty that surrounds these events commands an

> audience's awareness of the past, in A.L. French's words, "laying its cold hand on the present." (271)[56]

Even though there is a great difference between medieval and Shakespearean historical framing, it is possible to argue that in each case time "exert[s] relentless pressure" on literary and dramatic action. Kastan suggests that Shakespeare's histories emphasise the contingency and unpredictability of time, forcing the audience to "confront our existence as 'time's subjects' (*2 Henry IV*, I.iii.110)" (275). Rather than putting the audience at the centre of this historical experiment, I suggest that Mistress Quickly belongs there.

Mistress Quickly is constantly at pains to carve out her own history. Her relationship to time is expressed personally and anecdotally. If she "reckons" other characters in the sense of bringing them to account (for their actions and their bar tabs), she also recounts her past in contrast to "official" historical records (Thorne 55). Indeed, her livelihood depends upon recounting and reckoning, especially of clients' past activities and debts. While "reckon" and "recount" have separate etymological roots, they are related aurally; in conjunction they express conventional ideas about the loquacious alewife, one who provides a haven for her equally loquacious gossips. They also express Quickly's larger functional role within the *Henry* plays, as a figure of memorially constructed history.[57]

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[56] Kastan quotes French's "*Richard II* and the Woodstock Murder."

[57] Thorne discusses Quickly and Shallow as characters who desire to "halt time's advance" through detailed recollections, or "compulsive repetition of the past" (59). Quickly plays only a minor, though significant, role in the critic's argument; I would like to suggest Quickly's greater centrality to the play's concern with history and memory.

Many of Mistress Quickly's lines recount the past. In her quarrel with Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, she responds to Falstaff's complaint about his supposedly stolen ring:

> Falstaff: I have lost a seal-ring of my grandfather's worth forty mark.
>
> Hostess: O Jesu, I have heard the Prince tell him, I know not how oft, that that ring was copper! (3.3.79-82)

Quickly simultaneously creates a brief but vivid image of an ongoing dispute between Hal and Falstaff, and uses that recollection (and reckoning) to defend the reputation of her tavern. She also tells Hal that Falstaff has called him a "Jack" and that the fat knight would "cudgel" him (3.3.134-34). Apart from the many times she engages in reckonings with Falstaff, Quickly speaks mostly in past tense, recounting her actions and those of others. However, she also destabilises her own reckoning ability in the phrase "I know not how oft." She reinforces conventional notions about the alewife's loquacity and powers of recollection while also illustrating the difficulties of reconstruction.

Another moment of historical reconstruction occurs when she brings her case against Falstaff. Her action against the knight, brought before Snare and Fang, recounts his past transgressions: "A hundred mark is a long one for a poor lone woman to bear, and I have borne, and borne, and borne, and have been fobbed off, and fobbed off, and fobbed off, from this day to that day, that it is a shame to be thought on" (*2 Henry IV* 2.1.31-35). While the humour of the passage relies on the double entendre of "to bear" in a sexual manner, her verbal repetition reconstructs her past and ongoing conflicted relationship with Falstaff. It is often

through Quickly's recollective powers that the audience can imaginatively reconstruct their pre-play relationship. When Falstaff finally goes off to war in 2.4, Quickly decides to forget the knight's faults, conceding to their relationship's enduring power rather than its characteristic animosity: "Well, fare thee well. I have known thee these twenty-nine years come peascod-time, but an honester and truer-hearted man – well, fare thee well" (2.4.377-79). Of course, her underlying affection for Falstaff complicates the notion of Quickly as an objective "reckoner": a great deal of her memorial power stems from an emotional connection to the past.

Likewise, in her passionate account to the Lord Chief Justice, Quickly provides an overwhelming amount of detail about Falstaff's marriage proposal. Her evocative powers are so extraordinary that the passage deserves to be cited in full:

> Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by the sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing man of Windsor – thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me, and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech the butcher's wife come in then and call me Gossip Quickly? – coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar, telling us she had a good dish of prawns, whereby thou didst desire to eat some, whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone downstairs, desire me to be no more familiarity with such poor people, saying that ere long they

> should call me madam? And didst thou not kiss me, and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath, deny it if thou canst. (2.1.84-101)

Thorne argues that Quickly's recollection serves "to blot out ironic discrepancies between the semi-mythologised past of her imagination and present realities" (58). It is true that Quickly's narrative takes on a "semi-mythologised" tenor, since she is using this recollection of an "historical event" to validate her case against Falstaff. Her appeal to the past strengthens her argument, while her multiple digressions work against her credibility. Falstaff interprets her volubility as proof of her insanity; he argues that "poverty hath distracted her" (2.1.104-5). Furthermore, it is not Quickly's story that convinces the Lord Chief Justice of Falstaff's guilt: the judge says he is already "well acquainted with [Falstaff's] manner of wrenching the true cause the false way" (2.1.107-9). And when Quickly tries to interject again the justice chastises her: "Pray thee, peace" (115).

However, I do not believe that there is any particular reason to argue that there is an obvious "ironic discrepancy" between "the past of [Quickly's] imagination and present realities." If anything, the digressive, accretive effect of the passage suggests her narrative's truth value, and we are meant to observe that England's main legal authority neglects to recognise this. If we as audience members question Quickly's account, we must ask ourselves, "*why* do we distrust her?" What is it in the narrative that suggests an "ironic discrepancy"? For example, do we appreciate her narrative merely as an evocation of local colour from a specific time period, as we might when watching Dame Chat or Typple onstage? Do we laugh at the story's content (especially the notion of Falstaff

calling Henry IV a "singing man of Windsor")? Do we laugh at Quickly's pains to be taken seriously? Other characters bring assumptions about Mistress Quickly (as a voluble woman and potentially deceptive tavern hostess) to the scene. And by doing so, they make viewers realise their potential do the same. Unlike the audience, characters are not in a position to observe Mistress Quickly's greater involvement in the plays' historical narrative, to recognise Quickly's significant role as witness to the past.

Her narrative covers past, future and present: that on a "Wednesday in Wheeson week" Falstaff promised to marry her; that "ere long [the neighbours] should call [Quickly] madam" and that she tells Falstaff, "I put thee *now* to thy book-oath" (my emphasis). Falstaff attempts to escape the situation by "remember[ing]" his "honourable duty," claiming he is on "hasty employment in the King's affairs" (123-36). When this does not work, he draws Quickly aside. The audience is not privy to the argument that makes Quickly both withdraw the action *and* decide to pawn her tavern plate and tapestries. This dramatic ellipsis is surely part of the scene's humorous effect – what could Falstaff have said in such a brief span of time to make Quickly reverse her decision so, well, quickly? We can assume, however, that Falstaff's dual tactic – asking, "Dost not know me?" and implying, "You'll be a fool still" – is what finally causes Quickly to relent. His appeal to the past, their twenty-nine year-old friendship, and to the prospect

of her future foolishness,[58] results in Quickly's acquiescence. Quickly's focus on the past and her concern about perceptions of her future self, reflected also in her desire to heed Deputy Tisick's advice to "Receive…no swaggering companions" (2.4.92), resonates with the plays' larger concerns of historical revisionism. Yachnin argues that Hal's "I know you all" soliloquy in *I Henry IV* (1.2.183-205) is an example of the prince's "self-conscious construction of his history" ("History" 169). In order to construct their histories, characters must be aware of future potentialities. Quickly, aware that the past is constructed in relation to the present and future, strives to create her identity as a respectable tavern hostess, constantly fighting stereotypes of unchanging alewife and tavern hostess behaviours. Her malapropisms are emblematic of the difficulty of controlling history's meaning and its reception.

Her death – if we may assume it is Nell and not Doll of whom Pistol speaks in *Henry V* – comes as a report from England to France, emphasising the unreliability of "news" and personal accounts:

> News have I that my [Nell][59] is dead
>
> I'th' spital of a malady of France,
>
> And there my rendezvous is quite cut off.
>
> Old I do wax, and from my weary limbs

[58] The *OED* definition of "still" (adv. 4c.) suggests the sense of "in future as up to the present." Hence Falstaff may be implying that his assessment of Mistress Quickly is rooted in past observation and will continue into the future.

[59] Both the 1600 Quarto and the 1623 First Folio name "Doll" here, though Edward Capell's 1767-68 edition emends it to "Nell." While Doll has previously been identified as residing in the spitals (2.1.71-73), it is feasible that Pistol conflates the two women based on their close association. I believe it makes more sense from an emotional perspective if Pistol laments the loss of his wife, since here he is anticipating his future as a solitary man.

Honour is cudgelled. Well, bawd I'll turn,

And something lean to cutpurse of quick hand.

To England will I steal, and there I'll steal,

And patches will I get unto these cudgelled scars,

And swear I got them in the Gallia wars. (5.1.74-82)

Rumour – as a character and as a concept – features prominently in *2 Henry IV*, thus the spectators who remember the earlier play should be wary of "news." Moreover, Pistol vows to engage in his own historical revisionism, intent to play the war hero in order, presumably, to gain his victims' confidence. Even in death, Mistress Quickly – here as a recollection, a figure recounted – remains central to the plays' concept of historical revisionism.

Quickly as Clio

To conclude, Mistress Quickly, by virtue of her role as tavern reckoner and raconteur, serves as a memorial centre for the Eastcheap scenes, and for the play at large. These roles are solidified in her position of being sole witness to Falstaff's death. It is a scene which also resonates with the concept of spiritual reckoning, as the Eastcheap folk debate the dead knight's past actions. Quickly also deals with rumours surrounding Falstaff's death:

Nim: They say he cried out of sack.

Host.: Ay, that a did.

Bard.: And of women.

Host.: Nay, that a did not. (2.3.25-28)

There is no reason these rumours could not be true; the scene gives us the impression that Quickly is the guardian of Falstaff's memory. Quickly seems to revise the past event in order to suit her personal agenda not to speak ill of the dead. The boy's repeated references to devils and hell (ll. 29-37) recall Falstaff's earlier judgement of "the wicked" previously mentioned (*2 Henry IV* 2.4.329-46). Quickly also notes the time of Falstaff's death, both in precise terms – "between twelve and one" – and with superfluous natural detail – "even at the turning o' the tide" (2.3.12-13). The latter phrase inserts cosmological significance into the account of a friend's passing, another instance of historical revisionism.

As Quickly's accounts of the past illustrate, the hostess is a woman deeply invested in the passage of time as an observer of "unofficial history." Quickly's accounts invite the audience to "remember" the past of pre-play action: "[t]he imperative to 'remember' is also an irresistible signal to the audience to 'imagine'" (Richardson 109). This role is shared with the Chorus of *Henry V*, who encourages the audience: "let us, ciphers to this great accompt / On your imaginary forces work" (Prologue 17-18). Not only is Quickly central to the memorial project of reconstructing history within the play, she is also central to the audience's imaginative construction of history.

Earlier literary alewives belong to a process of reckoning men's souls within a Christian framework. Shakespeare returns dramatic and thematic functionality to the alewife figure after the Tudor alewives in plays like *Tom Tyler* and *Gammer Gurton*, which focus almost exclusively on atemporal characterisation. Tudor alewives (Typple, Chat) were emptied of their thematic roles – becoming "timeless women," to employ Rackin's term (*Shakespeare and*

Women), divorced from socio-historical contingency. Understanding Typple and Chat requires no knowledge beyond alewives' conventional social personhood as rural, loquacious, garrulous, moody female ale sellers. As with Fowler's Thomas à Becket figure, most medieval alewife stock characters and Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly rely on a greater overlay of social persons: temptresses, wives, procurers of meat and drink, centres of (male and female) communities, and, most distinctively, reckoners both of bar tabs and of souls. The earlier alewives contain some of these social persons and emphasise some traits over others, but only Mistress Quickly contains them all.

As with Betoun, Rose and the Chester alewife, Mistress Quickly can only be comprehended fully in the context of English religious and literary history. While Typple and Chat are also stock characters, they lack the multiple overlays of social persons, mentioned above, and become stereotypes. They also lack the other characters' investment in, to borrow Kastan's term, an "historical vision" (263). In the medieval works discussed above, especially the cycle play, this vision is "supra-historical" – that is, finite human time is circumscribed by the events of Creation and Doomsday. In *Piers Plowman*, meaning similarly relies upon the existence of supra-historical time: the spiritual didacticism of the work clearly depends upon divine, supra-historical consequences. Kastan argues that Shakespeare's histories are not circumscribed in such a way, but there does exist the pressure of contingently represented past and future actions which surround the play. This is a kind of circumscription, though one characterised by ambiguity rather than a known providential plan. Mistress Quickly is a figure of history – as one who reckons (in multiple ways) and recounts; an early modern Clio – one

who is only ever partially understood – whose ambiguity reflects uncertainty about the march of time. Shakespeare draws on past conceptions of the alewife stock character in order to draw attention to the tension between known and unknown "facts" about identity and of history. As one of "Time's subjects" Mistress Quickly epitomises the challenges of conceiving identity in relation to past events and actions.

3 • The Corrupt Clergyman: Shakespeare's Cardinal Winchester

I would tremble did I not know Thy mercies.
-- Fragment of the epitaph on Henry Beaufort's tomb[1]

Henry Beaufort's epitaph, read in conjunction with the figure's poetic and dramatic characterisation, seems to imply a life of political machination and moral contravention: Winchester the literary figure has good reason to tremble before God. And in fact, Shakespeare's dramatisation of the historical figure does involve a character arc that leads to God's judgement. Winchester seems to be punished for his role in the downfall of the English nation, or at least in the downfall of the "good Duke Humphrey" of Gloucester. There is an entire literary tradition that illuminates the moral and spiritual damage of which a Corrupt Clergyman is capable. From medieval estates satire to the Tudor chroniclers emerges the Corrupt Clergyman social person: a collection of character attributes which set up readers' expectations when they come across an unscrupulous cleric in literature and drama. These expectations are similarly brought to bear on *1* and *2 Henry VI*. However, Shakespeare broadens the moral and spiritual critique of the Corrupt Clergyman to include political ramifications. In Shakespeare's dramatic narrative of England's development Winchester seems to be a kind of

[1] Harriss 398.

moral touchstone, his failings resonating loudly throughout court and commons. The playwright also undercuts audience expectations, suggesting that England's narrative is neither linear nor straightforward; the Corrupt Clergyman is one figure within a wide network of *human* interests – if God has a role in England's downfall, the extent of his involvement is never definitively known.

This chapter focuses on four aspects of the Corrupt Clergyman social person as assimilated into *1* and *2 Henry VI*'s Bishop (and later, Cardinal) Winchester. As a charge frequently brought against higher-level clergy in the middle ages, nepotism features pervasively throughout these plays. Originally, nepotism referred to the promotion of nephews to positions of power by their uncles, especially uncles who belonged to the religious orders.[2] Of course Winchester's manipulation of his great-nephew is not the same sort of nepotism described in John of Bromyard's fourteenth-century preacher manual, but Shakespeare seems to have in mind the abuse of power that can occur within this specific relationship, particularly since nepotism was originally conceived as a form of corruption within the Catholic church. Secondly, prelates were notorious for the practice of simony, the purchasing of benefices or prebends[3] from the Pope or other church officials. Thirdly, the corruption of correct legal processes,

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[2] *Nepos* means "nephew" in classical Latin. The *OED* defines the term as "[t]he showing of special favour or unfair preference to a relative in conferring a position, job, privilege, etc.; spec. such favour or preference shown to an illegitimate son by a pope or other high-ranking ecclesiastic (now hist.)" (1.a.). The term "nepotism" only enters the English language in the seventeenth century; however Owst frequently cites medieval sermons in which high-ranking clerics are targeted for promoting their nephews within the church.

[3] While a benefice is an ecclesiastical living, a prebend is "the estate or portion of land from which a stipend is derived to support a canon of a cathedral or collegiate church… In later use [it is] the tenure of this as a benefice, or the right to an equivalent share in the revenues of such a church" (*OED*, "prebend" 1.a).

another complaint against those involved in the ecclesiastical courts, is also prevalent in these plays, especially in *2 Henry VI*. Lastly, the concept of the holy man as moral exemplar recurs throughout both works; the plays consistently raise and problematise the issue of the commons as a reflection of those in religious and secular power. I also discuss related sins of pride, love of venery and desire to amass material wealth, all of which factor into Shakespeare's portrayal of Winchester.

Winchester is a "meddler," a common complaint against clerics in medieval estate satire, in that he takes on roles which, as a clergyman, he should not adopt. For instance, Winchester leads a militia in London to fight Gloucester's men, and has "distrained the Tower to his use" (*1 Henry VI* 1.3.61) even though he has no right to do so. According to the morally righteous Pelican in *The Plowman's Tale*, "Preestes…to no bateyle shulde men lede" (ll. 109; 111). Winchester leads an army when his primary interest should be guiding the court and commons in spiritual matters. Just as Winchester takes on too many political and social roles, so too does the play rehearse what happens when too many individual interests are at work at the English court. The plays critique various governmental power structures: feudalism and chivalry, family dynasty, civil rebellion and religious imperialism. This chapter follows a trajectory tracing the Corrupt Clergyman initially as a figure whose meddling threatens the integrity of the church and of his flock in medieval literature, to a figure who imperils the very physical and spiritual well-being of the English nation. In an early modern history play, the emphasis is naturally on England's status as a (Protestant) world power. Shakespeare capitalises on the pre-existing (Catholic) Corrupt Clergyman

type to broaden and intensify the religious and political implications of a devastating civil war.

Raving on his death-bed, Cardinal Winchester offers a bribe in order to see the murdered Duke Humphrey alive again: "[S]how me where he is. I'll give a thousand pound to look upon him" (3.3.12-13). Just whom Winchester is attempting to bribe is left unclear. Does he imagine Death looming over him? Is it, as King Henry suggests, the "meddling fiend" (l. 21) who struggles to lay claim to Winchester's soul? The Cardinal's hallucination suggests the compromised state of his soul. As the king remarks: "Ah, what a sign it is of evil life / Where death's approach is seen so terrible!" (ll. 5-6). Winchester's guilty conscience forces him to imagine Gloucester's hair standing upright "Like lime twigs set to catch my winged soul" (16).[4] Winchester apparently is caught between three figures who desire his soul: his murder victim, Death and the devil. Collectively, these three figures tell a great deal about Winchester's life, particularly his constant manipulation of English and foreign power structures. Gloucester is a representive of his family, pointedly illustrating the bonds of kinship which the Cardinal has neglected and destroyed. His fear of Death indicates his investment in worldly concerns and that he does not expect a heavenly reward for his earthly endeavours. The evocation of the devil as judge reminds the audience of

[4] The metaphor is appropriate, for clergy were often accused of being more interested in venery than in the states of their parishioners' souls. The metaphor also continues a hunting lexis that runs throughout the rest of the play.

Winchester's prior acts of judgement and his manipulation of legal processes, especially in Gloucester's trial. The king prays,

> Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure be.
>
> Lord Cardinal, if thou thinkst on heaven's bliss,
>
> Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.
>
> [Cardinal dies.]
>
> He dies and makes no sign. O God, forgive him! (3.3.26-29)

Henry confirms that the Cardinal indeed is not comforted by his spiritual beliefs at death, and that he passes away fearfully. The nature of Winchester's death seems to confirm his role as the play's most spiritually corrupt villain.

Winchester's corruption targets the power structures of family, church and the law. He controls the king primarily through his blood relationship, though also as a powerful member of the Catholic church, with which Henry is pointedly aligned.[5] He engages in simony to obtain his promotion from bishop to cardinal. Along with Margaret and Suffolk, Winchester puts Gloucester on trial for treason and then has him murdered, an early act of kin-killing that will later multiply in the Wars of the Roses. Through Winchester, Shakespeare turns personal and spiritual conflict into nationally reverberating concerns.

Though Winchester does not readily recognise his interlocutor-judge, he tries to bargain with him:

> If thou be'st Death I'll give thee England's treasure,

[5] Queen Margaret facetiously wishes that "the college of cardinals/ Would choose him Pope, and carry him to Rome" (*2 Henry VI* 1.3.62-63).

Enough to purchase such another island,

So thou wilt let me live and feel no pain." (3.3.2-4)

Ronald Knowles notes a parallel passage in Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548) in which the dying cardinal asks, "Fye, will not death be hyered, nor will money do nothing?" (210).[6] Knowles writes, "[f]or all his innovation, Shakespeare seems here to take his cue from Hall" (n. 3.3.2-4, p. 281). However, rather than simply amplifying Hall's description, Shakespeare's dialogue recalls one of the many charges brought against Corrupt Clergyman in medieval ecclesiastical satire: the accusation of simony, "[t]he act or practice of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferments, benefices, or emoluments; traffic in sacred things" (*OED* 1.a.). Here, of course, rather appropriately, Shakespeare presents a fiendish variation of simony: Winchester bribes the devil with the "benefice" of the entire nation, a plot upon which Death (or the devil) can set up his own parish of conquered souls. That Winchester believes it is in his power to offer England as a bribe to Death (or the devil) illustrates his particularly monstrous pride and disregard for the English people, who live to their detriment under his spiritual care. Bullough similarly avers that "Winchester's character is blackened with hints of bribery and sexual corruption [ie. 3.1.14-20] not found in Hall or Holinshed, perhaps because he was a Romish cardinal" (3.40).

The association of high-level clergy with simony and lasciviousness, in addition to pride, ambition, nepotism and neglect of spiritual duties, did not begin

[6] Knowles cites the 1809 reprint.

with post-Reformation anti-Catholic propaganda. Medieval sermon literature and estate satire created the idea of the Corrupt Clergyman in the popular imagination. It is this social person which emerged from the earlier literary tradition that trained later audiences to expect the very worst from high-ranking clerics.

This critique of corruption in the church becomes even more pointed in the works of Tudor chroniclers, as we shall see, where historical distance permits attacks on specific personages. In these chronicles Winchester, for example, becomes a figure of the old faith; those who oppose him are precursors of religious reform. The case of the pseudo-Chaucerian *The Plowman's Tale* is a good example of this kind of religious revisionism, as the work "gained special prominence in the sixteenth century, when Chaucer's writings were thought to anticipate English Reformation attitudes concerning the church of Rome and its bureaucracies" (Dean, Intro *Plowman* 53).[7] Shakespeare works with both concepts of the Corrupt Clergyman – as a social person usually recognisable in many social and historical contexts and as a pointedly Catholic historical figure who had a negative impact on the fate of the English nation.

G.R. Owst's study of late medieval sermon culture, *Literature and the Pulpit*, persuasively argues for the continued influence of homiletic works, particularly those of John of Bromyard (d. ca. 1390).[8] Bromyard wrote extensively on the abuses of corrupt clergymen and excerpts from his preacher

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[7] *The Plowman's Tale* was included in editions of the *Canterbury Tales* until Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition excluded it.

[8] Bromyard is even mentioned in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, in a "consideration of the learned" living in the time of Richard II. He writes, "Iohn Bromyard a Dominicke frier, [was] both a notable lawyer & a diuine, a sore enimie also to Wickliuists [ie. Wycliffites]" (Holinshed 509).

handbook, the *Summa Praedicantium*, circulated widely after his death and throughout the sixteenth century.[9] Whether or not Shakespeare knew of Bromyard specifically is unimportant; as I have argued throughout my dissertation, the social persons upon which Shakespeare draws have enduring historical and literary currency. The playwright not only follows his chronicle sources but the literary tradition of ecclesiastical satire. Indeed, the chronicle sources are themselves likely influenced by popular literary conceptions of corrupt clergymen. Many works drawing on ecclesiastical and estates satire remained popular throughout the sixteenth century, Chaucer's General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* being the most famous example.[10]

Shakespeare's plays trace the "jars" between Gloucester and Winchester (1.1.44)[11] which are familial and personal, but which eventually threaten king and commons. Winchester's dramatic arc moves from inciting personal and familial strife to inspiring civil dissention – a connection made manifest in his dual position as the king's great-uncle and important political figure at Henry's court – to inviting foreign powers potentially to corrupt English national integrity. Significantly, Winchester dies alone, except for his great-nephew the king, Salisbury and Warwick. This intimate scene ends Winchester's dramatic arc

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[9] The *Summa* "was first printed by A. Koberger at Nuremberg in 1485, and other editions followed, the most widely circulated being that of Arcangelus Ritius at Venice in 1586" (Binkley). As late as 1655 Bromyard was still being cited as an authority, even if a spurious one: Anglican bishop George Hall (1612-1668) mentions him five times in his satirical "defence" of the Catholic faith, *The triumphs of Rome over despised Protestancie*.

[10] For the relationship between the General Prologue and estates satire, see Jill Mann's Introduction (1-16).

[11] While "jar" can mean any bout of contention, definition 6.b. of the *OED* interprets "jar" as **a** "dissension, dispute, quarrel. Now used chiefly of petty (esp. domestic) broils."

where it began: with the personal and familial. Winchester attempts to die as he has lived, by offering bribes, and by raving over his rival, his nephew Gloucester. His death also serves as counterpoint to his life: while his concerns have been overwhelmingly political and public, his death forces the audience to confront his personal spiritual state. If his death is interpreted as a warning against conducting such a "monstrous life" (3.3.30), his immediate witnesses do not comprehend the larger picture: that Winchester's death is merely a forerunner to the greater civil dissention at hand.

Yet Shakespeare also undercuts the seemingly overwhelming corrupt influence of Winchester within the English court. While Winchester has many of the markers of the villainous Corrupt Clergyman social person from medieval sermon literature and estates satire, he also supports Talbot's cause in *1 Henry VI* and acts as peaceful intermediary between warring French and English forces. His allegiance to Rome is a marker of his Otherness, but he is also an Englishman belonging to the venerable line of John of Gaunt (though born out of wedlock). It seems that in *2 Henry VI*, after Gloucester and Winchester die, the English court – and the play – loses dynamism and a sense of balance. The forces threatening to tear the nation apart were contained in Gloucester and Winchester's feud; when they are gone, actual civil war begins to threaten in earnest. Winchester is more than a merely conventional antagonist: his disappearance partway through the play sequence signals the problematic nature of scapegoating individual figures in English history.

Late Medieval Sermon Literature: When Preachers Attack

Fourteenth-century sermon literature targets a broad range of clerical abuses, sometimes real and sometimes exaggerated for effect. While sermonisers attack prelates for nepotism and the abuse of judicial systems, they chastise all levels of clergy for being poor moral and spiritual exemplars for their flocks. Owst's *Literature and the Pulpit* remains the most comprehensive collection of Latin sermonisers in English translation; I frequently rely on his book to cite works that remain unpublished.[12] This section focuses on common accusations which preachers levelled at clergy. These abuses largely define the Corrupt Clergyman social person, which is concretised in stock characters found in late medieval literary works such as the anonymously written *The Plowman's Tale*, *Mum and the Soothsegger*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* and Chaucer's Pardoner's Prologue in the *Canterbury Tales*. Each contains attributes of estates satire and portrays the Corrupt Clergyman within the context of clerical reformation. As we will see, when preachers (and estates satirists) attack, they create a vivid and often visceral impression of corruption throughout church ranks.

One of the vivid similes Bromyard employs to describe the priests' grasping natures is that these holy men celebrate at their parishioners' funerals "like parchment-makers rejoicing over the death of the sheep" (Bromyard, "Invidia," qtd. Owst 255).[13] These priests appropriate the money which dead

[12] Authors such as Mirk and Bromyard, for example, are either only partially translated or their works remain accessible only in manuscript.
[13] Since the *Summa Praedicantium* does not exist in translation, I rely on Owst's translations of Bromyard's and other preachers' works. The 1586 edition (vols. 1 and 2), published in Venice, is

parishioners have bequeathed to the church. The ovine reference is particularly appropriate considering the conventional pastoral analogy between Christ and his followers. The rhetorical figure implies a distortion of vision: priests view their flocks as a means to live rather than as a spiritual obligation. Indeed, one of the common complaints against the clergy is that they behave more frequently as worldly leaders than spiritual ones; they are recognisable by their fine clothes, good food, expensive horses and vast estates. John Mirk complains that it is difficult to tell the difference between a knight and a priest:

> A knight is dressed according to the form and fashion of the world. But neither here is there any difference between the two. Thus he (the priest) conforms to the world in such a way that in nothing does he differ from the people, save possibly in the tonsure which is reserved for him. So the prophecy is in truth fulfilled which says – "And as the people shall be, so also shall be the priest" [Hosea 4:9][14]

Mirk's critique rests on the problem of recognition: priests are increasingly difficult to identify according to their estate. Bromyard and other writers suggest that clergymen, who ought to abstain from worldly treasures and secular positions of power, in fact outdo kings and emperors in amassing wealth and status. Mirk also worries about the reflection of the flock in its pastor. This issue of moral exemplarity between estates occurs again in Shakespeare's Winchester. It is possible to view the commons' various rebellious activities in *2 Henry VI* as

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downloadable via http://books.google.com. Owst only cites chapter headings, such as "Invidia," "Luxuria," "Avaritia," etc. and does not give reference for the version from which he is working.

[14] Lib. 1, cap. xiii, MS York Minster Library xvi. O. 11, fols. 39 b-40. Quoted Owst 277.

reflections of Winchester's corruptive behaviour at court, a point I will argue in my section on the Cardinal.

Part of the problem is the process by which men enter the church. These corrupt prelates curry favour with other clergy in order for their nephews and young relatives to obtain clerical ranks for which they are not suitable. Another sermoniser, Franciscan Nicholas Philip, argues that priests labour for temporal wealth and status, "not to feed their parishioners, the poor and the weak, but to promote their own nephews, their sons and prostitutes."[15] Archbishop Richard Fitzralph of Armagh (ca. 1300-1360) similarly complains,

> Others there are, plunderers in the Church of God, falsely called pastors, who from the "goods of the churches…provide for their own flesh and blood, namely their nephews and nieces – as they call the crowd of their own daughters and sons, and so are unable to show that hospitality to which they are bound by their profession."[16]

Here, the archbishop targets nepotism with the added accusation that "nephews" and "nieces" are in actuality illegitimate sons and daughters. Promiscuity and illegitimacy are related sins. Owst cites another sermon, from the same collection, in which Fitzralph exclaims, "Travel through the provinces and look at the cathedral churches, and you will find them replete with 'flesh and blood', the

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[15] MS Bodleian Lat. Th. d. 1 [ca. 1430-1436], fol. 88. Quoted Owst 269. Very little is known about Nicholas Philip. Wenzel writes, "the sermon collection has a strong connection with an otherwise unknown Franciscan Nicholas Philip of the convent at King's Lynn. But it is by no means clear whether Friar Philip was its scribe, collector, preacher, author, or any combination of these" (*Latin Sermon*, 97).

[16] MS Lansd. 393, fol. 63 b et seq. Quoted Owst 244.

nephews and grand-nephews of bishops, I perceive."[17] The author implies widespread corruption in both town and countryside. It is not just the poorer clergy committing this sin, but the bishops and other prelates who have much greater power. Thus, Gloucester's accusations against Winchester contain the flavour of earlier sermon social critiqe: Gloucester charges Winchester with lasciviousness (*1 Henry VI* 3.1.14-20) and mocks him for being John of Gaunt's illegitimate progeny (*1 Henry VI* 3.1.42), even though Winchester's birth was legitimised after Gaunt's marriage to his mistress Katherine Swinford.

Other activities in which Winchester engages, such as simony and the manipulation of the legal process, are also often cited as typical clerical abuses. Robert Mannyng spends many lines on the effect of avarice on royal courts and justice systems. He warns against corrupt political advisers:

> Many man ys broght ful bare
> For cunseylours þat coueytus are.
> And many a land yn gret errours
> Are ouerturned þurgh cunseylours. (5419-22)

Mannyng argues for the national and political implications of these greedy, self-interested counsellors, including the "ouerturn[ing]" of countries themselves. He follows this discussion with an analysis of simony, a practice which occurs when "ȝyftes [ie. gifts] of holy cherche men selle" or when one "oþer ȝaue or sente / Of

[17] MS Lansd. 393, fol. 144 et seq. Quoted Owst 245.

holy cherche to haue vaunsemente"[18] (5514; 5515-16). Mannyng describes one who practises simony as a "wlf [sic] of goddess folde" (5522). Though an extremely common proverb (which occurs no less than three times in *1 Henry VI*, applied to three different targets),[19] Gloucester accuses Winchester of being a "wolf in sheep's array" early in our introduction to the bishop (1.3.55), an insult that foreshadows Winchester's later purchase of a cardinalship from the Pope.

Estates Satirists take on the Clergy

Turning from sermons to other forms of literature we find similar kinds of satirical critiques of corrupt clergy. Various authors of estates satire take special delight in identifying clerical abuses. Simony receives as much attention in the imaginative literature as in the sermons. The vice is often figured as a fine lord named "Sir Simony." In Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the personification serves Lady Meed (or Reward). Meed and Falsenesse travel to Westminster to be married. Having no horses, Sir Simony and Civil Law suggest "That somonours sholde be sadeled and serven hem echone" (2.170).[20] The following procession evokes Simony's persuasive and corruptive powers. Civil Law commands,

> Sire Symonye shal sitte upon hir bakes.

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[18] Ie. when "you either offer or send [money] / [that properly belongs to the] holy church to gain advancement."

[19] Notably, this imagery connects two overtly Catholic characters: Winchester and Joan of Arc. After Joan has denied her poor and obscure origins, her shepherd father cries, "when thou didst keep my lambs a-field, / I wish some ravenous wolf had eaten thee" (5.3.30-31). While not an obvious "wolf-in-sheep's-clothing" metaphor like Gloucester's accusation, each passage affiliates its object with the mendacious wolf.

[20] Both Civil and Canon Law were based on Roman legal precedents. Langland's narrator Will believes that Simony and Civil Law "Were moost pryvee with Mede of any men" (2.64).

> Denes and southdenes, drawe yow togideres;
>
> Erchedekenes and officials and alle youre registrers,
>
> Lat sadle hem with silver oure synne to suffer –
>
> As devoutrye and divorses and derne usurie –
>
> To bere bisshopes aboute abrood in visitynge. (2.172-77)

The passage finely illustrates not only the wide range of clerics under Simony's power – deans, sub-deans, arch-deacons, presiding officers, registrars and bishops – but also Simony's travesty of Christ's sacrifice. Simony promotes adultery, divorce and secret usury (l. 176) by saddling these officials with silver "our synne to suffer." These clerics suffer people's sins not through sacrifice but through the "burdensome" transportation of the people's silver on their backs. The reference to silver rather than to gold or coins or other monetary terms also recalls Judas' betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). Langland's imaginative description of Sir Simony effectively situates the effects of clerical simony within a larger frame of human salvation; the stakes of vice are no less than the corruption of the entire church. The passage's grotesque humour – namely the image of men saddled like beasts – also illustrates the dehumanising effects of corruption. Simony had lost some of these all-encompassing associations of religious denegration by Shakespeare's day. However, Winchester's purchase of his cardinalship signals a transfer of spiritual anxiety over simony to fear over its secular political effects within English government.

Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* (ca. 1376-1379) discusses the origins of simony. He interprets the tale of Simon Magus[21] – after whom the term is taken – who, according to early church authorities, was the father of all heresy:

> Simon Magus flew up on high, and in the end was killed when he fell down on the rock. He gave an evil example to the cardinals, who now give everyone in our court an example of high flying. They have laid hold of two wings, in which I see the feathers of vainglory. And thereupon they have taken to the strong wild wind of pride, which has snatched them up to the clouds so high that it has outstripped charity.
>
> (18997-19008)[22]

According to medieval legend (rooted in the apocryphal Acts of St Peter), Simon Magus told Emperor Nero that he could fly above the Forum, which he was able to do for a short while before the prayers of apostles Peter and Paul brought him to earth.[23]

Avian metaphors and images are often used to describe the behaviour of corrupt clergymen, as in the above example and elsewhere in imaginative literature of the medieval era. The fifteenth-century *Plowman's Tale*, written by an anonymous Lollard author, is a later addition to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

[21] According to the New Testament Book of Acts, Simon Magus was a magician who executed miracles. After being initiated into the church, Simon witnessed apostles Peter and John performing the sacrament of confirmation in Samaria. He approached the apostles and offered them money so that he might also be able to perform the sacrament. Peter rejected Simon's offer, instructing him that God's gift may not be purchased with money (Acts 8:9-25).

[22] The Wilson English translation of *Mirour de l'Omme* does not provide line by line correspondences with the Middle French original. I have consulted Macaulay's Middle French edition (in *The Complete Works*) to provide exact line citation.

[23] No doubt Gower's assertion that Simon "fell down on the rock" is meant to recall Jesus's words to the apostle: "thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

(which includes interpolations possibly from the Tudor era). Considering its ideological position – a position which places greater emphasis on the individual's relationship to God, without the interference of a corrupt clergy – the poem is invested in criticising popes, prelates and clerics to the fullest extent. It begins with the Plowman finishing his labour and joining the pilgrims at Canterbury. His tale describes a debate between two birds, a pelican and a griffin. However, the Pelican, a symbol of Christ,[24] speaks most of the poem's 1380 lines, while the Griffin has only a few rebuttals. Numerous medieval bestiaries emphasise the griffin's viciousness, especially toward men and horses. Most likely the author presents the Griffin defending the established (corrupt) clergy because, according to Pliny the Elder, griffins hoarded vast quantities of gold in Northern Asia.[25] The animal thus best represents the clergy's greed which is so often the focus in *The Plowman's Tale*.

As with the high-flying Simon Magus, the griffin's ability to soar is related to his pride. The Pelican says that the Griffin and the corrupt church "ben lykely," that is, are similar in their desire to steal (1303). This is why the Griffin

[24] The bird was popularly believed to feed its young with its own blood, suggesting Eucharistic connotations. Bartholomeus Anglicus writes, "[t]he Pellican loueth too much her children. For when the children be haught, and begin to waxe hoare [ie. grow older], they smite the father and the mother in the face, wherefore the mother smiteth them againe and slaieth them. And the thirde daye the mother smiteth her selfe in her side that the bloud runneth out, and sheddeth that hot bloud uppon the bodies of her children. And by vertue of the bloud the birdes that were before dead, quicken againe" (*De proprietatibus rerum*).

[25] In his Natural History Pliny writes, "[the Arimaspians are] said to carry on a perpetual warfare with the Griffins, a kind of monster, with wings, as they are commonly represented, for the gold which they dig out of the mines, and which these wild beasts retain and keep watch over with a singular degree of cupidity, while the Arimaspi are equally desirous to get possession of it" (Pliny the Elder).

defends the status quo. The Pelican further interprets the Griffin's character for the Plowman:

> The foule [ie. the Griffin's avian parts] betokeneth pryde,
>
> As Lucifer, that high-flewe was,
>
> And syth he dyd hym in evell hyde,
>
> For he agylted [ie. sinned against] Goddes grace. (1305-8)

The Pelican relates Lucifer's desire to ascend to God's throne with the Griffin's (and clergymen's[26]) overweening pride. He also interprets the Griffin's lion parts as symbolic of his pride (1323) and greed, calling the beast a "robber and a ravynere (ie. destroyer)" (1317). At the end of the poem, the Pelican and his recruit, the Phoenix (another avian symbol of Christ), battle the predatory birds enlisted by the Griffin. The allegorical war of birds signifies a kind of Final Judgement of the church; the Phoenix culls the other birds although they "flewen as thycke as rayne" (1345): "To flye from hym it was in vayne, / For he dyd vengeaunce and no grace" (1347-48). The author (or at least the Plowman) envisions a church finally rid of corrupt influence.[27]

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[26] Earlier in the poem the Pelican calls popes "proude as Lucifarre" (381).

[27] However, the author (or a later editor) backs away from his critique, blaming the Pelican if the reader takes any offence. He claims that the narrative is only a fable and that he intends no harm to the Holy Church. The author (or editor) is wary of criticising the church itself, rather than those men who work against its ideals. Earlier in the poem the Pelican declares, "I dispysed not the Pope, / Ne no sacramente, soth to say, / But speake in charite and good hope" (1179-80). This rhetorical stance may be a tactic to distance the Lollard author from the appearance of heresy. Many of the poem's earlier points seem directed at historical figures, though names are not given, as the Papal Schism forms part of the poem's backdrop – the rival popes are referenced at line 242. This mingling of eschatological allegory and pointed historical critique illustrates that the Corrupt Clergyman figure – or indeed, figures – take on both temporal and spiritual significance, a point emphasised throughout the poem in various ways. For the complicated compositional and editorial history of the poem, see Andrew N. Wawn: the critic concludes that much of the poem was written by one (or two) Lollard authors, with two sixteenth-century interpolations.

The connection between birds and pride is also emphasised in the Corrupt Clergyman's love of venery as both game hunting and as sexual pursuit. Gower may have this love in mind when he writes, in the voice of a corrupt prelate,

> "The more the fowler spreads his nets, the sooner the birds will be caught, and likewise the more diverse sins we have imposed by our decrees, the sooner we will be at fault, and we shall be more powerful….we want our table well-supplied with food and our stable with great steeds." (18505-18516)

The prelate threatens the creation of new sins (by the Roman papacy and court) so that people are forced to purchase indulgences or pay fines. Gower later uses a hunting metaphor to suggest clerics' predatory nature and their conventional love of worldly pursuits. Of parish priests he writes, "they give themselves up to lechery, whereby they delight their bodies, or they take to hunting and halloo the fox in the woods when they should be chanting their litany" (203312-20316). Here the ideal cleric – one who should be celebrating Mass – is contrasted with the typical priest – one who celebrates venery.[28]

Likewise Langland targets the clergy's love of hunting in *Piers Plowman*. Reason threatens to have no mercy on sinners,

> "Til the Kynges counseil be the commune profit;
> Til bisshopes bayards bin beggeris chaumbres,
> Hire haukes and hire houndes help to povere religious." (4.123-25)

[28] Mann observes that while the "hunting parson" is the typical "social stereotype," any prelate may be targeted in estates satire for their inappropriate love of hunting and whoring (24).

Reason cannot advise the king until all of the estates' many failings (4.112-33) are rectified and until Meed has no "'maistrie in the moot-halle'" (135). The listing of estates and their common faults have the effect of naturalising their behaviour. Reason's list suggests that these behaviours have become so rooted in the world that it seems impossible that things should ever change. That bishops should exchange their fine horses for visiting beggars and for looking after the poorer clergy seems impossible when meed is available. Langland uses the venery metaphor to argue that the king's and country's only hope is to continue striving against people's inborn sin, to embrace reason and reject financial gain.

The hawking scene at 2.1 in *2 Henry VI* likewise draws on these assocations, although in the play characters invoke hunting metaphors in multiple ways: to accuse their enemies of pride, to speak in a kind of code so that the king will not detect their infighting, and to justify their illegal behaviour. Whereas in sermons and estates satire hunting signifies clerical pride, ambition and the degeneration of the church, in Langland and Shakespeare, the metaphor combines an elite leisure activity with sinister political implications. In *2 Henry VI*, Winchester's deathbed fear that Gloucester's hair will entrap his soul like a bird seems a final ironic evocation of venery that haunts his final moments. I will elaborate further on this point in my section on the Cardinal.

Finally, sermonisers and estates satirists often make a connection between prelates' perversion of justice and of God's judgement of the judges. Bishops' and cardinals' engagement in, and perversion of, legal processes are a favourite target of medieval satirists. No figure illustrates this aspect of the Corrupt Clergyman better than Mum, who often wears a bishop's mitre in the anonymous, early

fifteenth-century *Mum and the Sothsegger* (579; 1236). Initially Mum is presented as an advisor who "keeps mum" and opposes truth-telling in the king's council chambers:

> 'I am Mum thy maister,' cothe he, 'in all maniere places
> That sittith with souverayns and servyd with greete.
> Thaire wille ne thaire wordes I withseye [ie. deny] never,
> But folowe thaym in thaire folie and fare muche the bettre,
> Easily for oyle [ie. flattery], sire, and elles were I nyce [ie. foolish].'
>
> (243-47)

As an advisor, Mum keeps silent at strategic moments. He never opposes the will of the king or the "greete" – rich, powerful lords – and by flattering these men, even when he recognises their political decisions as foolish, Mum gains wealth and status. In this way, Mum gains "maistrie" over the king and court.[29]

However, as the poem progresses the reader realises that Mum is much more complex and multifarious than this one role suggests. Not only does Mum keep silent at strategic moments; he is also a smooth rhetorician. The narrator describes Mum's facility with language in municipal councils:

> For he couthe lye and laugh and leepe over the balkes
> There any grucche or groyne or grame shuld arise.
> He was ful couchant and coy and curtoys of speche,

[29] At line 1115 in *The Plowman's Tale* the Pelican refers to Matthew 23:10: "Neither be ye called masters; for one is you master, Christ" (Douay-Rheims Bible). Elsewhere the Pelican cites St Benedict's rule which decrees that monks were never "To have lordshyppe of man ne towne" (l. 1012).

And parlid for the partie and the playnte lefte. (808-11)

The mayor praises Mum for his ability to smooth over grudges and complaints; his linguistic ability is presented in terms of physical agility. Mum can "leepe over balkes" – overcome hurdles – and can alternately lie, laugh, flatter, sue and plead. He defends the more powerful party and "ignore[s] the merit of the legal pleading" (Dean *Mum*, n. 2, p. 107).

As an influence over the clergy, Mum is responsible for prelates' secrecy about how they spend tithing money (622-26). The prelates do not tell anyone how they disburse this money because,

Thay have memoire of Mum among alle other,

[Which] Ys more in thaire mynde thenne martires of heven

That token the deeth for trouthe of tirantz hands. (630-32)

This passage essentially details the extent of the clergy's greed and the lack of transparency in their practices. Not only do these prelates keep Mum in mind when conducting religious functions, but they concern themselves more with these secrets than they do with being religious exemplars. They do not think about martyrs who were killed because they presented God's truth to tyrants, but only think about how "keeping mum" will advance them in the church.

The satirist suggests that while early Christian martyrs risked death by counselling tyrant rulers with religious truth, contemporary clerics and lords, by comparison, do not seem able even to counsel judicious kings such as the current ruler, Henry IV. In Henry's court these counsellors risk censure, but not death. As an advisor, Mum keeps silent in the king's council chambers until he knows which way the vote will go: "He spendith no speche but spices hit make / Til he

wite whitherward that wil doo drawe" (691-92). Unless he has received a bribe ("spice"), Mum will not provide counsel until he knows which way the council's desire ("wil") is tending. The narrator makes a similar point in *The Plowman's Tale*, complaining that the clergy,

> han more might in Englande here
> Than hath the kynge and all hys lawe.
> They han purchased hem suche powere
> To taken hem whom lyste nat knawe,[30]
> And say that heresy is her sawe;
> And so to prysone woll hem sende. (637-42)

These corrupt clergy manipulate the king's court and legal processes in order to send their enemies to prison for heresy.

In *Mum and the Sothsegger* and *The Plowman's Tale*, each writer satirises, albeit in different ways, manipulations at the highest levels of government. Moreover, the narrator in Mum makes a specific complaint about the clergy's involvement in certain legal situations: "prelatz shuld be voidid [ie. dismissed] / Whenne any dome of deeth shal be do there" (707-8). Dean notes, "Bishops in their clerical role were not permitted to take part in death sentences; hence they would have to leave Parliament during such discussions" (*Mum* n. 707-8, p. 155). The narrator argues that prelates take part in legal matters from which they should recuse themselves. This aspect is pertinent to Shakespeare's staging of Gloucester's informal trial and murder, in which Winchester plays a prominent

[30] ie. "To seize whomever they wish not to know."

role. In *1* and *2 Henry VI*, Winchester seems to mis-advise the inexperienced King Henry intentionally for his own benefit and manipulates the court to bring down his enemy.

In *Mum and the Sothsegger*, Sothsegger, or the Truth-teller, seems to have only one iteration – that of a beaten-down wounded man (847) who is often shoved into "a syde-herne" [ie. side-corner] (1260) rather than heeded. Mum, on the other hand, takes on numerous shapes: as counsellor at the king's court, as municipal official,[31] as bishop, as friar, as monk. Mum, as an abstract, multifaceted concept, is found in many concrete iterations throughout England; he is thus much more dangerous than Truth-teller, who remains relatively abstract and unrealised. Mum's self-interested counsel affects the spiritual, legal and governmental well-being of the country. Like Mum, Winchester is defined by his multiple roles in English government, both ecclesiastical and secular. Underlying Winchester's villainy is the idea that he is too involved in government, that as a high-ranking church official he spends too little time invested in his spiritual roles.

What happens at the upper levels of the social hierarchy has an impact on those lower down. The ideal clergyman provides an excellent moral example for his flock. I have suggested how prelates' abuse of power structures directly affects the commons in medieval estates satire; however, satirists are also concerned with how poor spiritual leadership can reflect itself indirectly in the

[31] The poet describes Mum as a friend of the mayor (a personification of all local government): "There was no maner man the maire had levir / Bydde of the burnes in benche" (ll. 802-3). No man was more welcome on the council bench than Mum.

laity. Mann argues, "[t]he notion that it was a priest's duty to set an example is given great prominence in estates satire, and a large number of images are used to express it with vividness" (63). The Pelican in *The Plowman's Tale* echoes the common simile that the secular clergy "shulde be as a myrrour, / Both to lered and to leude also" (ll. 753-54). However, more often than not, priests "sewen synne by every syde" (l. 776), but their "dedes shulde be as bryght as sterre; / Her lyvynge, leude mannes lyght" (969-70). Mann compiles an extensive list of similar metaphors in Latin, Middle French and Middle English works (63-65). In these and in other examples the metaphor figures good exemplarity as an act of transmission. However, the full implications of this transmission or lack thereof are never conveyed fully. The poets imply that sin engenders sin: if the "shepherds" do not provide good examples to their "flock," the flock feels authorised to commit the same sins as their shepherds. The implication is that the spiritual well-being of the entire country is in trouble; however, this concern is conveyed in abstract rather than concrete terms, perhaps because the consequence of this neglect is more powerful in the reader's imagination than it would be if spelled out precisely. This ellipsis suits didactic imaginative literature, particularly *The Plowman's Tale*, where the extensive listing of the clergy's abuses has an accretive effect which finally culminates in the allegorical battle of the birds. As in a parable, the reader is left to interpret the full implications of the narrative.

This strategy is much different in dramatic literature such as *1* and *2 Henry VI*, where Winchester's apparent abuses are directly related to the downfall of particular characters, as well as to the imperilling of the entire nation.

However, there is also a degree of ellipsis in the interpretation of Winchester's character. How much does he conform to the Corrupt Clergyman social person as suggested by medieval estates satire? Is he merely a villain stereotype – flat and unchanging – or does the underlying social person condition the viewer's reaction in ways that are sometimes misleading? Certainly Shakespeare is concerned with the state of the nation and with individual and collective forces that influence England's historical narrative. However, he also leaves ambiguous the causal links between these forces and the nation's health.

Chaucer's Pardoner

Shakespeare could look to a literary precedent for this kind of ambiguity. Chaucer similarly plays with the conventions of estates satire and with recognisable social persons. In Chaucer's portrayal of the Pardoner, many aspects of the Corrupt Clergyman social person are apparent. Pardoners were not necessarily clergymen; Kellogg and Haselmayer's extensive analysis of the historical pardoner's roles observes that pardoners were often "professional" collectors hired by various churches or hospitals who needed the laity's charity to support construction and maintenance projects (258). Moreover, A.J. Minnis argues that Chaucer's Pardoner "is probably a layman" (323). However, the Pardoner's description in the General Prologue, his Prologue and his Tale all rely in some way on conventions of ecclesiastical satire, and especially satire which targets bishops and other prelates. As Wenzel avers, "Chaucer borrowed…material from preaching either to satirize friars directly, or to characterize some of his fictional

pilgrims indirectly as hypocrites (Pardoner, Reeve) or as long-winded advocates of their own cause (Wife of Bath)" ("Chaucer," 141).

While I do not wish to enter deeply into the debate about the extent of Chaucer's potentially heterodox leanings, it seems clear that the Pardoner's Tale was an attractive text for later writers who were keen to see in Chaucer a critique of the Roman church as a dangerous foreign influence. Sixteenth-century editors such as William Thynne, Thomas Godfray and John Stow accepted the Lollardy-inflected *Plowman's Tale* as "authentically Chaucerian" (Dean, Intro *Plowman* 51). This does not mean that Chaucer was a Lollard of course, but there are indications in the text that the Pardoner represents a negative foreign power – at the very least he engages in corrupt practices under the guise of the Roman church.[32]

Historically, the pardoner's church role was simple. Clement V, at the Council of Vienne (1311-12), defined their function: "'[t]heir sole concern is to communicate to the people the indulgences confided to them and to humbly request alms'" (*Corpus Juris Canonici*, II, 1190, qtd. Kellogg and Haselmayer 253). However, it seems apparent that many pardoners were not content with this role. Corrupt and false pardoners became a problem as early as the thirteenth century. At the Lateran Council of 1215 Pope Innocent III condemned the pardoner's, or *questor*'s, misuse of his office (Maxfield 151). The process of granting and obtaining indulgences was not inherently evil, nor were indulgences

[32] During the Papal Schism England remained loyal to Pope Urban VI (ruled 1378-1389) at Rome rather than Clement VII (1378-1394) at Avignon.

simply "sold" as had sometimes been the popular perception. Popes or prelates granted indulgences; these "pardons" did not absolve sinners wholesale of guilt and penance. People who were granted indulgences needed to be contrite, attend confession and usually provide proof of each act. The indulgence only affected the satisfaction of penance; it could not remit guilt. The indulgence could erase partially or wholly the punishment of sin, often the number of years the sinner had to spend in purgatory. Sinners did not pay for the indulgence straightforwardly, but offered a charitable donation as proof of contrition. Many pardoners illegally claimed that their indulgences could indeed absolve guilt and erase the need for punishment.[33]

Chaucer's Pardoner collects for Rouncivale Hospital at Charing Cross, on the road between Westminster and London. Rouncivale Hospital was a cell of the Augustinian St Mary's of Roncesvalle in the province of Navarre, Spain. It was situated in a mountain pass in the Pyrenees, on the pilgrim route to St James of Compostela. As David Maxfield argues, St Mary's was associated with suspicious pardoners:

> The real [Augustinian] canons (or their proctors) – whatever they might have been in actual life – soon became lost to view by the piling up not only of the failings often displayed by legitimate pardoners, but also of all the evils and abuses associated with the horde of false pardoners.
>
> (158)

[33] See Maxfield and Kellogg and Halselmayer for a more thorough list of abuses committed by pardoners.

Maxfield gives a concise history of St Mary's, especially its relationship to the Charing Cross cell and the English court. Particularly pertinent to my examination of the Pardoner as exemplar of ecclesiastical satire is St Mary's evocation of English xenophobia. While the Charing Cross cell of St Mary's enjoyed royal and noble support – John of Gaunt was a notable patron – relations with the mother house at Roncesvalles were often strained. In the course of the Hundred Years' War, "fear arose in England that the resident foreign religious would serve as enemy spies. Moreover, they were sending money out of the country, and their extensive real estate was much coveted" (Maxfield 154). During the Papal Schism – throughout which England remained loyal to the Roman, not the Avignonese pope – foreign-owned religious estates were confiscated by the crown, including the Charing Cross hospital, even though its mother house was Spanish, not French (Maxfield 154). Moreover, the English court and the mother house fought for control over the Charing Cross hospital; the late fourteenth century was a period which saw tensions increase between Richard II and the Navarre priory. Pardoners had their licences to collect repeatedly granted and revoked by both the English court and the mother cell. When in 1389 Richard II appointed a Spanish canon as warden, "[x]enophobic sentiment in England soon made this appointment impractical, so that between 1390 and 1396 the king successively assigned three different royal clerks to the post" (Maxfield 155). In 1414, several years after Chaucer's death, English parliament confiscated nearly all foreign religious houses, including St Mary Rouncivale (Maxfield 156).

While the Pardoner in Chaucer's General Prologue is "Of Rouncivale" (l. 670), his connections with Rome are more obvious: he had "straight comen fro

the court of Rome" (671); his pardons "comen from Rome al hoot" (687) and he wears a "vernycle," or Veronica,[34] sewed into his hat, a Roman pilgrim badge (685). As England had remained loyal to the Roman Pope Urban VI, it is evident that Chaucer does not target Rome itself as a usurping power; however, the author does suggest that the Pardoner uses foreign authority to sanction his illicit activities. Coupled with the xenophobic sentiment felt against France and Spain during this period, the Pardoner represents the worst fears about a co-opted holy church.

Not only are clergy increasingly perceived as wolves in sheep's clothing; they also enter England and "fro Berwick into Ware" offer indulgences with false Roman seals (692).[35] Alan Fletcher argues that the Pardoner's hypocrisy signals his heresy – an equation that most medieval readers would recognise (117) – and I would add that the Pardoner's foreign associations argue that he is a heretical influence which specifically originates outside of England. Kellogg and Haselmayer observe that licensing and jurisdictional problems afflicted the pardoning practice at the local level – between archdeacons and bishops (267-68) – and at international levels – between the English prelacy and foreign hospitals (271).[36] As agents of the Pope or of a bishop, or both, corrupt pardoners could

[34] A vernicle, or Veronica, was an image of Christ's face, legendarily created when St Veronica used a handkerchief to wipe the sweat from Christ's brow on his journey to Calvary.

[35] While there is no indication that the Pardoner's indulgences are fake, his relics clearly are. The false relics throw doubt on the authenticity of the Pardoner's indulgences and even on his license to pardon.

[36] The critics argue, "[c]ontrol of these hospitals from outside of England was difficult if not impossible, and their wealth, to which charitable collections were no small contributing factor, made them tempting political prizes… The complaints of local English clergy against the unrestrained actions of questors for the Knights of St. John 'in Anglia' necessitated the issuance of

claim licensing authority in a variety of ways. This set-up made it easier for pardoners to abuse the system. As the Pardoner himself reveals, "Bulles of popes and of cardynales, / Of patriarkes and bishops I shewe" (Pardoner's Prologue 342-43). He has multiple authorities (or claims them, at any rate) behind his indulgences, including patriarchs, who were "metropolitans [ie. archbishops] such as those of Venice and Lisbon" (Hilary n. 342-43, p. 906). Patriarchs were associated with foreign sees rather than English ones.[37]

As with other Corrupt Clergymen in literature already mentioned, the Pardoner is avaricious. The number of pockets and bags he carries is impressive. His hood is "trussed up in his walet" (l. 681) along with his pardons (686); he carries a "male" in which he keeps a false relic, a "pilwe-beer," itself a type of sack (694). His love of "newe jet" (682) and courtly hairstyles (677-80) and his extreme talent in extracting money from parishioners (703-4; 710-14) similarly illustrate his avarice. This emphasis follows the Summoner's decree, "'Purs is the ercedekenes helle,'" which is a reference to the talion punishment for bribe-taking archdeacons: their purses become their hell. The greed of both the Pardoner and his partner intensifies the hypocrisy of their abuse of the legal and ecclesiastical systems.

The Pardoner's portrait up until line 706 creates the image of an obviously hypocritical servant of the church. The narrator then changes tack:

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a Bull by Urban V" (271). Regarding jurisdictional licensing, Minnis observes, "ordained priests did not have ex officio the power to issue indulgences; for that the requisite jurisdiction was required, and this rested with the pope and his bishops (whether the latter acted on their own authority or by dint of delegated authority, as the pope's agents, was a hotly debated topic)" (324).

[37] Even though the archbishops of York and Canterbury were metropolitan bishops, it seems likely that the Pardoner here refers to foreign metropolitans.

But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbeste he song an offertorie;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude. (707-14)

The narrator seems intent to see the Pardoner in a more generous light than suggested in the lines prior to this passage. He focuses admiringly on the Pardoner's sensual attributes – of singing and telling compelling stories – though he ironically reveals even more of the Pardoner's hypocrisy than the earlier lines did. In church the Pardoner *becomes* a "noble ecclesiaste" – a protean shift that was of course impossible in reality. Only priests and friars were allowed to preach in church; according to Innocent III's decree at the 1215 Lateran council, the *questor* was only allowed to read the indulgence in church, not preach a sermon (Kellogg and Haselmayer 255). The Pardoner's goal to "wynne" silver suggests that he is not collecting it for a charitable cause but for himself.

We have seen in the anonymous poet's presentation of Mum in *Mum and the Sothsegger* that corrupt clergy and advisors were often perceived as having smooth tongues. Mann also describes the friar's eloquence and profane love of language as an aspect of anti-mendicant satire (37-39). Here of course the Pardoner uses his "smal" (ie. high) voice in the service of offertory hymns (l. 688). As with the other pilgrims' descriptions, the reader is placed in a position of

moral uncertainty. Mann argues that Chaucer often uses sumptuous language and imagery to complicate conventional notions of morality. In the instance of the Monk, Mann argues, "[i]t *is* very pleasant to imagine the company of such a sleek, gleaming lordly prelate – above all, he is 'fair'. The language of the portrait thus stimulates us to condemn (in so far as it evokes tradition) and approve at the same time" (36-37). Likewise, the Pardoner "makes the person [ie. parson] and the peple his apes" and cheats them using false relics (706); however, he appeals through his storytelling ability. As the Pardoner himself observes, "lewed peple loven tales olde" (Pard. Prol. 437). There is something attractive in his talent for singing "the murierly and loude." Not only his singing good, it is "alderbest" according to the narrator. Even though the narrator seems intent on deluding himself, the reader cannot help but feel pleasure in the description of the superlative con man, the only one of his kind in England (692-93).

However, Fletcher argues persuasively that religious hypocrisy, a marker of heresy, was an extremely topical debate at the time during which the *Canterbury Tales* was being written and that the high stakes of the Pardoner's illicit activities would not be lost on the audience:

> [t]he Pardoner, through his central theme of religious hypocrisy, has become inextricable from the religious hypocrites who inhabit the world of contemporary religious polemic. It is here, where issues are writ large in black and white, and where wolves go daily in sheep's clothing, that the Pardoner's "bretheren" are to be found, and here is where at least some medieval readers, before troubling long to map the

> contours of his psyche, would have unreservedly judged and placed him. (121)

The Pardoner forthrightly says, "myn entente is nat but for for to wynne, / And nothyng for correccioun of synne" (Pard. Prol. 403-4). Fletcher argues that the choice of a pardoner rather than a friar – the typical target of Lollard ecclesiastical satire – for Chaucer's critique is motivated by a desire to avoid charges of religious partisanship. The selection of a pardoner "lets Chaucer hide behind a character traditionally corrupt yet into whom he can safely introduce the resonance of the most urgent and topical theological argument of his day" (119). Chaucer thus enlivens the potentially "stale," "traditional perceptions" of pardoners' behaviour (119).

Chaucer, like Shakespeare, uses the Corrupt Clergyman social person – here in the form of a dishonest pardoner – to complicate perceptions of the clergyman's works. The narrator admires the Pardoner for his profane abilities; the reader cannot help but appreciate the Pardoner's impresario attributes; and the Pardoner himself boasts of and defends his activities:

> What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,
> And wynne gold and silver for I teche,
> That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully? (Pard. Prol. 439-441)

From the Pardoner's point of view, he provides a service – telling "tales olde" in his sermons – for which he deserves to be paid, rejecting the notion of clerical poverty. Of course, the medieval reader would also be able to appreciate the Pardoner's dangerous spiritual influence, one that is especially affiliated with external spheres of power (the court of Rome, Roncesvalles). This is what

especially sets Chaucer's work apart from the other medieval works, even though those are also invested in large-scale issues of England's spiritual well-being. Chaucer's work illustrates an awareness of England's situation within a larger European political climate, and the necessity of treading carefully in matters of religious reformation. The playful retraction at the end of *The Plowman's Tale* (1373-80) shows a similar attention to the latter;[38] however, Chaucer's work more thoroughly questions simple assumptions about corrupt clergy. The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale – particularly the latter's use of the folktale's Italian variant[39] – deals more extensively with issues of English spirituality in relation to foreign factors.

It is appropriate to end this section on medieval literature with Helen Cooper's observation on social types in Chaucer and Shakespeare:

> Chaucer never names his Pardoner, and buries his one mention of the Wife of Bath's name deep within her Prologue; it is her identity as a wife in the full misogamist tradition, and how she fills that out, that matters. The same principle applies to Claudius, who is never named in the spoken text of *Hamlet*, nor at all in the first quarto print. Audiences know him as the king who has murdered his brother and married his widow, and that is more than enough to provide a baseline for response.
>
> (*Medieval World* 132)

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[38] The plowman/narrator instructs the reader to "Wyteth [ie. Blame] the Pellican, and not me, / For herof I nyl not avowe… But as a fable take it ye mowe" (ll. 1373-74; 1376).

[39] See *Sources and Analogues of the* Canterbury Tales, vol. 1. My thanks go to Jake Walsh Morrissey for alerting me to this fact and critical resource.

The Pardoner, for all his apparent psychological depth, is still a type defined by his social (and spiritual) roles. The "baseline for response," provided by the character's social roles, is the essential departure point for any sense of a character's "individualism." The Pardoner and Winchester are still stock characters in that they are largely defined by their social roles as corrupt clergymen, and measured by how much they adhere to or deviate from that social person. Both Chaucer and Shakespeare introduce ambiguity into their characterisations in a variety of ways. They complicate any overt didacticism the character type usually displays in other literary works; they draw attention to the broader social contexts in which the characters exist; and they give the characters an affective dynamism that appeals on levels other than the reader's or viewer's moral sensibility.

However, unlike the Pardoner's Tale or *Hamlet*, the *Henry VI* plays rely on well-known names of English nobles and kings. For Shakespeare's characterisation of Winchester, the playwright had to look not only to older medieval types but also to historical accounts in the works of English chroniclers. As we shall see, these chroniclers are invested in storytelling, and frequently mix historical "fact" with conventional characterisation. Their stories are particularly inflected with early Reformation attitudes. The literary tradition of the Corrupt Clergyman becomes freighted with anti-Catholic sentiment, particularly in Foxe's work. The audience's "baseline for response" is to know Winchester not only as a corrupt prelate, but as a dangerous, foreign, Catholic influence, and as a man who actually existed in English history.

The Tudor Chroniclers

The Tudor chroniclers create an individuated character in their portrayals of the Cardinal Winchester, but unlike Chaucer's portrayal of the Pardoner the chroniclers avail themselves of the Corrupt Clergyman social person in a sweeping national narrative. Where Chaucer's use of the Corrupt Clergyman, as realised in the Pardoner, is mainly satirical and ideologically ambivalent, the chroniclers' representations of Winchester are more overtly dangerous to England's civil integrity and its international influence. The following section examines Winchester's portrayal in the works of the Tudor chroniclers. These representations are Shakespeare's most immediate link to the Corrupt Clergyman social person: we know that the playwright consulted these works in writing his English history plays. All of the chronicles – Foxe's[40] and *Mirror for Magistrates*[41] – especially, raise the stakes about the Corrupt Clergyman's impact on England's national and international affairs.[42] The chroniclers employ the

[40] Each Tudor historiographer treats similar key moments in Winchester's life, though Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* has perhaps the most overt anti-Catholic agenda. In the 1570 Preface dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, Foxe complains that although he would have liked to begin writing other histories, he was forced to continue revising *Actes* in response to numerous "papist" critics: "[s]uch blustering and striving was then against that poor book [the 1563 edition] through all quarters of England… so that no English Papist, almost in all the realm, thought himself a perfect Catholic, unless he had cast out some word or other to give that book a blow" (vi, vol. 1). Foxe's impulse to create a new, specifically Protestant, martyrology relies on social types more than on historical personages: what the martyrs represent is more important than who they were while living. Of the chroniclers examined here, Foxe avails himself most fully of the Corrupt Clergyman social person. All other references to Foxe's work are from vol. 3.

[41] I include *Mirror for Magistrates* as a "chronicle" even though it employs numerous poetic techniques (meter, rhyme, dramatic voice, etc.) I do not treat the work as an objective historical account. It is certainly a literary-historical source which Shakespeare consulted in writing the first "tetralogy." I find it useful to compare the internal motivations the authors present in their portrayal of Winchester to those of the the Tudor historiographers, especially Foxe.

[42] As I was writing this section on the historical and literary Winchester, I found that my use of past and present tense sometimes became confused. To simplify coherence, most of the section

Corrupt Clergyman social person in Cardinal Winchester to give meaning and shape to their historical narratives. In their works, Winchester becomes a conventional villain, a scapegoat for many of England's troubles.

Human Agency: Kinship, Family, Nepotism

Let him peruse the stories throughout
Of English kinges, whom practise did oppresse,
And he shal fynde the cause of their distresse
From first to last, vnkindly to beginne,
Alwayes by those that next were of the kynne. (*Mirror*, "Humphrey" 115-19)

The sentiment expressed above informs all of Shakespeare's English histories, but most significantly his first "tetralogy," which details the *Contention betwixt the two famous houses of York and Lancaster*.[43] The posthumous voice of the Duke of Gloucester in the *Mirror for Magistrates* warns that national "distresse" begins when ruling families act unnaturally, or "vnkindly." Historically, as in Shakespeare's works and in the chroniclers', Gloucester was nephew to Cardinal Winchester and uncle to King Henry VI. The uncle/nephew relationship is significant in *1* and *2 Henry VI* not only between these three men, but between York and Mortimer as well, as the former claims the English throne through the latter. The above passage also implies that what is corrupted at the level of the monarchy is reflected in the rest of the nation, a theory which underlies many

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follows the literary critical convention of writing in present tense. On the odd occasion that I refer to the historical Winchester, I switch to past tense.

[43] Part of the title of the play more frequently known as *2 Henry VI*. Shakespeare scholars generally agree that the Henry VI plays and *Richard III* were not in fact conceived as a "cycle." Burns notes that "*1 Henry VI* is almost always cut and adapted [in performance] to fit the pattern of a 'cycle,' the assumption being that the surviving text may be corrupt or chaotic anyway… No producer yet has acted on the evidence that *I Henry VI* may not belong in a 'cycle' at all" (69).

metaphors common in "advice to princes" literature: for example, the king as gardener and the nation as garden; the king as head and the commons as body; the king as shepherd and his citizens as sheep.[44] The life of Winchester, as recounted in chroniclers such as Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York*, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and in the collectively-written *Mirror for Magistrates*,[45] combines many of the moral and religious principles we have already seen in the medieval literature with the historical clergyman's personal idiosyncrasies. These writers supply causation for specific historical events involving Winchester, often combining human agency, moral principle, and divine guidance (or punishment) in the process. But all writers to greater or lesser extents agree that Winchester himself caused Gloucester's fall, and was a primary agent in the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses.

As I have claimed, Foxe's account of Henry VI's reign, in *Actes and Monuments* (1583 edition), and the lives of Eleanor of Cobham and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in *Mirror for Magistrates* (1578 edn) are the most heavily partisan accounts of Winchester's machinations. In the latter work, Gloucester explains, "The very cause, which made my weale to wane / So neere of Kin that I was to the Crowne, / That was the Rocke that made my Ship to drowne" (52-53). He argues that his close ties of kinship to the crown made him a natural target for

[44] The pastoral metaphor is used to advantage in Henry VI's famous meditation in *3 Henry VI* (2. 5). While Henry should be England's shepherd, he is too much the sheep. Gloucester, being led towards prison, forewarns, "Thus is the shepherd beaten from thy side, / And wolves are gnarling who shall gnaw thee first" (*2 Henry VI* 3.1.191-92).

[45] The first edition, published in 1559, was edited and (most likely) written by William Baldwin and George Ferrers. See Campbell's Introduction for a detailed publication history.

his enemies. His foes – Queen Margaret, Duke of Suffolk and Cardinal Winchester – envy his status as heir to the throne. As Henry V's brother, if Henry VI died without issue, Gloucester would inherit the crown.

Ties of kinship and kingship are deeply interwoven in Gloucester's tale. The chroniclers repeatedly note Winchester's personal ambition, and especially recount his envy of Gloucester's role as Protector (Hall 48; Holinshed 590; Foxe 709).[46] In Henry VI's minority, "two realmes the regiment royal / Betwene brothers was parted equallye" (*Mirror*, "Humphrey" 197-98). Henry V's brother John, Duke of Bedford, became Regent of France and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, became Lord Protector of England. *Mirror*, Hall, Holinshed and Foxe all imply that Cardinal Winchester was dissatisfied with merely being a spiritual lord. Winchester, Hall writes, "would have no temporall lord, either to hym syperior, or with hym egall" (62). Jealous of the power wielded by the two brothers, Winchester devised numerous means of achieving political power. The conventional pride and ambition of the Corrupt Clergyman type, propelled by family jealousy, motivates the chroniclers' Winchester to wreak havoc in the realm.

Gloucester also protests that Winchester has kept the king from receiving good counsel: the cardinal has "estranged me your sole vncle…and manie other lords of your kin, to haue anie knowledge of anie great matter, that might touch

[46] Indeed, Foxe argues that Winchester's ambition was papal: "the ambitious cardinal, seeking by all means to be pope, procured such trouble against [Gloucester], that all the shops within the city of London were shut, for fear of the favourers of these two great personages" (714).

your high estate, or either of your realmes" (Holinshed 620).[47] The duke emphasises the blood connections between the king and his counsellors, and argues that Winchester interrupts these natural ties. However, Gloucester selectively neglects to mention Winchester's own kinship to Henry VI (as the king's great-uncle), a move that may be an implicit reference to Winchester's illegitimate birth.[48] This account of Gloucester's accusation suggests that Winchester is not near enough in blood to the king, and that he obstructs those who have better familial claims to belonging in the king's advisory council. Gloucester's charge rests upon the idea that not only does one need to have kinship claims within Henry VI's court; one needs to have the right kind of kinship claim. This notion finds voice in Gloucester and Winchester's "petty jars" at court, particularly in *1 Henry VI* where the duke calls the cardinal "Thou bastard of my grandfather!" (3.1.42).

Hall and Holinshed leave ambiguous the cause of Gloucester and Winchester's "ancient bickerings" (*2 Henry VI* 1.1.141), what Foxe terms the "great flames of grudge" that burst out long before the duke's twenty four articles of complaint were brought forth in 1440 (709). Hall does not claim to know what caused this grudge, "whether the bishop…envied the authoritee of Humphrey" or whether Gloucester "had taken disdain at the riches and pompous estate of the bishop" (48). Foxe, on the other hand, asserts more confidently that Winchester

[47] Henry VI's other uncle, John, Duke of Bedford, died in 1435, five years before these articles were presented to the king.

[48] Interestingly, the other chroniclers do not target Winchester's bastardy as a moral flaw; only the dramatic accounts of Eleanor and her husband in *Mirror for Magistrates* make any great fuss over the conditions of the Cardinal's birth ("Eleanor" 183-84; "Humphrey" 155-56). These poetic creations link Winchester's bastardy to his pride, ambition and political machinations.

"sorely envied and disdained" Gloucester's rule, and that the duke "could not abide the proud doings" of the cardinal (709). I highlight this point about the clash of personalities because it complements the conventional objections against corrupt clergymen I have earlier rehearsed: Winchester is proud, ambitious, rich, and ostentatious. Shakespeare inherited these conventional ideas about corrupt clergy in medieval literature, but the chronicles also provide him with a specific, historically-vexed relationship to use in his characterisation of Winchester. However, as I have suggested, the chroniclers are not immune to conventional ideas of the Corrupt Clergyman. The social person also informs their characterisations of Winchester. Here, Winchester is implicitly the cause of the dispute, regardless of who actually began the grudge: either because the corrupt prelate is proud and ambitious or because Gloucester (rightly) censures the cardinal for his material wealth.

Again, Foxe's work especially makes use of this social person in his portrayal of the "proud" cardinal. Recounting the fall of Gloucester, Foxe writes that the duke did not lack "his Satan" nor his "secret maligners….Of whom, specially, was Henry Beaufort" (714). Foxe lays at Winchester's feet responsibility for all of England's civil dissention: "[s]uch were then the troubles of this tumultuous division within the realm, and all by the excitation of this unquiet cardinal" (714). Significantly, Foxe repeatedly emphasises that Winchester's ambition was papal in nature (714, 716, 717), thus adding to the

conventional social person a strong tenor of anti-Catholic sentiment.[49] While Hall and Holinshed identify Queen Margaret and the Dukes of Suffolk and Buckingham as the prime instigators of Gloucester's downfall (Hall 106; Holinshed 626), Foxe claims that Winchester was "the principal artificer and ringleader of all this mischief" (716). Foxe prepared spectators of Shakespeare's plays to see in Winchester the reason for England's downfall.

Foxe's villainous portrait contains elements of the Corrupt Clergyman social person: the collective of corrupt prelates described in the medieval works seem to be evoked in Foxe's description of the king's deliberations. After hearing the articles against Winchester, the king is advised by his "council, whereof the most part were spiritual persons. So, what for fear, what for favour, the matter was winked at, and dallied out, and nothing said thereunto" (711).[50] The advising prelates either fear Winchester's power or seek to curry favour with him, so they do not quash the dispute decisively, but allow the contention to flourish. Foxe makes it clear that, as his gloss announces, "Prelates hold one with another" (711). He defends Eleanor of Cobham and argues that she was a victim "more of malice than of any just cause," presumably the malice of Winchester and his

[49] This last reference to Winchester in Foxe recounts the cardinal's desire to enter England as a papal legate, "contrary to the old laws and customs of this realm" (717).

[50] Hall's account (101) is similar, although his phrasing does not contain this following jibe at the clergy: "a fair countenance was made to the duke, as though no displeasure had been taken, nor malice borne in these spiritual stomachs. But, shortly after, the smoke hereof, not able to keep in any longer within the spiritual breasts of these charitable churchmen, burst out in flames of mischief" (Foxe 711).

cleric cronies (711).[51] Likewise Gloucester is an "enemy to pride and ambition, especially in haughty prelates, which was his undoing in this present evil world" (712). Foxe creates a vivid image of a fallen earth filled with corrupt Catholic prelates who collude with each other and plot the ruin of noblemen and noblewomen. Winchester is repeatedly labelled proud and ambitious – descriptors we have already seen in medieval corrupt clergymen figures. These labels are frequently found in the more moderate Hall and Holinshed; however, Foxe's description of Winchester is particularly condemnatory.

Human agency in the chroniclers' discussion of Winchester is often linked to conventional clerical pride and the cardinal's personal claims to power through kinship. The human causes for England's downfall spring from Winchester's desire for secular political authority. In *Mirror* especially, Winchester is a corruptive force within the Lancastrian family. Though Foxe and Hall connect England's downfall to divine providence, they clearly separate Winchester's personal motivations from this larger narrative arc. In the next section I examine how the choniclers measure Winchester against ideals of his role as prelate and court counsellor. They relate his responsibility for England's troubles to his unwillingness to adhere to conventional moral principles, particularly the principle of clerical exemplarity.

[51] As portrayed in *2 Henry VI*, Eleanor, Gloucester's wife, was accused of witchcraft and treason. As punishment, she was forced to perform acts of penance in a white sheet at three different places in London. She was exiled to the Isle of Man afterwards.

Moral Principle: Exemplarity

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the concept of clergy as exemplars of moral values. Underlying many of the chroniclers' critiques of Winchester are conventional notions that clergy should be beacons of morality, and should eschew material goods and secular power. Gloucester invokes such ideas in his charges against Winchester. In his twenty four articles of complaint, as recorded in Holinshed, the duke claims that Henry V did not want spiritual lords sitting in the king's council.[52] He argues,

> [Henry V wanted] proctors of his nation…in the court of Rome, and not to abide in this land, nor to be in anie part of his councels, as beene all the spirituall and temporall, at parlements and other great councels… And therefore, though it please you [ie. Henry VI] to doo [Winchester] that worshop, to set him in your priuie councell after your pleasure: yet in your parlement, where euerie lord both spirituall and temporall, hath his place, he ought to occupie but his place as a bishop. (620)

Gloucester invokes the concept of proper hierarchy. Citing the beloved King Henry V as an authority, he argues that Winchester should perform the spiritual role of the bishop rather than the political role of the lord. The king's cabinet is certainly no place for the ambitious uncle, nor for any spiritual lord.

Elsewhere Gloucester cites Henry V again, avowing that the king knew Winchester's proud and ambitious mind and so barred the bishop from pursuing a

[52] However, article four advises that "of lords spirituall, of right, the archbishop of Canturburie should be your cheefe councellor" – though of course the duke may mean a spiritual counsellor rather than a political one (Holinshed 621).

cardinalship (Hall 51-52). Henry V reportedly decreed, "Cardinalles Hattes should not presume to be egall with Princes" (52).[53] The underlying argument of these examples is that clergy can only perform spiritual functions and should look after the religious well-being of the English people. They serve their people best as moral and spiritual exemplars. Prelates especially should not abuse their spiritual authority in secular situations.

However, this is exactly what Winchester does, according to Hall. When Richard Woodville keeps Gloucester from entering the Tower of London, Winchester is accused of "cherish[ing] [Woodville] against the state and worship of the kyng" (49).[54] Moreover, because of the dispute between Winchester and Gloucester, "the whole realme was troubled with them and their partakers: so that the citezens of London fearing that that should insue upon the matter, wer faine to kepe daily and nightly, watches, as though their enemies were at hande" (48). The unrest caused in London affected "the whole realme"; even more significantly, the London citizens were so afraid of their superiors that they felt "as though their enemies were at hande." Hall implies that the watchfulness of English armies in France was replicated on English soil. Surely readers perceived this instance as an inversion of proper rule and moral guidance, and especially as a dangerous displacement of military activity.

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[53] It is interesting to note that the cardinal's hat is the particular focus, especially as a metonymy for cardinals themselves. The concrete wholeness of "Princes" is contrasted with the ephemeral partiality of "Cardinalles Hattes."

[54] This is the first article of accusation against Winchester in Gloucester's list of 1426.

The mayor of London, the Duke of Quymber (Prince of "Portingale" or Portugal), and the Archbishop of Canterbury were forced to intervene (Hall 48-49). The Duke of Bedford was recalled from France in order to settle the dispute. In *Mirror for Magistrates*, Gloucester complains that Bedford

> Heard of this hurle, and past the seas in hast,
> By whose traueil this troublesome distaunce,
> Ceassed a while, but nethelesse in wast [ie. waste]:
> For rooted hate wil hardly be displast. (184-87)

Members from all estates become involved, and the impact of the contention is felt throughout many nations, not just in England. The chroniclers frequently mark the contiguousness of external warfare and internal strife during Henry VI's rule. Though the chroniclers note that both Winchester and Gloucester were involved, Hall argues that the cardinal alone "set furth this proude and arrogant conclusion, thorowe whiche unhappie devision, the glory of thenglishemen within the realme of Fraunce, began first to decaye, and vade awaie in Fraunce" (62). The chronicler connects the contention between Gloucester and Winchester to the loss of English provinces in France, marking Winchester especially as the cause.

The chronicles observe that Winchester's poor exemplarity exists not only in political events, but in moral and spiritual matters as well. In *Mirror* the dead Gloucester describes Winchester's simony:

> Not Gods Aungels, but Angels of old Gold,
> Lyft him aloft in whom no cause there was
> By iust desert, so high to be extold,
> (Ryches except) where by this Golden asse,

At home and abroade al matters brought to passe,

Namely at Rome, hauing no meane but that

To purchase there his crimzin Cardinal hat. ("Humphrey" 161-68)

Procuring the cardinalship is as simple as buying a hat. Implicit is a critique of the entire (Catholic) system of obtaining ecclesiastical preferments. The bishop buys his promotion to cardinal with gold: the ironic play on the word "angel" – as divine messenger and as gold coin[55] – emphasises that the cardinal had no intrinsic religious merit. He purchased his promotion with the wrong kind of "angelic" currency. Moreover, Winchester "At home and abroade al matters brought to passe." The narrating duke targets Winchester's machinations inside and outside the nation, but especially notes his Roman simony. Winchester ignores Henry V's strict orders for the bishop not to pursue the cardinalship. The bishop waits until Henry VI's infancy before he obtains the position "from the Pope" ("Humphrey" 174). The implication is that Winchester manipulates English secular and Roman religious authorities to gain advancement. Again, the chroniclers emphasise the national and international impacts of Winchester's actions.

As noted earlier, the chroniclers measure Winchester's character against conventional ideas of the "good prelate." Hall comments on Winchester's simony and its impact on the cardinal's reputation:

[55] An angel is a gold coin with the image of the archangel Michael slaying the dragon (*OED* 6.) It was first struck in 1465, thus the reference here is anachronistic.

> [Winchester] obteined that dignitie, to his great profite, and to the empoverishyng of the spiritualitie. For by a Bull legatyve, whiche he purchased at Rome, he gathered so much treasure, that…so was he surnamed the riche Cardinall of Winchester, and nether called learned bishop, nor vertuous priest. (52)

The ideal against which Winchester is measured (and fails) is that of the "learned" and "vertuous" prelate. By contrast, Holinshed focuses on Winchester's negative political impact rather than on his reputation,

> Of the getting of his goods both by power legantine, and spirituall briberie, I will not speake; but the keeping of them, which he chiefelie gathered for ambitious purpose, was both great losse to his naturall prince and natiue countrie: for his hidden riches might haue well holpen the king, and his secret treasure might haue relieued the communaltie, when monie was scant and charges great. (627)

Holinshed is initially discreet about Winchester's simony, but he does acknowledge the cardinal's ambition and greed, and their consequent impact on the nation's well-being. The chronicler's point is that Winchester's greed drained the nation's finances, particularly during a critical moment in the Wars of the Roses. Significantly, Holinshed points out the cardinal's impact on both king and "communaltie." Gloucester is presented in contrast to Winchester as "the very Father of the countrye, and the shield and defence of the poor commonaltie" (Hall 109). The implicit argument is that spiritual lords should provide for the commons, their "flock."

Not only does Winchester provide a poor moral example for the commons, he is a poor advisor to kings. One of Gloucester's complaints against Winchester, as recounted in Holinshed, is that the cardinal encouraged Henry to leave "your right, your title, and your honour of your crowne, and nomination of you king of France, during certeine yeares" and to sign only "Rex Angliae" on official documents, rather than "King of England and of France" (621). This move was condemned because the court was committed to maintaining Henry V's claim to the French throne. Winchester seemed to be encouraging Henry VI's relinquishment of provinces that rightfully belonged to England. Winchester also encouraged Bedford to resign his post as Regent of France when the young Henry VI resided in that country. Bedford consequently "toke such a secret displeasure with this dooyng, that he never after favored the Cardinall, but repugned and disdained at all thynges that he did or devised" (Hall 62). Other accusations against Winchester recorded by the historiographers include: fomenting dissent between Prince Henry and his father Henry IV (Hall 50); sending a man to kill Henry V (Hall 50); attempting to ambush Gloucester in the bishop's see of Southwark (Hall 50); supporting England's enemies (Holinshed 621); abusing England's "common law" (Foxe 710); "giving…example to the clergy…to withdraw their disms"[56]; and having the "singular affection" to lose the French provinces (Foxe 711). All of these are charges which Gloucester brought against

[56] Here, a "dism" is a tithe paid to the English crown. Winchester had asked the pope "to be freed from all disms… due to the king by the church of Winchester" (Foxe 710). Foxe argues that this provided an example to all clergy to do the same.

Winchester at various times during their extended feud. These accusations tarnished Winchester's reputation as an advisor, politician and holy man.

While all of these instances are historically-specific, the Corrupt Clergyman social person provides the chroniclers and their readers with Winchester's psychological motivation. He was a rich, ambitious, proud prelate who often clashed with secular powers while neglecting his spiritual duties. He relied on his nepotistic connections with the king to provide a certain amount of political protection. This list of attributes is now familiar to us as embodied within the social person that emerged from medieval literature. Foxe combines this social person with anti-Catholic sentiment and warns against the corruptive influence the adherents to this "foreign" religion can spread. Readers did not need to know much more than this to make sense of Winchester's corrosive role in English history.

Divine Guidance: Judgements of Man and God

The final aspect of the Corrupt Clergyman upon which the chroniclers focus is that of legal manipulation. In the chroniclers' narratives, Cardinal Winchester corrupts legal proceedings and is finally judged by God himself. The chroniclers involve Winchester in Eleanor's and Gloucester's separate trials, though it is not at all evident that the historical Winchester had much to do with either. The chroniclers adopt the Corrupt Clergyman social person in their portrayal of Winchester because the figure sets up audience expectations about the cardinal's unreliability as an impartial judge. In the chroniclers' closing remarks on Winchester's life, the readers' expectations are fulfilled: the cardinal's death

matches the bad deeds he committed in life. God's final judgement of the cardinal fits into the frame of divine causation which motivates the chroniclers' works, most notably Hall's *Union* and Foxe's *Actes*.[57] Moreover, Winchester's involvement in legal cases foregrounds the role of God's judgement in his personal fate, and in the fate of the English nation as a victim of civil war. The following three sections examine instances of judgement that are commonly alluded to in historical accounts of Winchester's life: the first is Eleanor Cobham's trial for witchcraft; the second is Gloucester's treason trial; and the third is God's "trial" of Winchester. The presentation of these trials in the chronicles likely provided Shakespeare's audiences with expectations about Winchester's political and spiritual inpact on the English nation.

Eleanor's trial

Winchester's role in the 1441 trial of Eleanor Cobham is given various treatments in the chroniclers. Hall and Holinshed recount Eleanor's arrest and trial without mentioning the cardinal (Hall 101-2; Holinshed 622-23). Foxe, on the other hand, conjectures that because Eleanor had Wycliffite leanings the clergy targeted her, for "what hatred and practices of papists can do, it is not unknown" (707). Foxe theorises that the accusation against Eleanor occurred as a result of Gloucester and Winchester's grudge (707). Foxe claims his partiality for Eleanor's side

[57] Holinshed is generally more careful about asserting knowledge of divine causes. Of the supposed causal link between Gloucester's death and Henry VI's downfall, Holinshed writes, "This is the opinion of men, but Gods iudgements are vnsearchable, against whose decrée and ordinance preuaileth no humane counsel" (627).

through the authority of earlier historians John Hardyng (1378-1465?) and Robert Fabyan (d. 1513). However, Foxe also organises and presents his material in such a way that creates a strong case against the cardinal. Foxe implies collusion between Margery Jourdain and Winchester, "seeing that the town of Eye [Jourdain's place of residence]…was near beside Winchester, and in the see of that bishop" (708). Though not stated directly in any of the chronicles, that Eleanor was assisted in her alleged necromancy by priests Roger Bolingbroke and John Hume fuelled even more suspicion on the church's role in her trial. Shakespeare seems to have developed Foxe's thread: in *2 Henry VI*, Hume tells the audience that Winchester and Suffolk have hired him as their "broker" to "undermine the Duchess" (1.2.101; 98). Dominique Goy-Blanquet observes that

> none of [Foxe's] suspicions is implemented with data….It was Shakespeare who designed [the couple's entrapment], suppressed all religious implications, and gave verisimilitude to the innuendoes of his sources by contracting the interval between the trials of the couple. (65)

I would argue that Shakespeare does not entirely suppress the "religious implications" of Eleanor's trial, excepting the omission of Eleanor's supposed Wycliffite sympathies. There is enough evidence in Shakespeare's play to suggest the church's coordinated interference in matters of state, and to argue that early modern audiences might well have been receptive to the implications of clerical collusion in the couple's separate trials.

Eleanor's ghostly voice in *Mirror for Magistrates* makes Winchester's involvement in her trial even more explicit. Emrys Jones was not the first writer

to posit a similarity between Winchester and the High Priest Caiaphas (46-54). The *Mirror* poet has Eleanor presents herself as a Christ figure, where

> Cayphas, sytting in his glory
>
> Would not allow my answer dilatory
>
> Ne Doctor or Proctor, to allege the laws.
>
> But forced me to pleade in myne owne cause. ("Eleanor" 123-26)

Unrecorded in any other chronicle, Eleanor explains that the cardinal's interference prevented her from receiving appropriate legal resources and thus resulted in her condemnation. Moreover, Eleanor uses biblical typology to suggest that Winchester belongs to an enduring cycle of corrupt prelates. He is a contemporary incarnation of Christ's legal prosecutors. Eleanor creates a narrative in which she is Christ, denied support from legal authority. This creative interpretation of Eleanor's situation may have given Shakespeare the idea to suggest an analogy between Gloucester and Christ in *2 Henry VI*. Jones identifies three similarities between Christ's accusers and Gloucester's enemies: "the stress on the enemies of the victim-protagonist, and on their virulent malice; the legalistic procedure they find it expedient to adopt…and the progressive isolation of the hero, whose friends are powerless to help him" (52). Such an analogy in *Mirror* is vexed, of course, as Eleanor's position as autobiographer noticeably complicates the truth value of her assessment. Her analogy does not stand as historical "fact." The reader is made aware of historical construction as a personal narrative and as the conglomeration of many different viewpoints, some of which are irreconcilable.

Similarly, spectators of *2 Henry VI* are meant to question the validity of the analogy between Christ and historical personage. Like Shakespeare, the *Mirror* poet sets up the observer's expectations using biblical typology. In Caiaphas, the Corrupt Clergyman social person is given broader historical significance. In their constructions of England's history, both the *Mirror* poet and Shakespeare draw on biblical precedent. The *Mirror* poet complicates this expectation in order to draw attention to the difficulty of determining the extent of Eleanor's culpability or innocence. Some things are lost to the mists of time, but the reader is made aware of the pleasures of historical conjecture. Shakespeare, on the other hand, complicates the analogy in order to question the audience's assumptions. Is Winchester really another Caiaphas? Is Gloucester actually another Christ? What are the implications for England in assuming such typological associations? Shakespeare draws attention to the dangers of making such leaps of interpretation. As I will argue in a later section of this chapter, Winchester's villainy is complicated by numerous dramatic viewpoints, some which confirm his adherence to the social type and some which deny it.

Gloucester's trial

In the chronicles, Gloucester's trial takes place in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, in 1447. A parliament was called at that location in lieu of London because the duke had too many supporters in the city. In order to effect Gloucester's downfall, Winchester defamed the duke "By rumours false, which hee and his did sowe / Letters and bylles to my reproch and shame" ("Humphrey," *Mirror* 211-12). The

cardinal uses his influence to slander and libel the duke at court, the direct result of which is Gloucester's treason trial.

Gloucester, like Eleanor, compares Winchester to a biblical figure: the cardinal is a "Pylate" this time, and the duke presents himself as a Christ figure (l. 371). Again, Shakespeare may have had the trial of Christ in his mind – possibly a mystery play portrayal, as Jones suggests – when writing the scene of Gloucester's torment in *2 Henry VI* (3.1). If this is the case, Shakespeare had even more source material available which he could use to engage with audience expectations. If audiences gained familiarity of Gloucester's downfall through *Mirror*, the biblical analogy would be all the more ready in their minds.

Hall names the Dukes of Suffolk and Buckingham as Gloucester's chief accusers at his trial, though Winchester is a minor player in the proceedings. Margaret is presented as the instigator of the treason trial, encouraged by her father, Regnier of Sicily. She did not prohibit Gloucester's enemies from inventing "causes and griefs against hym" (106). Fearing backlash after the duke's murder, Suffolk pardoned the servants who killed Gloucester, though Hall notes that this act "was no amendes for the murderyng of their master" (108). The chronicler is intent on emphasising an image of Gloucester's foes as manipulators of legal process, both to commit their act of personal and political vengeance and to control the commons' reaction to an unjust event.

However, Hall moves away from precise political critique to general moral-drawing. At the end of the section on Gloucester's murder, Hall avers,

> So al men maie openly se that to men in aucthoritie, no not the courte the chief refuge of all, nor the dwelling house, nor yet a mannes private

> Castle, or his bed ordeined for quietnes, is out of daunger of deathes dart. (108)

The "inevitability of death" moral diffuses the political circumstances surrounding Gloucester's downfall. Hall does not suggest as strongly as *Mirror* or *2 Henry VI* that Winchester is directly responsible for Gloucester's murder. Shakespeare explicitly involves Winchester in Gloucester's murder – the cardinal provides the assassins for the job – but, like Hall, the playwright also creates wider, though more ambiguous moral implications of Gloucester's death. In some ways, Gloucester and Winchester's rivalry keeps rebellion contained within a smaller sphere of influence. Once the lords die, however, rebellion breaks out throughout the country. Shakespeare implies that while the lords' rivalry is destructive, once it is no longer in place, the nation disintegrates even further. The chroniclers create a sense of closure when invoking moral and providential themes in relation to Winchester's death. Shakespeare reflects more critically on this artificial sense of closure to question whether England's state actually improves after God's "intervention."

Final Judgement: Winchester's death

For all the linguistic similarities in Hall, Holinshed and Foxe, each chronicler treats Winchester's death differently, particularly in terms how his passing relates to the state of the English nation. One thing they do have in common, however, is that as historiographers they all measure the value of Winchester's life. According to Bullough, Hall's goal in *Union* is "to show the evils of dissension in the state, and of the wickedness in the individual, to trace the workings of Divine Justice in

its effects on the sinner himself, on his posterity, and on the unhappy people over whom he ruled" (11). Hall does not state explicitly that Winchester's death occurred as punishment for his role in Gloucester's murder, but he does weave a narrative in which the cardinal is a repentant sinner, one who wreaks civil dissention, but who in the end acknowledges the folly of pursuing worldly achievements at the expense of his soul.[58] Holinshed omits reference to divine punishment, but thoroughly judges Winchester to be a man who had forgotten God. Foxe follows Hall's account, but selectively omits reference to Winchester's penitential mood at death. For Foxe, Winchester is a conventionally ambitious prelate who consistently denies God's presence, an act for which he is finally judged by the deity.

Foxe decrees that Winchester "was suffered of God no longer to live" (716). The chronicler implies that Winchester's death, which followed Gloucester's apparent murder by two months, was "God's condign punishment…for [his] bloody cruelty" (717). Following Hall's account, Foxe records Winchester's deathbed ravings:

> 'Fie,' quoth he, 'will not death be hired? will money do nothing? When my nephew of Bedford died, I thought myself half up the wheel, but when I saw mine other nephew of Gloucester deceased, then I thought myself able to be equal with kings, and so thought to increase my treasure, in hope to have worn the triple crown,' &c. (716)

[58] Goy-Blanquet observes, "Hall's determinism stops short of predicting the form taken by divine will to treat earthly affairs. He does not hide his contempt for superstitions, and often mocks those who see supernatural phenomena everywhere" (86).

The wheel of fortune metaphor is suitable for the symmetry of Winchester's ascent: with the decease of each nephew, the cardinal moves part way up the wheel. However, contrary to the cardinal's plan, Gloucester's death in fact marks Winchester's apex; his downfall quickly proceeds from it. The metaphor is also suitable for Hall and Foxe's moralistic purposes, and is in keeping with the tone set in "advice to princes" literature such as *Mirror for Magistrates*, a work that details the impact of Fortune on men's lives.[59]

The passage in Hall is nearly identical; however, Foxe places an elliptical 'etcetera' mark in lieu of the following line: "'But I se now the worlde faileth me, and so I am deceyved: praiyng you all to pray for me'" (Hall 109). Implicit in this line is an acknowledgement of sin: Winchester realises that he needs his fellows' prayers in order to achieve any kind of divine mercy. Foxe, like Shakespeare, omits Winchester's self-recognition of sin.[60] Hall evokes a repentant sinner, an image strengthened by his appeal to authority: the cardinal's deathbed speech is recorded by "John Baker his priyvie counsailer, and his chappelleyn" (109). Foxe does not reproduce the eye-witness account, but uses Hall instead of Baker as his authority, cleverly excluding anything in Hall's work that would suggest a more ambivalent representation of the Winchester's character.

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[59] The full title of the 1578 edition is *The Last part of the Mirour for Magistrates, wherein may be seen by examples passed in this Realme, vvith how greenous* [sic] *plagues, vyces are punished in great Princes & Magistrats, and hovv frayle and vnstable vvorldly prosperity is founde, where Fortune seemeth most highly to fauour*. London: Printed by Thomas Marsh, 1578.

[60] Bullough notes this contrast between Hall and Shakespeare as well (n. 3, p. 109).

Holinshed, on the other hand, summarises the cardinal's life without offering Winchester's deathbed speech, and without reference to divine punishment:

> He was…more noble in blood than notable in learning, hautie in stomach, and high of countenance, rich aboue measure, but not verie liberall, disdainefull to his kin, and dreadfull to his louers, preferring monie before friendship, manie things beginning and few performing, sauing in malice and mischiefe; his insatiable couetousnesse and hope of long life made him both to forget God, his prince, and himselfe.
>
> (627)[61]

Holinshed focuses on Winchester's national legacy rather than on condign punishment. The chronicler presents a totality of transgression, a life of misdeeds. Winchester's noble lineage is not matched with excellent accomplishments; moreover, he disdains his kin, while capitalising on his great-nephew's royal power. He is rich though niggardly and ambitious though ineffectual, except in creating "mischiefe." Holinshed's portrayal effectively summarises the cardinal's wide-ranging faults: his hope for longevity makes him forget his public spiritual and secular roles in addition to his private obligations. This passage is a complete denigration of the cardinal's life, but notably absent of divine censure. Holinshed's emphasis is on Winchester as manipulator of human agency, not a corrupter of divine agency. He is an internal corrupting force, in contrast to Foxe, who views the cardinal as the papacy's cancerous representative. In the end,

[61] There is a parallel passage in Hall which is nearly identical (109).

Winchester becomes a symbol for all of the tensions that exist in Henry VI's court, as a government that is maintained by family connections, and that attempts to continue Henry V's legacy in making England an international force, particularly in France. Winchester's life warns against corruptive family influences and against the interloping power of the Roman church. In Foxe's work alone Winchester's death marks the beginning of God's retribution for Gloucester's downfall and for the internal divisiveness which the duke's foes cause.

Shakespeare's *1* and *2 Henry VI*: the Corrupt Clergyman on Stage

In the first scene of *1 Henry VI*, news arrives of the loss of nearly all of Henry V's hard-won towns and provinces. Bedford, Exeter and Gloucester all go their separate ways to stem the tide of failure. Winchester remains onstage, complaining,

> Each hath his place and functions to attend.
> I am left out; for me nothing remains.
> But long I will not be Jack out of office.
> The King from Eltham I intend to steal,
> And sit at chiefest stern of public weal. (1.1.173-77)

Winchester's brief monologue provides the first indicator of his dramatic motivation.[62] Shakespeare foregrounds Winchester's desire for political roles in

[62] Somerset and Warwick are still onstage at this point, but there is nothing to suggest that they have overheard Winchester's speech.

Henry's government; it rankles that he is "Jack out of office." But not only does Winchester desire to be at the "stern of public weal," that is, the prime manipulator of the commonwealth; he also wants to participate in all levels of government: the king's court, the church and the legal system. In this key passage, Winchester knowingly embraces the pursuit of many social roles. If we define this impulse in terms of the Corrupt Clergyman as found in ecclesiastical satire, he becomes a "meddler."

As I noted earlier, a "meddler" in medieval anti-clerical works is a clergyman who is not satisfied with the spiritual demands of his role. For example, in detailing the abuses of clerks, the *Mum and the Sothsegger* poet creates an image of a holy man who is involved in every role except a spiritual one. The poet argues that in biblical times, clerks were not recognisable by their clothing,

> Ne by royal raye ne riding aboute,
> Ne by service of souverayns, so me God helpe,
> Ne by revel ne riot ne by rente nothir,
> …….
> Ne by worldly workes of writtes ne seelyng,
> Ne by no maniere niceté that thay now usen,
> But by the deedes that they dide, I do you to wite. (644-46; 649-51)

The main argument here is that clerks spend all their time on non-spiritual acts. Rather than focusing on holy writ or scripture, these clerks produce legal writs for

secular courts.[63] The biblical clerks were known for deeds "that they dide" rather than for their worldly clothing, "manier[s]," revelry, and income ("rente"). Implicit in this critique is the idea that corrupt clergy meddle or interfere in affairs to which they do not belong. The *Plowman's Tale* poet similarly complains that priests

> …ben proude, or coveytous,
> Or they ben harde, or hungry,
> Or they ben lyberall, or lecherous,
> Or els *medlers* wyth marchandry,
> Or maynteyners of men wyth maistry,
> Or stewardes, coutours, or pledours,
> And serve God in hypocrisy;
> Such prestes ben Christes false traytours. (797-804; my italics)

A few lines later the poet complains, "Of eche matter they woollen mell," and at revels and alehouses they make "medlynge" or interference (857; 871). Compare Holinshed's assessment of Winchester's life, cited earlier: the descriptions share numerous adjectives: liberal, covetous, proud ("high of coutenance"), and meddling ("manie things beginning and few performing"). In the poet's account above, priests perform the duties of accountants, counters, and pleaders (ie.

[63] These legal writs could be summonses to the royal court. These types of writs pertained to "worldly" matters rather than ecclesiastical ones. These writs were closed with "seelyng" wax. The poet could also be referring to the Office of the Chancery, which was often helmed by a high-ranking prelate. See discussion below.

lawyers). That they engage in these activities is bad enough; that they are meant to be spiritual leaders makes their crimes seem worse.

If we compare Winchester to a character such as Talbot, the point becomes more greatly illuminated. Within the play's narrative, Talbot is only required to be a warring chivalric knight, to be the "scourge of France" (2.3.14). This is not to suggest that Talbot is "simply" a knight, as within the role of knight are included various social persons such as warrior, strategist, revenger (of Salibury's death) and father, among others. However, in the world of the play, Talbot strives for one dramatic goal – the victory of the English over the French. He is unyielding in a single motive: to maintain the glory of the English troops after Henry V's demise. Scaling the walls of Orleans, Talbot proclaims his motivation:

> …here will Talbot mount, or make his grave.
> Now, Salisbury, for thee and for the right
> Of English Henry, shall this night appear
> How much in duty I am bound to both. (2.1.34-37)

His oath of loyalty to Henry VI and to Salisbury's memory marks Talbot as a duty-bound knight committed equally to his cause or to his death if he fails. Winchester, by contrast, supports the crown when it suits him, but when Gloucester threatens his ambitions, he promises to "either make [him] stoop and bend [his] knee, / Or sack this country with a mutiny" (*1 Henry VI*, 5.1.61-62). Where Talbot represents chivalric loyalty, fighting for the common good, Winchester represents Machiavellian individualism (echoing *King John*'s Bastard when the latter avows to pursue "commodity").

The ultimate failure of chivalry in the play can be viewed in several ways: for example, Talbot's actions are admirable but untenable in a government increasingly controlled by individualistic interests; or the older system of government was never particularly effective when none of the other soldiers maintains the same kind of ideals as their general, nor when the king is weak; or a government motivated by self-interest can work, but only when individual interests coincide with acts for the nation's good (Gloucester's hatred for Winchester, for example, is personally motivated yet also politically provident). In a comparison with Talbot's single-minded chivalric idealism, Winchester's self-interested engagement in many social and political functions represents a damaging lack of focus which has divisive effects on the country.

As I have already noted, one of Gloucester's complaints as recorded in Holinshed was that Henry V decreed Winchester should "occupie but his place as a bishop" and not as a temporal lord (620). However, even during Henry V's lifetime, Winchester was Lord Chancellor (1403-5; 1413-17; 1424-26), a position that allowed him to take part in the *Curia Regis* (royal court) and to hear petitions and preside over law cases in the Court of Chancery.[64] Since the Norman Conquest, high-ranking churchmen often held this position, until Cardinal Thomas Wolsey failed to obtain Henry VIII's first marriage annulment in 1529. After that, laymen were nearly always favoured for the office. That Winchester's "meddling" behaviour plays so prominent a role in his actions and in his downfall

[64] The Lord Chancellor "is the highest judicial functionary in the kingdom, and ranks above all peers spiritual and temporal, except only princes of the blood, and the archbishop of Canterbury; he is keeper of the Great Seal, is styled 'Keeper of his Majesty's conscience'" (*OED* II. 2.a (a.)).

illustrates that Shakespeare seems to adhere to the early modern notion that prelates should restrict themselves to their spiritual roles, and refrain from performing certain temporal functions. In fact, Shakespeare makes no reference to Winchester as Lord Chancellor, depriving the prelate of the sanctioned (though scorned) authority to play many parts in government. Thus, not only is Shakespeare influenced by medieval characterisations of corrupt clergymen, he is also indebted to the bias present in the chroniclers and in relatively recent political history.

Moreover, as a representative of the "old faith," Winchester is the only English character who serves as a warning against meddling external interference from Rome. Other characters frequently regard his Catholic faith with suspicion: for example, Gloucester threatens Winchester: "In spite of Pope or dignities of Church, / Here by the cheeks I'll drag thee up and down" (*1 Henry VI* 1.3.50-51). In 5.3 Winchester enters as an emissary from King Henry. His entrance (in the Folio, anyway) occurs immediately after York's curse of Joan as a "foul accursed minister of hell" (l. 93). Burns notes that the position of the stage direction "might then be seen to have application to [Winchester] as an equivalent figure of diabolical Catholicism" (n. 91.1, p. 277). However, Shakespeare complicates Winchester's diabolism and his representation as a force external from England's interests. Indeed, he acts in his capacity as holy man and as peacebroker for "the states of Christendom" to reconcile French and English forces (l. 96), but he also acts as Henry's messenger, decreeing that the French will "swear / To pay him tribute and submit" to the English crown (129-130). Moreover, as I have already mentioned, the historical Winchester was directly descended from Edward III and

son to John of Gaunt. From this lineage Shakespeare recovered an already complicated figure: as bastard to an English personage who was both widely loved and reviled. Thus Shakespeare thoroughly complicates Winchester's "meddling" nature as a Corrupt Clergyman by invoking various historical and literary contexts.

Far from being a simple moral critique of corrupt (Catholic) clergymen, Shakespeare's Winchester is the focal point for an analysis of a government at the mercy of too many power structures. Shakespeare presents several alternatives to a weak king: the puissant Talbot, representing feudalism and chivalry; York, representing (a competing) dynastic family line; Cade, representing civil rebellion; and papal legate, representing religious imperialism. Just as Winchester takes on too many political and social roles, so too does the play rehearse what happens when too many competing individual interests are at work at the English court. However, the question remains, does the feud between Winchester and Gloucester in fact keep these interests at bay, or does it exacerbate an already fragmented political system?

Nepotism

The nepotistic battle for control between family members is represented differently in the *Henry VI* plays than in medieval criticism of the church. Rather than promoting his nephew (in this case, great-nephew) to a position of power, Winchester capitalises on a pre-existing familial connection. It is nepotism in a general sense: the manipulation of a power structure through family ties, though in this case the specific nephew/uncle relationship is involved. Shakespeare's

English histories, and many of his plays generally, are invested in the conflicts that arise between families participating in dynastic royal succession based on primogeniture. Uncle/nephew relationships in Shakespeare are frequently fraught: consider the murderous relations between Claudius and Hamlet, Richard III and the princes in the tower, and King John and Arthur of Brittany. In each case, the overweening uncle succeeds in manipulating and destroying the younger party (though in Claudius's case, it is Laertes's poisonous "unction" that finally kills Hamlet (5.1.141)). The trend even exists between uncle and niece in *As You Like It*, where Rosalind's usurping uncle Frederick ousts her from her father's palace. Shakespeare often conceived of the uncle/nephew relationship as a powerful dramatic configuration, one that could recall biblical injunctions against kin-killing within the historically pressing concern of patrilineal descent.

When Gloucester confronts Winchester at the Tower of London, the cleric employs a comparison rich in irony:

> Nay, stand thou back – I will not budge a foot.
>
> This be Damascus, be thou cursed Cain,
>
> To slay thy brother Abel, if thou wilt. (*I Henry VI* 1.3.38-40)

Winchester's rhetoric marks him as a hypocritical clergyman, for if anyone is Cain in the relationship it is he. The situation will come to pass in reality in *2 Henry VI*. The biblical analogy is inappropriate, at least in the roles Winchester assigns. The cardinal (here, bishop) uses the analogy to signal sibling rivalry, a much more intense and personal emotion than what generally exists between uncle and nephew. Winchester inadvertently labels himself as an envious brother; we have already observed that envy and pride are two characteristics of the

Corrupt Clergyman social person. Moreover, Cain's representation in the mystery plays – as we have seen in chapter one – emphasises his greed and unwillingness to part with his best sheaves of grain: Winchester, the richest prelate in England, is marked by a similar greed.

This typology suggests providential consequences to Winchester's actions. When Cain murders Abel, God decrees that Cain's land will be barren, owing to the stain of Abel's blood. Here, Damascus is England and Winchester's eventual murder of his nephew will signal the razing of English soil similarly stained with brothers' blood during civil war. Thus Winchester's lines prefigure not only Gloucester's death but also larger national costs. However, Shakespeare also evokes this providential narrative in order to question it later in Winchester's death scene, as we will see. Winchester aggrandises the relationship because it suits his rhetorical intents here – he wants to argue for his persecution at the hands of his nephew. Of course, Winchester seems to have the roles reversed; the dramatic irony inherent in his lines suggests that the viewer should be wary of any character using biblical history to configure English history. Thus Shakespeare creates biblical comparisons between Winchester, Gloucester, Cain and Abel, while simultaneously drawing attention to their insufficiency.

Nepotism also occurs in other relationships within the play. In the same scene as Winchester and Gloucester's argument in Parliament, Richard Plantagenet claims and is granted his father's title, Duke of York. Shakespeare connects the inter-family argument between Winchester and his nephew with Richard's ascension to the dukedom. Shakespeare has just shown, in 2.5, York's intention to claim the throne through his uncle Mortimer. Mortimer tells Richard,

his "fair nephew," the cause for which Richard's father, the Earl of Cambridge, was executed (2.5.55). The old man tells Richard that Henry IV "Deposed his nephew Richard, Edward's son, / The first begotten and the lawful heir / Of Edward" the Third (64-66). Of course, Henry IV was Richard II's cousin, not nephew. Even granting that early modern family appellations were used more loosely than they are today, Shakespeare obviously emphasises the relationship between uncle and nephew in this scene, and throughout English history more generally.

Mortimer acknowledges that the rehearsals of his claim to the throne "do warrant death. / Thou art my heir. The rest, I wish thee gather: / But yet be wary in thy studious care" (2.5.95-97). The dying man is alert to the seditious content of his speech, but also subtly encourages his nephew to fight for his royal claim. As with Winchester, Shakespeare highlights the potential of uncles to manipulate and encourage nephews to act in the interest of the elder party. Even though Mortimer is on his deathbed, his advice to his nephew seems to be motivated by the preservation of justice and the maintenance of "true" royal descent:

> Since Henry Monmouth first began to reign –
> Before whose glory I was great in arms –
> This loathsome sequestration have I had;
> And even since then hath Richard been obscured,
> Deprived of honour and inheritance.
> But now the arbitrator of despairs,
> Just death, kind umpire of men's miseries,
> With sweet enlargement doth dismiss me hence:

I would his troubles likewise were expired,

That so he might recover what was lost. (23-32)

Death is the only "umpire" who will rectify Mortimer's miserable situation.[65] His words of encouragement to his nephew are meant to procure further justice for his wrongful imprisonment and for the dispossession of his heir. Of course, the wrongfulness of Mortimer's captivity is by no means clear. As Shakespeare will later portray in *1* and *2 Henry IV*, Mortimer colludes with Owen Glendower to obtain the English throne. Moreover, Mortimer problematically claims the throne through matrilineal rather than patrilineal descent.[66] Shakespeare buttresses the parliamentary dispute between uncle Winchester and nephew Gloucester with a scene that connects political and national unrest with avuncular interference. Not only does Winchester's meddling resonate with the conventional Corrupt Clergyman's behaviour; here Shakespeare raises the stakes to suggest that nepotism, or perhaps "avuncularism" is better term, has enduring political ramifications.

Winchester's "avuncularism" also reveals itself in his position as court advisor. *2 Henry VI* opens with the court on its way to the coronation of the king's new bride Margaret. Gloucester foresees disaster in the match – not only has

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[65] The passage also resonates with the theme of death as moment of final judgement, a concept in line with the providential interpretations of history. Mortimer's suffering, caused by his political machinations, will finally be eased by death. Presumably he foresees that he will find his reward with God in heaven or Satan in hell. Similarly, characters interpret Winchester's death as punishment for his political and moral transgressions.

[66] In the play, Mortimer is the son of Clarence's daughter, where Henry IV is son to John of Gaunt. Mortimer argues that being the heir of Edward III's third son is a stronger claim than Henry's position as heir of the fourth son. Here and in *1 Henry IV* Shakespeare conflates three historical Mortimers: "the known rebel, his brother the unfortunate prisoner, and (historically loyal) uncle of Richard [II]" (Burns n. 14, p. 110).

Henry broken a promise to marry the Earl of Armagnac's daughter; he has relinquished the French provinces of Maine and Anjou in exchange for his bride. Significantly, Gloucester hints at productive rather than destructive debate with Winchester: he asks the other English lords, was it for this purpose that

> mine uncle Beaufort and myself,
> With all the learned council of the realm,
> Studied so long, sat in the council house
> Early and late, debating to and fro
> How France and Frenchmen might be kept in awe…? (1.1.85-89)

This is the first indication the audience is given that Winchester has a positive and even fruitful role in English government. Gloucester's speech suggests that their disputes in parliament actually help keep the French "in awe." His lines thus complicate the conventionally established notion that Winchester is one of the plays' major antagonists. It is only through conflict and debate that England's power structures remain in balance.

However, Winchester soon turns Gloucester's rallying cry against him, defending Henry's choice of bride: "My Lord of Gloucester, now ye grow to hot: / It was the pleasure of my lord the King" (1.1.134-35). On the surface Winchester behaves like a loyal subject, obediently following the wishes of the king. However, it soon becomes clear that Winchester uses Gloucester's opposition to Henry's marriage in order to accuse the duke of treason. When Gloucester exits, Winchester attempts to persuade the nobles:

> Consider, lords, he is the next of blood
> And heir apparent to the English crown.

> Had Henry got an empire by his marriage
>
> And all the wealthy kingdoms of the west,
>
> There's reason he should be displeased at it. (1.1.148-52)

Winchester uses Gloucester's blood proximity to the king to further his claims of the duke's treachery. Winchester accuses the king's uncle of nepotism – of using his relationship to his nephew to obtain power. The irony is, of course, that Winchester himself is guilty of this act, relying on his great-nephew's passivity to further his own claims to power. Later, the cardinal advises Henry to silence Gloucester:

> If those that care to keep your royal person
>
> From treason's knife and traitor's rage
>
> Be thus upbraided, chid, and rated at,
>
> And the offender granted scope of speech,
>
> 'Twill make them cool in zeal unto your grace. (3.1.173-77)

Fearing that the king will heed his uncle Gloucester's appeal, Winchester warns that allowing a traitor to rail against his lawful captors will make those captors less loyal to the king. To Winchester's delight, the king replies weakly to the accusers' slander: "My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best / Do, or undo, as if ourself were here" (195-96). Winchester uses his authority as the king's great-uncle to manipulate his actions.

Shakespeare also employs the uncle/nephew relationship in particular to portray the problems in a political system based on family dynasty. Winchester, whose authority is strengthened by Gaunt's blood, is too powerful a Machiavel to be overthrown; Richard Plantagenet is encouraged to treason by a dying yet

charismatic uncle with a weak claim to the throne; and Henry is too passive a king to overcome his manipulative great-uncle. Robert Pierce puts it succinctly: "in a realm where no strong king demands unexceptional loyalty, every man is tempted to struggle for himself, even against his brothers" (37). Each iteration of the uncle/nephew relationship is different, but they all share in common the weakening of the state through nepotism – the manipulation of this particular family relationship at court. Medieval preacher manuals targeted nepotism in their portrayal of corrupt clergy: the church had a history of clerics promoting kin, especially nephews, whether actual nephews or in reality the illegitimate sons of prelates. Winchester's own illegitimacy likely flagged for the audience this church practice; historically, Winchester was barred from royal succession, but he could still amass a great deal of power within the ranks of the clergy. The Corrupt Clergyman social person already contained this nepotistic aspect when Shakespeare was writing the *Henry VI* plays. The playwright broadens the implications of clerical nepotism to include dynastic struggles in the English court. In this way, Shakespeare highlights the insidious nature of nepotism and suggests its particular destructive impact when there is no strong king to counteract its effects.

Exemplarity

As illustrated in the earlier section on medieval Corrupt Clergyman figures, clerics were meant to act as moral and spiritual exemplars for their flocks. In *1* and *2 Henry VI*, Winchester is involved in activities which delineate the national political implications of abusing such a behavioural standard. Not only does

Winchester set a poor moral example for his flock, he provides a bad political example as well. In *1 Henry VI*'s "Parliament of Battes" (3.1) Gloucester and Winchester's private dispute spills out into the commons, each group of servingmen combatting the other with stones, after swords are forbidden them. Even after Winchester's death the Cade rebellion threatens the country with division earlier confined primarily to court.

It is established early on in *1 Henry VI* that dissention at court is frequently mirrored in political spheres further afield. Shortly after Henry V's death, numerous French provinces are lost. When Exeter asks the messenger "What treachery was used" to cause the loss, the messenger replies, "No treachery but want of men and money….And whilst a field should be dispatched and fought, / You are disputing of your generals" (1.1.68-69; 72-73). The messenger's chastisement ironically shows greater understanding at the level of the commoner (for whom the messenger speaks) than that at court. Gloucester and Winchester's squabble over Henry V's corpse underlines the pettiness of the nobles' immediate concerns, and reflects the nobles' squabbles over the English armies in France.

The mirror relationship between court and commons is conventional in medieval and early modern literature, especially in "advice to princes" literature. William Baldwin puts it bluntly in his Dedication in *Mirror for Magistrates*: "the goodnes or badnes of any realme lyeth in the goodnes or badnes of the rulers" (22-23). In the earlier *Mum and the Sothsegger,* Mum explains the clergy's role in the relationship between court and commons, and how clerics fall short of their duties:

> The grucching of grete that shuld us gouverne

Han yshourid sharpely through sufferance of clercz,
That lightly with labour ylettid thay mighte,
The conseil of clergie yf thay had caste for hit.
For there the heede aketh alle the lymes after
Pynen, whenne the principal is put to unease. (759-64)

The ruling nobility are too busy "grucching," or quarrelling, to govern properly. It is the role of the clergy to "let," or prevent, this kind of dispute, if the clergy "had caste for hit," that is, if they wanted to do so. Since the clergy are remiss in their duty to properly advise the king's council, the rest of the nation endures the effects: when the head aches, all other limbs "Pynen" or suffer.

Similarly, Cardinal Winchester's presence in the plays emphasises the religious aspects of this reciprocal relationship. When he should advocate for peace between the various noble factions, Winchester instead participates in the squabbles. By virtue of his ecclesiastical position, Winchester is held to a higher standard of behaviour; his failure to advise the king's council properly marks him as an even greater destructive force in England, since clerics were meant to be moral exemplars for those they "shepherded." His presence in the play raises audience expectations about the political, moral and spiritual ramifications at stake in civil war.

Gloucester duly draws attention to the spiritual and moral implications of Winchester's neglect. During their argument at the Tower, Gloucester accuses Winchester of various crimes:

Stand back, thou manifest conspirator,
Thou that contrived'st to murder our dead lord,

Thou that giv'st whores indulgences to sin;

I'll canvas thee in thy broad cardinal's hat

If thou proceed in thy insolence. (*1 Henry VI* 1.3.33-37)

Gloucester references an accusation found in the chronicles – that Winchester conspired and sent a man to murder Henry V (Hall 50). As Southwark was located in the see of Winchester, the cardinal had authority to license prostitutes. Burns notes that in the middle ages, the area "was governed by ecclesiastical courts, who imposed punishments and ran their own gaols," and although Southwark was brought under city jurisdiction in 1550, it remained difficult to administer until the eighteenth century (21). The term "indulgence" here resonates with another critique I have already discussed: the distribution of papal remissions of sin. Gloucester's censure of Winchester's ostentatious clothing is signified in his derogatory mention of the "broad cardinal's hat," or *galero*.[67] Lastly, the duke abuses the cardinal for his "insolence." Gloucester piles up various charges which prepares the audience for Winchester's centrality to the overall moral and political corruption of England.

Furthermore, Gloucester frequently infantilises Winchester, thus suggesting even more poignantly that the cleric is no exemplar to the people: the duke threatens to "canvas" Winchester in his hat, a mock punishment suitable for

[67] Winchester's actual status as bishop in this scene – since the pope confers his cardinal's robes only in 5.1 – has caused great critical debate (n. 1.3.36, pp. 144-45, and Burns 73-75). Burns' claim that Winchester may be "laying claim to a title to which he as yet has no right" seems the most appropriate interpretation for the apparent confusion (145).

petty criminals rather than prelates.[68] Gloucester also promises to use Winchester's "scarlet robes" as a "child's bearing cloth" used for transporting babies (1.3.42-43). He will "cuff" him, "stamp [his] cardinal's hat" underfoot and "by the cheeks…drag [him] up and down" (ll. 48; 49; 51). While the scene has dangerous undertones, Gloucester's threats are comical and underline the pettiness of the lords' squabble. The 1983 BBC version of the play emphasises this point by having the duke and cardinal "ride" onstage using hobbyhorses.

In 3.1, Gloucester's accusations take on a more serious tenor: Winchester's crimes are so well known that "very infants prattle of thy pride" (l. 16). Not only is Winchester like a child in his greed and self-interest, Gloucester claims that his life serves as a warning to children, that he has become an example of pride to the youngest demographic in England. And the young King Henry "is not quite exempt / From envious malice of thy swelling heart" (3.1.25-26). Gloucester connects Winchester's bad influence on the commons with his potentially disastrous influence over the naïve king. Gloucester's rhetoric creates an image of Winchester as poor moral and political exemplar, an image that Winchester's behaviour does little to counteract.

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[68] Burns argues that "canvas" here refers to the practice of trapping small birds in a net, an interpretation which is fitting in a play replete with hunting and birding metaphors. However, another available meaning of "canvas" is *OED* 1.: "To toss in a canvas sheet, etc., as a sport or punishment; to blanket." Mak, from *The Second Shepherds' Play*, is tossed in a blanket for trying to steal a sheep. The shepherds agree on this light punishment when they could in fact pursue hanging. Their decision is an example of Christian grace brought on by Christ's nativity. Rick Bowers argues that the shepherds' actions are "as refreshingly life-affirming as they are comically lenient" (595). A reference to a mock punishment is in keeping with Gloucester's other childish taunts.

However, several events in the plays suggest that it is not Winchester alone who causes the moral and political deterioration of the country. Gloucester himself is guilty of overwhelming anger – it is in fact his words which begin the dispute in *1 Henry VI* 1.1. When Winchester claims that the church was responsible for Henry V's victories in France, Gloucester escalates the situation:

> The Church? Where is it? Had not churchmen prayed,
> His thread of life had not so soon decayed.
> None do you like but an effeminate prince,
> Whom like a schoolboy you may overawe. (33-36)

Again, Gloucester presents the charge of Winchester's lack of moral exemplarity and uses a child simile to emphasise his point. As this is an account of the previous king, the audience has no information to confirm or deny Gloucester's charge. The double entendre of churchmen "praying" or "preying" on the king is unsubstantiated, though as we have seen in the chronicles and elsewhere in the play Winchester was accused of a murder attempt on Henry V. But since the attempt, if true, was unsuccessful, Winchester can hardly be accused of personal involvement in Henry's death. At this point in the play, Winchester has not revealed himself as a Vice; only his bishop's robes mark him as a potentially dangerous Catholic influence. It is Gloucester's already biased perspective that sets up the audience's expectations.

Moreover, the lords are frequently chastised as a unit when they fight. Bedford tells them both to "Cease, cease these jars and rest your minds in peace" (*1 Henry VI* 1.1.44); and the Mayor complains, "Fie, lords, that you, being supreme magistrates, / Thus contumeliously should break the peace" (1.3.57-58),

and later, "Good God, these nobles should such stomachs bear!" (1.3.88). Warwick encourages the lords to yield to peace, "Except you mean with obstinate repulse / To slay your sovereign and destroy the realm" (3.1.114-115). Shakespeare may flag Winchester's spiritual role as cleric, but his degeneracy exists in a broader political context, one in which all the lords are implicated for their inability to cope with a weak king.

Winchester's "meddling" in multiple areas of government life is mirrored in the nobility's failure to pull together in a time of crisis. Exeter observes the larger problem when York and Somerset bring their quarrel to the king:

> …no simple man that sees
>
> This jarring discord of nobility,
>
> …….
>
> But that it doth presage some ill event.
>
> 'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands,
>
> But more when envy breeds unkind division –
>
> There comes the ruin, there begins confusion. (4.1.187-88; 191-94)

Exeter is frequently the voice of prophecy and wisdom in the play. While Exeter is correct in his forewarning about civil dissention, Shakespeare leaves ambiguous God's role in the proceedings. Talbot is killed largely because York and Somerset cannot cooperate in order to assist him. With him dies the structure of chivalry, Machiavellian self-interest taking its place. Michael Taylor describes Talbot as a "representative of a chivalry that was fast decaying in the real world but newly popular in the play world….[I]n 1592 Talbot may have well been considered by the intelligentsia in the audience as impossibly old-fashioned" (21). The failure of

chivalry here would have particular poignancy for Londoners in the 1590s, as it was a "fragile time politically speaking" where patriotic unification was a "matter of some urgency" (Taylor 23). The play thus capitalises on fears of political division. Lucy succinctly observes the cause of Talbot's downfall:

> The fraud of England, not the force of France,
> Hath now entrapped the noble-minded Talbot.
> Never to England shall he bear his life,
> But dies betrayed to fortune by your strife. (4.3.89-92)

The "strife" at court is mirrored in the strife overseas. Significantly, only Lucy memorialises Talbot, threatening Joan and Charles, "that I could but call these dead to life, / It were enough to fright the realm of France" (4.4.193-94). The next scene turns to Henry's marriage negotiations; Talbot is not mentioned again in the English court. Winchester's promise to "make [Gloucester] stoop and bend [his] knee, / Or sack this country with a mutiny" merely continues Somerset and York's competing interests in the time of war, as if Talbot's death had made no impact (5.1.61-62). The play rehearses the notion that while Talbot's bravery is laudable it is ultimately ineffectual, particularly since feudal obligation requires a strong lord or king to make it a successful political structure. Just as Winchester is a "meddler" in English political affairs, so does "meddling" stand as a symbol for what is wrong at the level of the royal court: each lord interferes on behalf of his own personal ambitions or desires. The nation suffers because Henry is neither powerful nor decisive enough to control this interference. Winchester is not solely responsible for this situation, but his character is emblematic of the problematic political environment at large.

Judgement and Justice

Considering all the material Shakespeare had before him in medieval literary history, and especially in the chroniclers' works, it is surprising that Winchester's portrayal does not include more instances of his role as corrupt judge and political advisor. Nevertheless, there are enough moments in the plays to suggest that this aspect of the Corrupt Clergyman social person forms an essential part of his characterisation. Winchester's interference in legal affairs prefigures God's apparent judgement of him during the cardinal's deathbed scene. Shakespeare sets up audience expectations that Winchester's death is divine punishment for crimes he earlier committed, but undercuts these expectations in the end.

1.3 sets the tone for the rest of the play in terms of its portrayal of the legal process. Suffolk and Queen Margaret snatch documents from petitioners who have come to see the Duke of Gloucester. The cardinal is implicated in these proceedings despite his absence, as one of the petitioners brings a charge against "John Goodman, my Lord Cardinal's man, for keeping my house and lands and wife and all from me" (17-18).[69] Margaret then tears up two of the petitioners' papers, forcing them to "Begin [their] suits anew" (40). This brief scene sets up the nobles' later relationship to the law: they obviously do not recognise appropriate legal procedures, especially where their nemesis Gloucester is

[69] Here is another indication of exemplarity: the cardinal's greed is reflected in his man's rapaciousness.

concerned. The commons suffer directly from the Suffolk and Margaret's acts of impunity.

Given the evidence presented in Foxe and in the *Mirror* it may seem surprising that Shakespeare uses only a few instances of Winchester's involvement in Eleanor's trial. Suppressed are the mention of Jourdain's village of Eye in Winchester's see, Eleanor's Wycliffite leanings which made her an enemy of the church, and Winchester's intervention in keeping Eleanor from receiving proper counsel. Winchester more or less "keeps mum" about his role in Eleanor's trial. However, in 1.2 we are given a Vice-like speech from priest John Hume, Suffolk and Winchester's "broker" (101). His greed is another instance of the nobles' avarice and ambition being reflected in the commons. Hume seeks the duchess's gold, but chastises himself for speaking about his motivations:

> …how now, Sir John Hume!
> Seal up your lips and give no words but mum;
> The business asketh silent secrecy.
> ……
> Yet have I gold flies from another coast:
> I dare not say from the rich Cardinal
> And from the great and new-made Duke of Suffolk,
> Yet I do find it so. For, to be plain,
> They, knowing Dame Eleanor's aspiring humour,
> Have hired me to undermine the Duchess
> And buzz these conjurations in her brain. (1.2.88-90; 93-99)

Hume receives the gold from Eleanor to conjure spirits, and is also paid by his masters. Hume enjoys playing with the notion of "secrecy" – he "dare[s] not say" where he receives his money, but does so anyway. He cites the proverb, "A crafty knave does need no broker" and acknowledges that he has implied that Suffolk and Winchester are "crafty knaves," though he should not say so directly (100; 103). He is alone onstage, ostensibly speaking to himself, but is actually talking to the audience.

Hume recalls Mum from *Mum and the Sothsegger*, a figure who lies and tells half-truths in order to succeed in self-interested goals. More persuasively perhaps, in terms of Shakespeare's direct influences, he recalls the Vice and the Crafty Slave.[70] Moreover, as I noted earlier in my discussion of Mistress Quicky and Falstaff, "Sir John" was "a familiar or contemptuous appellation for a priest" ("John, n." *OED* 3.). Shakespeare is clearly working with several stock iterations here; Hume's clerical status marks him as a spokesman for the cardinal, and he directly implicates the prelate in Eleanor's downfall. Taken with Winchester, who similarly keeps mum at important moments,[71] he signifies a general clerical duplicity. Hume speaks because it would be improvident for Winchester to do so; Hume's loquacity draws attention to Winchester's politically motivated silence. Throughout the actual trials of Eleanor and Gloucester, Winchester says very little, though it is apparent that he seeks the couple's downfall. Throughout the

[70] It is also possible to argue that the *Mum* poet is working with Vice conventions in his literary portrayal of Mum.

[71] He keeps quiet most notably when Henry chooses Margaret for his wife although the king was pre-contracted to the Earl of Armagnac's daughter. One would expect Winchester to side with Gloucester in this debate, if only because marriage disputes often fell under ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

rest of his scenes Winchester's quarrel with Gloucester becomes less public and more subtly dangerous.

The hawking scene in 2.1 contains a dispute much more private than previous battles between Gloucester and Winchester. It significantly contains a high concentration of venery metaphors. Much of the scene's irony stems from Winchester's accusations of Gloucester, which mostly apply to the speaker himself. Suffolk argues that Gloucester "bears his thoughts above his falcon's pitch" and the cardinal agrees: "he would be above the clouds" (ll. 12; 15). As we have seen in medieval estates satire, prelates were often accused of "high-flying," their love of venery associated with pride and ambition. The duke retorts,

> Ay, my Lord Cardinal, how think you by that?
> Were it not good your grace could fly to heaven?
> King: The treasury of everlasting joy.
> Cardinal: Thy heaven is on earth, thine eyes and thoughts
> Beat on a crown, the treasure of thy heart,
> Pernicious Protector, dangerous peer
> That smooth'st it so with king and commonweal!
> Gloucester: What, Cardinal? Is your priesthood grown so peremptory?
>
> (2.1.16-23)

The king, of course, misses the point of Winchester's veiled threat. Winchester accuses Gloucester of being a hawk that "beat[s] on a crown," that is, as a predatory bird beats its wings together to carry off its prey (Burns n. 20, p. 197). Gloucester's counter-accusation of "peremptory" behaviour carries the sense of being legally unchallengeable. Winchester of course subverts the legal process to

entrap and finally murder Gloucester; it is telling that Winchester says he will provide for the duke's "executioner" (3.1.276). In his mind, Gloucester's death is legally justified. As Suffolk and Margaret point out, it would be foolish to leave the "poor chicken" under the care of a "hungry kite" (3.1.251; 249). The hunting metaphors in the play continue the medieval association of clergymen with venery. However, these characters use hunting metaphors in a variety of ways: to accuse their enemies of pride and ambition; to speak euphemistically in order to avoid censure; and to justify their illicit actions. Taken together, the hunting metaphors suggest that England's legal system has degenerated to the point of becoming a "cat and mouse" – or perhaps "chicken and kite" – game,[72] illustrating the irony in Henry's confident assertion that "Justice' equal scales" will determine Eleanor's fate (2.1.195).

The bird-hunting metaphors become more insistent and dangerous the closer the action moves towards Gloucester's entrapment. Suffolk later advises his conspirators,

> …do not stand on quillets how to slay him:
> Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety,
> Sleeping or waking, 'tis no matter how,
> So he be dead… (3.1.261-64)

The lords will not let "quillets" or legal niceties prevent them from setting snares for Gloucester's life. His wife has already been "limed" (1.3.89), and Eleanor

[72] Indeed, Winchester and Gloucester organise a duel under the guise of discussing falconry. In *1 Henry VI* their men were forbidden weapons; surely this dual contravenes ordinary legal process. Hawking covers characters' intentions in more ways than one.

similarly warns her husband about bushes being "limed" for him (2.4.54). On his deathbed Winchester hallucinates that Gloucester's hair stands "Like lime twigs set to catch my winged soul!" (3.3.16). These birding metaphors create a sense of mutual entrapment; the "lime" that was used to catch Eleanor and Gloucester has unintentionally entrapped the cardinal's soul, or at least he worries that it has. Thus we observe that hunting metaphors suggest the compromised state of the English legal system, but also suggest a providential trajectory to the plays.

The less publicity Winchester's dispute is given, the less defined is his actual role in the Eleanor and Gloucester's downfall. During the parliament scene in 3.1, Winchester says very little. However, during his rant against his accusers Gloucester retorts, "Beaufort's red sparkling eyes blab his heart's malice" (154). To the duke, Winchester's silence cannot hide his culpability, and we have already seen Gloucester act as a shrewd judge in determining Simpcox's false miracle (2.1.67-155), as well as in organising the trial by combat between Horner and his apprentice Peter (1.3.182-218). Gloucester's reliability as a judge of character reinforces the audience's sense of Winchester as a legal conspirator.

As I have argued earlier, the *Mirror*'s Eleanor complains that Winchester is a Caiaphas partaking in the buffeting of Christ, making herself a Christ-figure in the process. However, in the mystery plays Caiaphas is Christ's prime legal antagonist. In Pilate's court, Caiaphas pleads,

> Pilate, he hath donne mych amysse.
>
> Let him never passe.
>
> By Moyses lawe liven wee
>
> and after that lawe dead shall hee bee,

for apertly preached hase hee

Goddes Sonne that he was. (Play 16, *Trial* 293-98)

Caiaphas in many ways leads the charge against Christ, first in hearing Jesus's initial accusers and then in bringing the case to Pilate. Caiaphas is marked by his religious otherness, being a follower of "Moyses lawe," just as Winchester is a representative of the foreign Roman church. However, the similarities end there. Winchester is a relatively silent partner in Suffolk and Margaret's "buffeting" of Gloucester, preferring to sit in the background until he is needed. Shakespeare may evoke a Passion sequence, as Jones suggests, but he also undermines such an association with English history in key ways: Christ's passive attitude in the mystery play buffeting is not one that is desirable for England's Lord Protector. Moreover, the verbose Gloucester is hardly the meek Christ, though he is a victim. Winchester is a villain, but his villainy is supported by a system that has already been corrupted by a weak ruler and individualistic political interests.

Thus does Winchester thwart expectations about being Gloucester's prime antagonist throughout the plays. As *2 Henry VI* develops, Suffolk and Margaret supplant Winchester as the duke's most dangerous foe. It is Margaret who first overtly broaches the murder plot, that Gloucester "should be quickly rid the world" (3.1.233), though Winchester immediately avers,

That he should die is worthy policy;

But yet we want a colour for his death.

'Tis meet he be condemned by course of law. (235-37)

Winchester, appropriately considering his ecclesiastical and advisory status, insists on following the "course of law," or at least the pretence of it under a

Machiavellian "policy." Yet one cannot help but feel that it is only because of the others' instigation and support that Winchester assents to Gloucester's murder.[73] It is difficult to believe that after decades of dispute Winchester would actually desire his nemesis's death, or at least not have found a "policy" for his death and killed him sooner. In the BBC 1983 production of *2 Henry VI*, the early scenes of the play gain dramatic, and even comic, interest from the lords' bickering, particularly during the hawking scene.[74] From a dramaturgical standpoint the play loses a fundamental component: the older generation, representatives from Henry V's time. What remains afterwards: Henry VI's passive providentialism, Cade's misguided rebellion, and York's treasonous ascendency.

Henry's providentialism encourages the audience to look upon Winchester's death as divine punishment for past sins: "Ah, what a sign it is of evil life / Where death's approach is seen so terrible!" (3.3.5-6). Such a view would be propagated through medieval and early modern sermon culture, Foxe's *Actes* and Hall's *Union*. The enduring trope of the "judge judged"[75] gives greater force to Shakespeare's presentation of the Cardinal of Winchester, suggesting that Winchester's providential fate is part of a greater cycle of Christian history.

Yet, as I have suggested, Shakespeare complicates the idea of Winchester's death as divine punishment. *1 Henry VI* sets up Winchester as a type

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[73] While Winchester threatens to spill Gloucester's "heart-blood" in one of their early exchanges (1.3.81), at the end of 5.1 *1 Henry VI* Winchester's goal is to "make thee stoop and bend thy knee" (61) – not to kill him.

[74] The aged Gloucester and Winchester squabble in asides, watchful of the youthful Henry's chastisements. Director Howell has interpolated a few lines regarding Winchester's bastardy, lending their dispute an aspect of humorous tedium.

[75] Ie. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1)

of scapegoat for many of the nation's problems. The cardinal represents a religion often conceived of as an interloping power. Winchester purchases his cardinal's robes from the papal legate, and threatens papal intervention when Gloucester insults him: "Rome shall remedy this" (1.3.51). Unlike Chaucer's more generous, yet xenophobic, portrayal of the Pardoner, Shakespeare plays on audiences' fears of Roman religious imperialism and Catholic infiltration – Spain of course remained a palpable threat even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The "Romish" church is just another force that threatens to fill the power vacuum created by Henry V's death**.** However, nothing ever comes of these threats, and as the plays go on it becomes clear that the only interloping powers that England has to fear are its own divided factions. Shakespeare shapes Winchester as a Vice from the beginning of the play, and has Hume continue the association, but Winchester's villainy is not as great as York's treason, nor Cade's seemingly arbitrary execution of commoners and lords alike. At times he even works in the interest of the crown, showing genuine concern for Talbot's success in France (*1 Henry VI* 1.1.107) and acting as arbitrator between England and France (*1 Henry VI* 5.1.34-40; *1 Henry VI* 5.3.94-101).

Winchester's death may serve as an indicator of God's role in English affairs; however, the audience also feels the loss of Winchester on a dramaturgical level. The play loses the compelling dynamism of Winchester and Gloucester's ancient feud, which is, for better or for worse, a part of earlier English history. As noted earlier, the deaths of these two lords signal a shift away from the older generation – the generation of Henry IV and Henry V – towards a new political

order. After finding his father's dead body, Young Clifford exclaims, "York not our old men spares" and takes the body up on his shoulders:

> Come, thou new ruin of old Clifford's house;
>
> As did Aeneas old Anchises bear,
>
> So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders. (*2 Henry VI* 5.2.51; 61-63)

As Knowles notes, Young Clifford's reference to Aeneas signals a devotion to the older generation, an honouring of gods and nation. York's uprising, supported by his young sons, soon to be Edward IV and Richard III, dishonours paternal and filial bonds. Though seemingly incongruous, Winchester's death, along with Gloucester's and Old Clifford's, marks a movement from a balanced (though imperfect) English court to a violently destabilised political system of "might makes right."

The patriotic payoffs for viewing Winchester as a scapegoat for all of England's problems are slim. From the beginning of *1 Henry VI,* Shakespeare invites the audience to perceive Winchester as this villain of the piece. However, his sudden death at the near midpoint of *2 Henry VI* thwarts any satisfactory sense of closure to his story arc. If God is responsible for Winchester's death, if the cardinal is punished for his role in Gloucester's murder, it is unclear what is resolved by divine intervention. Certainly, England's political turmoil is not over. Cade's rebellion, the first major civil dispute on English soil, begins in 4.2, and only after York's – not Winchester's – instigation. Shakespeare uses the Corrupt Clergyman stock character in Winchester to set up these expectations, to raise the stakes of the unethical prelate's government involvement, and finally to undercut any sense of simple narrative closure in a storyline that is far too complex for

mere heroes and villains. At the end of Winchester's death scene Warwick observes, "So bad a death argues a monstrous life." Henry replies,

> Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.
> Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close,
> And let us all to meditation. (3.3.30-33)

The lines might well apply to the audience as to the other lords present. Shakespeare has implicated the viewers in a dramaturgical trap, manipulating the audience's enjoyment of Vices and Machiavels to suggest initially a simple moral narrative. Henry's chastisement suddenly draws the viewers into a larger, more complex ethical universe. We are meant to meditate on the significance of Winchester's death, not to suppose that all of England's troubles are gone with him. Rather than inveigh on his uncle's unrepentant death, Henry graciously treats his elder like a fellow Christian rather than a villain. Unlike York, Henry honours the older generation and refuses to engage in the drawing of straightforward moral conclusions.

Henry's imperative to "draw the curtain close" suggests that Winchester's bed is located in the same discovery space that displayed Gloucester's corpse in the previous scene. Despite their vastly different characters, Winchester and Gloucester die similar deaths. Again, we are meant to perceive these deaths as one unit, the passing of an older generation. This generation was not without its quarrels and bloodshed; however, the Wars of the Roses which follow are unlike anything that these quarrels resembled. It is not far-fetched to suggest that Winchester does not begin the cycle of events that result in the civil war, but rather that his dispute with Gloucester maintained a kind of balance at the court

level, particularly in a court that lacked a strong central ruler. If this is the case then Shakespeare has given the "meddling" clergyman a new dimension: he is a necessary evil keeping England's divided interests political interests at bay. Shakespeare uses the Corrupt Clergyman social person in his portrayal of Winchester in order to complicate orthodox notions of divine providence in English history. His clerical status may signal spiritual significance to his actions; however Wars of the Roses plays are more concerned with divining *human* causes and their impact upon a developing nation.

4 • Queen Isabel: Arthurian Romance Heroine Caught in English History

Critics have often analysed *Richard II*'s Queen Isabel as a central figure of woe, a woman who represents the domestic losses which are contiguous with regnal usurpation.[1] Equally important is her ability to rally passionately for her husband's right, and to demand the privilege to be a part of royal decision-making despite being ousted with her husband. Helen Cooper describes the traditional romance heroine as "typically feisty…she knows her own mind, [and] she is passionately devoted to the man she chooses to love (or, in a widespread variant, to the man she has already married)" (*Medieval World* 180). While Malory's *Morte Darthur*[2] features many female characters, not all of them conforming to this type, I will argue that *Richard II*'s Isabel exhibits several key elements of Arthurian Romance heroine social personhood.

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[1] Charles Forker argues that in Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars*, Book 2, "Shakespeare found a means of reflecting Richard's suffering through a loyal and non-political adjunct to the action" (Introduction 143). Howard and Rackin equate Isabel with Richard's patrimony; Richard appeals to his authority as husband to bolster his authority as England's rightful king (158-59). Jeanie Grant Moore compares Isabel and Richard in their inability (or failure) to maintain their rightful roles at court (31).

[2] All references to Malory are from Helen Cooper's edition of the Winchester manuscript. I am using this version of Malory rather than Caxton's because Shakespeare's representation of chivalric romance does not come from reading Caxton closely. As Moore observes, "Shakespeare's use of Arthurian material is complex, in that his references allude not so much to literary texts as to para-literary texts and cultural traditions" (96). As Malory's late-medieval work consolidates a temporally wide-ranging tradition of Arthurian romance, I feel that it is representative of the "cultural traditions" from which Shakespeare borrowed.

While my earlier chapters have examined social persons within a mostly native tradition of stock characterisation, this chapter is slightly different. The chivalric romance tradition began first in France and in other parts of Europe. I examine Isabel as a signifier of this French literary tradition subsumed within the English history dramatic genre. Isabel represents an "Englishing" of the romance tradition. Other characters in *Richard II* do not denigrate Isabel on account of her French nationality, as they do with Joan of Arc or Margaret in the *Henry VI* plays. I have chosen Malory's *Morte Darthur* as a source text for the romance heroine social person because it represents a similar "Englishing" of female characters from the French Arthurian romances.[3]

Arthurian romance heroines are as likely to be negative influences on the knights who serve them as positive embodiments of chivalric ideals. However, Isabel exhibits many of the positive elements of the romance heroine: she is a wise counsellor, a peacemaker and a quester, one who indefatigably seeks truth and defends her husband's right to rule. Isabel's French nationality marks her foreign influence, but her interest in Richard's divine right makes her a strong English supporter beyond the affective ties of marriage. In Isabel, Shakespeare knowingly signifies the Arthurian romance tradition, initially a French mode of storytelling, to reconcile or, to use Cooper's term, to "atone" English history with

[3] One instance of this "Englishing" is Malory's downplay of adultery in the *Morte*. Unlike other English Arthurian romance writers, who gave no account of "the adulterous love-stories of either Lancelot and Guinevere or Tristan and Isolde," Malory does include this aspect ("Cooper, "Malory and Prose Romance"). However, Malory is much more judicious in its representation than the French romance writers.

French chivalric ideals.[4] In the process, English history gains a panoramic, national heroic narrative that legitimises Richard's rule within it. Richard's introspection is in part spurred by his wife's chastisements (5.1.26-34).[5] As Helen Ostovich argues, "[Isabel's] verbal slap in the face works a change in Richard, who begins to reclaim his dignity, first in his caustic contempt for Northumberland…and in his accurate prediction of the future falling-out between the two traitors" (30). However, rather than present Isabel in terms of Marian iconography – as Ostovich persuasively does – I argue that Shakespeare uses the legendary elements alluded to in Queen Isabel to make English national history a kind of romance.[6] That Isabel is (un-historically) banished to France after Richard's deposition signals the new Henry IV's rejection of France's positive chivalric ideals and the separation of England from a unifying cultural heritage, a heritage that could legitimise English rule of France.

From the Tudor to the Elizabethan periods, writers were engaged in making romance a nationalist narrative. "So far as Elizabethan England was concerned," avers Cooper, "there were good reasons why romance, like the culture it served, should be English" (*English Romance* 7). Henry IV's rejection of romance principles, as emblematised in Isabel, leads to the destruction of the Hundred Years' War and eventually to the Wars of the Roses, during which all

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[4] Of *Cymbeline* Cooper writes, "[Imogen and Cymbeline's reconciliation] coincides too with the 'atoning' of Britain with Rome: a rewriting of historical invasion and colonization as a willed act of peacemaking" (*Medieval World* 172). She argues that patterns of atonement and redemption are integral to romance narrative (171).

[5] All references to the text of *Richard II* are from Charles Forker's Arden 3 edition.

[6] However, given romance's "Catholic associations" (Cooper, *English Romance* 6), a reading of Isabel as romance heroine does not necessarily preclude a simultaneous Marian reading.

English possessions in France are lost.[7] Shakespeare limns a sympathetic French queen who supports Richard's right to the English throne. She is a peacemaker but also a fighter, a woman unafraid to speak her mind and to venture out of the relative safety of her *hortus conclusus* to journey to "Julius Caesar's ill-erected tower" (5.1.2). The Tower, of course, connotes England's Roman past, and evokes the nation's connection to the heroic narratives of Brutus, grandson of Rome's founder Aeneas, and, by extension, to the romance narratives of King Arthur.

Isabel also raises issues of identity. Her failure to achieve her social and political purposes as romance heroine and medieval queen also suggests England's (or at least Henry IV's) failure to recognise the power of a shared Anglo-French mythos. Role fulfilment is a large part of romance narratives, where characters struggle to maintain the ideals of their social positions. As a result, romance concerns itself with characters' internal conflicts as much as their adventurous deeds: "[r]omance shifted the balance of earlier epic narrative from warfare towards love, and from the homosocial warrior community towards individual self-realization of both the male and female protagonists" (Cooper, *Medieval World* 173). The romance heroine social person has built-in ideals which Isabel is not able to live up to as a result of Richard's deposition. She is unable to fight physically, to make peace via her marriage or to proffer the child

[7] This is not to suggest that Shakespeare had this complete narrative in mind when writing his history plays in the 1590s. Yet, considering how prevalent the romance mode was to be in his later comedies and romances, it is not far-fetched to argue that Shakespeare knew early on the cultural currency of the French tradition and could place that currency within a political context in the history plays.

which will continue Richard's line. The only functions she is able to perform are that of counsellor to her husband and of exponent of righteous anger. Isabel is barred from her "individual self-realization," and is thus a figure of frustration and sorrow. Her expression of these characteristics is appropriate considering the genre from which her character type is taken. "Frustration and self-conviction," Barron argues,

> are the roots of romance, however defined….Across the ages romance has embodied a vast range of idealisms, personal, social, cultural, historical, religious, whose very formulation reveals the frustrations which the wish-fulfillment of the mode was designed to relieve.
>
> ("Arthurian Romance")

Isabel's frustration lies in the inability (or unwillingness) of others to recognise her and her husband.

As I have suggested, none of Henry's retinue recognises her status as a symbol of Anglo-French political unity. England's rejection of Isabel entails the rejection of a "vast range of idealisms," a rejection which goes largely unnoticed, except by the gardener who memorialises the queen through his craft: "Rue e'en for ruth here shortly shall be seen / In the remembrance of a weeping queen" (3.4.106-7). Yet even the gardener only recognises Isabel as political collateral damage, as a "Poor queen" (102) and a "weeping queen." He does not realise the national consequences of her return to France. Isabel is in fact overdetermined by her "weeping queen" status, though as Ostovich rightly argues, her Marian connotations are iconographically and thematically significant to the play at large. Jeanie Grant Moore agrees, observing that "Shakespeare has shown us a man [ie.

Richard] tragically incompetent in his role in contrast to an apparently competent woman whose tragedy is that she has no fulfilling role to play" (31). Isabel represents not only the domestic losses accrued in political upheavals, but remains a central figure who engages in her own tragic narrative simultaneously with Richard's. Equally important – and left unrecognised by the play's other characters – is Isabel's centrality to peace, unity and a shared cultural heritage between France and England.

"There she made overmuch sorrow": Romance Heroine as Mourner

While other critics have analysed the thematic and functional significance of Isabel's woe, none to my knowledge has connected her sorrow to that of the Arthurian romance heroine. Typically, the romance heroine weeps (and often swoons) after the injury or loss of her lover. Elaine of Ascolat, immortalised in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," is perhaps the most well-known woman of woe in Arthurian legend. Upon discovering Sir Lancelot grievously injured after a tournament, she faints, lamenting the differences between his former and current selves: "when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed she might not speak, but suddenly she fell down to the earth in a swoon, and there she lay a great while" (Malory 427).[8] Moreover, upon Lancelot's rejection of her love she "shrieked shrilly and fell down in a swoon; and then women bore her into her chamber, and

[8] It is worth noting that women are not the only ones capable of being emotionally overwhelmed: upon finding Sir Gareth after a long search, King Arthur "sank down in a swoon for gladness" (165). Sir Gareth's mother one-ups King Arthur, however: "when she saw Sir Gareth readily in the visage she might not weep, but suddenly fell down in a swoon, and lay there a great while like as she had been dead" (165). Elaine of Ascolat is similarly immobilised by her grief. It seems that while men are capable of great emotion, women are likely to be paralysed by it more fully.

there she made overmuch sorrow" (433). It may seem that the narrator chastises Elaine for her "overmuch" sorrow, but her love of Lancelot has legitimisation from Sir Lavain: "she doth as I do, for sithen I saw first my lord Sir Lancelot, I could never depart from him, nor nought I will and I may follow him" (433). Elaine has reason to be frustrated: she cannot act on her love as Lavain can, with his engagement in homosocial bonding and "knightly fellowship" (Cooper, *English Romance* 240). Love, sorrow and frustration are what typify her character in the narrative. Like Elaine, Isabel's sorrow is related to her frustration at being unable to continue her love for Richard as she pleases. Even though the cases are different – Isabel and Richard are forcefully separated, while Lancelot does not reciprocate Elaine's feelings – Isabel and Elaine are each marked by frustration caused by an inability to act as they desire.

Sorrow and frustration likewise appear in Igraine, mother of King Arthur. Merlin and Uthur conspire to have Uthur substitute Igraine's husband in bed. Igraine mourns when she learns that her husband was killed in battle three hours earlier, before she slept with the man she thought was her husband. The reason for this mourning is no doubt an indication of her – and the period's overall – concern with monogamy in marriage and the preservation of male patrilineage:

> Female sexuality was…a matter of direct high economic and political concern: hence the anxiety over male control in a system of patrilineal inheritance, and the high premium on female chastity in the form of virginity before marriage and faithfulness within it. (Cooper, *English Romance* 222)

Igraine is upset that her love for her husband – her monogamous sexual desire – has been manipulated by an unknown party. When she hears of her husband's death, she "marvelled who that might be that lay with her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace" (Malory 5). This later phrase resonates with Mary's psychological attitude at the Nativity: "all that heard [of Jesus's birth], wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:18-19).[9] Each woman keeps private the understandable emotional turmoil caused by miraculous or "marvellous" pregnancy.[10] With Igraine, marvellous birth and, indeed, the thought of perceived adultery, interrupts her conception of herself as a chaste mother. The emphasis in each narrative is on the private contemplation of motherhood and on each woman's role as propagator of a family line after a non-traditional pregnancy.

The Arthurian heroine Igraine, the Virgin Mary and Shakespeare's Isabel share a kind of grief that stems from fears over legitimate childbirth and, most significantly, from anxiety over the continuation of patrilineal descent – in Mary's case, of *divine* patrilineal descent. As Isabel is a dramatic character, she must speak her thoughts in order for the process of self-realisation to be known. Her dialogue with Bushy provides an opportunity for contemplation similar to

[9] From the Douay-Rheims Bible.

[10] Janet Jesmok also notes the similarities: "Igraine, like the Virgin Mary, has the challenge of explaining a mysterious pregnancy when, after their marriage, Uther disingenuously questions her about the father's identity" (37). Moreover, "Marian symbolism associated with female authority, intercession and motherhood was adopted within the visual imagery and pageantry associated with royalty in England during the high and central Middle Ages" (Oakley-Brown and Wilkinson 13). The connections between queenship and Marian iconography were long established by the time Malory and Shakespeare began their literary careers.

Igraine's and Mary's. Isabel fears that she has birthed a "prodigy" (2.2.64). Bolingbroke is her "sorrow's dismal heir" rather than any legitimate child born of Richard (2.2.63). "Instead of being a means of producing peace and good will," Ostovich writes, "Isabel discovers she has spawned civil war and usurpation" (27). English coronation rites referred to the queen's assumed fertility, thereby underlining her role as one who could safeguard the realm's political stability (Oakley-Brown and Wilkinson 13). Isabel has a great deal to live up to, and ultimately judges herself as a failure, perhaps the source of her "unborn sorrow" in addition to fears over Richard's reign.

Her birth and ancestry metaphors describe the failures of her very thought processes, or self-realisation:

> …Conceit is still derived
> From some forefather grief. Mine is not so,
> For nothing hath begot my something grief,
> Or something hath the nothing that I grieve.
> 'Tis in reversion that I do possess –
> But what it is, that is not yet known what,
> I cannot name. (2.2.34-40)

The normal processes of thought and of patrilineal descent work "in reversion" in Isabel's mind. Grief begets "conceit" and "nothing" begets "something." Isabel is only able to articulate her sense of self through terms of faulty reproduction. For her, grief and failed propagation are inextricably linked. Shakespeare presents a queen who, like a romance heroine, measures her identity against her ideal social roles as a mother and progenitor of the family line. However, Isabel's failure to

"conceive," in both senses of the term, heightens the play's tragedy and provides further motivation for Isabel's later anger and frustration, first against the gardener and then against her husband. Isabel's failure in these roles parallels the greater failures of chivalry within the play, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

Perception and identity are frequent themes in Arthurian romance, especially where women are involved. For instance, Lancelot's change in appearance after his injury affects Elaine of Ascolat terribly: she faints after seeing her would-be lover so "sick and pale." Similarly, Isabel's first meeting with Richard after his deposition reflects the challenge of seeing a loved one in decline: "…Thou most beauteous inn, / Why should hard-favoured Grief be lodged in thee, / When Triumph has become an alehouse guest? (5.1.13-15). Her analogy articulates the concept of emotions coupled inappropriately with their possessors: Bolingbroke's body is an inferior guest-house for triumph, who should lodge in a more suitable setting, namely Richard's body, his "beauteous inn." Similarly, ugly or "hard-favoured" Grief sleeps where he should not. The metaphor springs from Isabel's disappointment in seeing her husband fallen so low. Shakespeare's poetry fleshes out the circumstances borrowed from romance narrative, giving greater voice and depth to Isabel's emotions. Yet even romance concerns about treating knights according to their blood and status may underpin Isabel's outcry.

Many knights are confused and "marvel" at Lyonet's treatment of Sir Gareth (131; 133), who repeatedly proves himself in front of the lady. Even Lyonet, after she has accepted Gareth as a noble knight, cries, "'Ah, Jesu, marvel have I…what manner a man ye be, for it may never be other but that ye be come

of gentle blood; for so foul and shamefully did never woman revile a knight as I have done you'" (135). Sir Gareth proves himself a knight of the Round Table in part by his ability to overcome ill-treatment. Most of the knights he encounters remark upon his "gentle blood," and suggest his entitlement to land, knights, and a beautiful wife (who possesses her own land and knights). Indeed, his nickname "Beaumains," given early in the story, is "an indication of his true nature, since they are a sign of someone not used to manual labour" (Cooper, "Explanatory Notes" 541).[11] The perception and identification of nobility are integral themes in Gareth's tale. Lyonet's "testing" of Gareth in part proves his noble identity.

Isabel's sorrow and frustration partly lie in her perception that other lords do not recognise Richard for who he truly is. It is not simply that Richard is England's king and his dispossession a crime against obedience, right rule and normative English politics. Isabel is angry that Richard's chivalric status, his gentle blood, is not recognised. This is a king who decreed a tournament "At Coventry upon Saint Lambert's Day" to resolve Mowbray and Bolingbroke's dispute: "Since we cannot *atone* you, we shall see / Justice design the victor's chivalry" (1.1.199; 202-3, my italics). Richard's words invoke a reconciliatory element of romance narrative, "a pattern of atonement for sin, of repentance, and a hard progress towards redemption" (Cooper, *Medieval World* 171). Of course,

[11] Sir Gareth's noble blood is initially unknown to Sir Kay and the other knights, as Gareth keeps his identity secret when he enters King Arthur's court. Kay makes Sir Gareth work in the kitchen. When Gareth leaves to follow Lyonet back to her sister's castle, the damsel mockingly calls him "kitchen knave."

Richard cancels the trial by combat at the last moment. Graham Holderness argues this

> royal intervention…represents an emasculation of the combatants and their chivalric culture, since it leaves Bolingbroke and his supporters not merely disappointed of their expectations, but absurdly on record as voicing empty heroic boasts, fighting only a "woman's war," the "bitter clamour" of "eager tongues." (183)

Holderness argues that Richard represents a "feminised form of authority" which circumvents masculine chivalry and deprives Mowbray and Bolingbroke their place in history (184). One could extend Holderness's argument, however, to include the importance placed on fair speech, as an aspect of courtesy, in romance narrative.[12] Perhaps Mowbray and Bolingbroke feel deprived of their chance to prove themselves in heroic combat, but they neglect to perceive that heroic yet courteous language has an equally integral place in the chivalric past. Isabel represents the "feminised" possibilities for "atonement" (to use Cooper's term again) inherent in chivalric narrative. She is part of Richard's own project to settle disputes peacefully, and her frustration stems from her inability to do so.[13] Her investment in chivalric codes mirrors her husband's investment in them.

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[12] Such an argument extension would entail revising Holderness's notion that Richard's reliance on words over battle represents "a *modern*, almost matriarchal authority prepared to substitute peace for blood" (184; my italics). In my configuration, Richard merely emphasises another aspect of chivalry which is at odds with Mowbray and Bolingbroke's emphasis.

[13] Richard's treacherous role in his uncle's murder (though not definitively proven) complicates any simple notion of the king as embodiment of chivalric ideals. Of course scepticism about the viability of chivalric ideals arises inevitably within the first medieval romances. Barron writes, in "*Morte Darthur*… as perhaps in all forms of romance, heightened idealism coexists with awareness of human limitations" ("Arthurian Romance").

"But soft, but see, or rather do not see / My fair rose wither": Isabel's "Quest"

Andrew Gurr notes that "the rose among flowers was regarded as equivalent to the lion among beasts," another analogy Isabel makes later in her speech (n. 5.1.8, p. 151). More pertinent to my argument is the association of the rose with romance literature, notably the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* composed by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. The *hortus conclusus* so elaborately described in the early medieval work is earlier evoked in 3.4.[14] It follows that Isabel's figuration of Richard as her "rose" marks her, contrary to established gender roles, as the quester who seeks romantic love. This role reversal indicates Isabel's legitimacy as a ruler in her own right, in contrast to Richard, who seems weak by comparison, at least in 5.1. The queen's quest for her "rose" marks her in contrast to Mary and Igraine, figures who are generally silent and contemplative. In this moment, Isabel's character moves away from religious comparison with the Virgin Mary and embraces other romance affiliations.

Malory's narrative contains several accounts of questing women, or women who, though not the female equivalent of knights, take up their own quests when occasion demands. Elaine of Ascolat seeks permission from her father to search for Lancelot after hearing of his injury: "'I require you give me

[14] The dreaming narrator comes upon a "high, crenellated wall, which was decorated on the outside with paintings and carved with many rich decorations" (4). The allegorical otherworldliness of Isabel's garden contrasts sharply with Bolingbroke's later political pragmatism. As Kehler writes, "[t]he gardener… functions less as a choral voice of old and homely wisdom than as an explicator of the new order of *Realpolitik* that Bolingbroke will inaugurate" (125).

leave to ride and seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind. For I shall never stint till that I find him'" (425). She strikes out on her own, unattended.

Perhaps the most powerful example of a female quester is Lyonet, from the "Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney," who rides to King Arthur's court alone in order to recruit knights to rescue her sister from a sieging "tyrant" (Malory 122). She spurs Gareth on to commit great heroic deeds so that her sister may be rescued. She also heals his wounds (146; 159; 165) and preserves his chastity – through magical means (151-54) – when he falls deeply in love with Lyonet's sister, Lyonesse. Dorsey Armstrong argues, "Lyonet plays a far more important role in creating and shaping Gareth's knightly identity and reputation than do those knights with whom he engages in direct conflict" (118). Her agency is best signified by her nickname, the "damosel Savage" who had "ridden with [Sir Gareth] many a wildsome way" (165; 151). She is not truly "savage," of course, since she upholds conventional bonds of family and loyalty. Her devotion to Lyonesse and to Gareth's cause finds expression in her seemingly mysterious assertion, "'all that I have done shall be to your worship, and to us all'" (154). Initially, Gareth cannot fathom Lyonet's actions, from her repeated denigration of his chivalric behaviour to her violent means of keeping the lovers apart until their wedding day.[15] Later, he recognises her services to himself and to her family, rewarding her appropriately.

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[15] Lyonet's chastisement of Gareth will be treated below. When Gareth and Lyonesse are just at the point of engaging in premarital sex, Lyonet conjures a giant knight who, "smote [Gareth] with a foin through the thick of the thigh," thus forestalling the lovers' sin (152). It is a humorous instance of *coitus interruptus*.

Isabel's questing devotion is manifested at the beginning of 5.1, where she leads her attendants to Caesar's "ill-erected Tower" in order to see her husband. The opening lines to her ladies indicate their physical fatigue: "Here let us rest, if this rebellious earth / Have any resting for her true king's queen" (5-6). The image consists of a group of exhausted women, led by one extraordinary heroine, seeking her "true king." Isabel's very identity as her "true king's *queen*" is also tied up in the search. At stake is not only her husband's right to the throne, but her own claim to power. When Lyonet completes her task she is wedded to Sir Gaheris, Gareth's brother. Lyonet's involvement in her sister's plight also impinges on her own future as wife and progenitor of a noble line. As noted earlier, the romances are frequently ideologically invested with concerns about patrilineage. Igraine disappears from her narrative "until she is needed to establish Arthur's lineage in his quest for the throne" (Jesmok 37). Arthur's mother has the greatest significance as true progenitor of Arthur's line. Isabel's quest, in turn, is not only an example of her romance-infused independence, but another instance in which her identity as rightful queen to her rightful king is brought to the fore. When her "quest" to Richard ends, she relies on her verbal powers as another form of agency.

The Romance Heroine's Verbal Power

Morte Darthur often relates female agency to verbal power. In the story of Gawain, Uwain and Marhaus, the knights meet three women at a fountain: one is sixty years old, another thirty, and another fifteen. The women offer to "teche hem unto stronge aventures": leading them separately, the women act as guides

and teachers for the men.[16] Jesmok writes, "Malory's guides are not helpless females but knowledgeable and discerning women who not only lead knights to adventure, but also instruct them and the audience in worthy chivalric behavior" (35). Gawain's young guide chastises the knight after he fails in his chivalric duties. When the knights and guides meet up after a year has passed, the older guides praise their knights, but as for Gawain's counsellor, she "coude sey but lytyll worshyp of hym" (179). Her judgement is good: Gawain initially fails to help the suffering Sir Pelleas and then, in attempting to help Pelleas win his lady, Gawain betrays him by sleeping with the woman. In this scenario, the guide women use their powers of chivalric recognition to encourage, instruct and judge the knights in heroic behaviour.

In the "Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney," the disparity between heroic recognition and lack of heroic recognition motivates much of Gareth's initial storyline. When he comes to Arthur's court, Gareth refuses to identify himself, begging only food and lodging for a year. Arthur is confounded; he suspects Gareth's noble lineage and tells the young man he could request a greater favour: "'ask better, I counsel thee, for this is but a simple asking'" (121). Sir Kay does not recognise Gareth's true birth, saying, "'I undertake he is a villein born, and never will make man'" (121). The knight takes Gareth on as a kitchen hand, and the youth patiently endures Kay's mistreatment. Yet when Lyonet arrives at court asking King Arthur to send help for her sister, she is appalled that only the

[16] References to the story of Gawain, Uwain and Marhaus are taken from Eugene Vinaver's *Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edition, vol. 1. The narrative has been cut in Cooper's edition.

"kitchen knave" volunteers to accompany her (123).[17] Throughout their initial adventure together, Lyonet chastises and insults Gareth, telling him his victories over various knights are owed to luck or chance:

> "What, weenest thou," said the lady, "that I will allow thee for yonder knight that thou killed? Nay, truly, for thou slewest him unhappily and cowardly; therefore turn again, thou bawdy kitchen knave! I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains. What art thou but a lusk and a turner of broaches and a ladle-washer?" (125)

She refuses to "allow" or give credit for Gareth's achievements, saying he is a "lusk" or layabout and a "turner of broaches" – a spit-turner. Although Gareth begins the narrative desiring to keep his identity secret, he becomes enraged when treated below his birth. He is a good knight, however, and refuses to engage with Lyonet's taunts.

Lyonet finally realises, after many trials of Gareth's valour, that the knight is noble and not merely a kitchen knave. His endurance of her mockery proves his gentleness, for

> "a knight may little do that may not suffer a gentlewoman, for whatsoever ye said unto me I took no heed to your words; for the more ye said the more ye angered me, and my wrath I wreaked upon them that I had ado withal. The missaying that ye missaid me in my battle

[17] Arthur refuses to send knights because Lyonet will not tell her sister's name nor where she lives. The theme of secret identities runs throughout the tale.

> furthered me much, and caused me to think to show and prove myself at the end what I was." (135-36)

Gareth can only prove himself by withstanding Lyonet's chastisements and insults. The difference between Richard and Gareth is that Richard's deterioration is real, and Gareth's only perceived by a sceptical observer. It is not merely luck that permits Gareth to conquer his enemies: he is consistently the chivalric hero. Lyonet's insults spur him to even greater heroic heights.

Richard, however, has seen a steady physical decline since his deposition. Richard's actual debasement is what makes Isabel's intervention in 5.1 so poignant. She rallies him with her chastisements:

> What, is my Richard both in shape and mind
> Transformed and weakened? Hath Bolingbroke
> Deposed thine intellect? Hath he been in thy heart?
> The lion, dying, thrusteth forth his paw
> And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage
> To be o'erpowered; and wilt thou, pupil-like,
> Take the correction mildly, kiss the rod
> And fawn on rage with base humility,
> Which art a lion and the king of beasts? (5.1.26-34)

In Malory it is the "little lion" – Lyonet – who motivates the knight to even greater acts of chivalry. In Shakespeare it is the lady who encourages her husband to be the lion, even if he is a dying beast, though there is certainly something leonine in Isabel's speech. While she must acknowledge that her power is tied to Richard's, she does not "Take the correction mildly," or "fawn on rage with base

humility." In 3.4 Isabel rebukes the gardener for what she perceives as a check to her husband's regal position: "Dar'st thou, thou little better thing than earth, / Divine his downfall?" (78-79). She views the gardener as a would-be prophet who assumes knowledge that only God should rightly know, an act that could be severely punished in Shakespeare's day. Moreover, she perceives that he usurps royal authority, along with divine: "Doth not thy embassage belong to me, / And am I the last that knows it?" (5.1.93-94). Isabel takes on the role that she prescribes for Richard: she herself "rages" that her husband ought to retain what is rightfully his – recognition and dignity – despite being ousted from the corridors of power.

Richard does finally fulfil Isabel's request: he rears up in his prison cell after the Keeper tries to poison him. "His wits sharpened and his spirits stirred up," Ostovich argues, Richard accuses the Keeper of attempted regicide and "is reborn as the monarchial lion, killing several of his attackers until Exton strikes him down" (31). Here Isabel makes up for her earlier failures. She will not, of course, produce Richard's heir, but she will be alive after Richard's death to tell "tales / Of woeful ages long ago betid" (5.1.41-42). In her final meeting with Richard, Isabel fulfils her role as romance heroine where earlier she could not.

Making Peace

Arthurian romance heroines are sometimes figured as peacemakers between warring territories. When Igraine's husband is killed in battle, her barons, "by one assent," encourage her to marry Uther (Malory 5). Igraine succeeds in marrying Uther and producing Britain's greatest king. The stakes were similarly high for

historical queens if they failed in this role. At stake were political alliances and dynastic bonds between European countries: "[j]udiciously arranged marriages carried with them the promise of enhanced prestige at home and abroad, as well as promises of mutual friendship and support" (Wilkinson 21-22). Fifteenth-century poet Christine de Pisan writes on the persuasive powers of women generally, and on their influence in the political world specifically. She remarks, "how many great blessings in the world have often been caused by queens and princesses making peace between enemies, between princes and barons and between the rebellious people and their lords!" (qtd. Laynesmith 84-85).[18] But just as frequently, queens would fail. Henry VIII's many wives, especially Catherine of Aragon, illustrate the ongoing political (and biological) pressure which Tudor queens faced. And of course Elizabeth I's rejection of French and Spanish suitors created heated debate in parliament about the succession question.

Isabel is faced with the pressure of providing peace between France and England at a time when concerns over civil dissention have come to the fore. The Duke of York notes the difference between the noble past and the corrupted present. He rails before Richard,

> I am the last of noble Edward's sons,
>
> Of whom thy father, Prince of Wales, was first.
>
> In war was never lion raged more fierce,
>
> In peace was never gentle lamb more mild[.]
>
> …….

[18] Laynesmith cites from Christine's *Treasure of the City of Ladies* (51-53).

But when he frowned it was against the French

And not against his friends. (2.1.171-74; 178-79)

York evokes a (probably mythical) time when enemies were more likely to be external rather than internal. Gurr notes a possible allusion to the crusading Richard I in York's "lion" reference (n. 173, pp. 92-93). For York, the Black Prince embodies both chivalric ideals of raging warrior and courteous knight, the "gentle lamb." However, York's evocation of England's heroic past is problematic. In the Arthurian romances enemies are more likely to come from within than from outside England. For instance, Mordred, one of the key players in Arthur's downfall, is the king's illegitimate son. York uses the concept of chivalry to create an image of a romance knight within the context of England's oft-contentious relationship with the French. For York, national integrity can only occur in the unification of an English front against a common French enemy.

Contrary to this ideology is Isabel's role as peacemaker. York fails to perceive that Richard's marriage represents a peaceful route to English rule in France. While civil division is still reprehensible, York's political idealism favours only war and not the equally chivalric (and "feminised") possibilities of peace. Characters throughout the play, as Holderness has shown, use the language and ideals of chivalry to fashion their critique of Richard's rule, or in Richard's case, as I have argued, to rationalise his political decision-making. Isabel is often left out of courtiers' debates and arguments; as her anger in the garden illustrates, her political roles are often unrecognised. English rule of France becomes central to the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V. The courtiers' failure to recognise Isabel's

key political position, while focusing only on Richard's perceived crimes, indicates a significant lost opportunity for the nation.

Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars*, Book 2

Were it possible that Shakespeare did not know the above-cited stories from Malory or the Arthurian para-literary texts, it is certain that his primary source for Isabel's characterisation, Book 2 of Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars*, is heavily imbued with chivalric images and themes, particularly the theme of recognition. The poet describes Isabel using many superlatives, a frequent feature of Malory's Arthurian romance. Daniel records that Queen Isabel was "Borne great, macht great, liu'd great and euer beene / Partaker of the worlds best benefits" (Sig. K2r). Being a woman "Borne great," her assumptions about the treatment of royalty mark her as one who embraces chivalric ideals. She observes Bolingbroke's procession into London from a tower above. She cannot see her husband,

> Yet thinking they would neuer be so bold
> To lead their Lord in any shamefull wise,
> But rather would conduct him as their king,
> As seeking but the states reordering. (Sig. K2r)[19]

She imagines that even though Richard has been overthrown, he will still be treated according to his blood and rightful estate. Finally she sees a man who she takes to be her husband:

> …yonder…is hee

[19] In citing Daniel's 1595 edition, I have regularised the long 's' character and all ligatures.

Mounted on that white courser all in white

……..

I know him by his seate, he sits s'vpright:

Lo how he bows: deare Lord with what sweet grace:

How long haue I longd to behold that face. (Sig. K2v)

For Isabel the white courser, the staple mount of romance, signifies her husband's identity, as does his regal posture and mannerisms. She measures his nobility by his chivalric behaviour. Isabel, however, is here mistaken: she observes Henry Bolingbroke and not Richard. Mistaken identity is of course a major trope of Arthurian romance – knights often don the gear of other knights to protect their identity, or use magic to prevent recognition. Sometimes, as in the "Tale of Sir Gareth" or in the narrative of Lancelot's madness,[20] they willingly withhold their names, or assume different names.[21]

And yet when Isabel finally does see Richard, led at the back of the procession and much altered from his past self, her "loue-quicke eies" perceive that "his basenes doth a grace bewray" (Sig. K3r; K3v). Daniel spends many stanzas articulating Isabel's struggle with the recognition of her king and describing her anger at Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard in her perceptual field. She castigates her "betraying eies" for their mistake: "O haue they grac'd a periur'd rebell so? / Well for their error I will weepe them out" (Sig. K3r). Isabel

[20] This story, where Lancelot adopts the pseudonym "Le Chevalier Malfait," is a sub-section of the *Book of Sir Tristram de Lyonesse*. In Cooper's edition, the narrative runs pages 292-303.
[21] Armstrong devotes several pages to the analysis of the Fair Unknown "narreme" in *Morte Darthur* (114-128).

engages in a psychological battle between her desire to see her lord and her misery at seeing him so debased:

> Thus as shee stoode assur'd and yet in doubt,
>
> Wishing to see, what seene she grieued to see,
>
> Hauing beliefe, yet faine would be without;
>
> Knowing, yet striuing not to know twas he. (Sig. K4r)[22]

Such conflict does not occur in the fickle commons who witness Bolingbroke's procession in *Richard II* (5.2.1-40). Shakespeare reproduces Daniel's narrative of the procession, but it is told by York and occurs after the queen's last appearance. The "desiring eyes" belong not to Isabel but to the London population eager for the chivalric spectacle of Bolingbroke's entry (5.2.14). Unlike Isabel, they are eager to recognise Bolingbroke prematurely as their king. Isabel's chivalric idealism is set against the visual (and ideologically empty) appeal of chivalric spectacle. Isabel struggles with the recognition of her debased husband, a serious trope with serious implications in Arthurian romance. At stake in the public recognition of a knight's bloodline is peace and national integrity – the very basis of a civilised society.

Instructive, again, is the "Tale of Sir Gareth" in *Morte Darthur*. Barbara Nolan argues that the misrecognition and dishonour of family members complicates the simple idealism of the "younger brother" and "Fair Unknown" folktale motifs. Gareth competes against his brother Gawain and his mentor

[22] The convoluted syntax in this passage is perhaps reflected in Isabel's similarly configured speech in *Richard II*: "what [grief] it is, that is not yet known what, / I cannot name. 'Tis nameless woe, I wot" (2.2.39-40).

Lancelot, a plot development that does not accord with the traditional "younger brother" motif.[23] The deviation "make[s] Gareth less 'pure' in [the tale's] character as a *roman d'aventure*. At the same time, [the deviation] deepen[s] the tale by connecting it to the historical trajectory of the *Morte Darthur* as a family tragedy" (Nolan 165). In tournament, Gareth strikes down his brother Gawain, but it is unclear whether Gareth has recognised his brother under his helmet. When Gawain cries, "'Ah, brother….I weened ye would not have smitten me so'" (Malory 163), Gareth does not answer, but runs away into the forest. Nolan notes, "Malory provides no narrative commentary to ease our readerly discomfort over the family tension" (166). Both Malory's romance and Shakespeare's play share this evocation of discomfort. Henry IV is guilty of the very same kin-killing as Richard (though in each case the king's direct responsibility is left ambiguous).

Henry IV's promise to atone for his sins in the Holy Land is unsatisfying because it leaves the cyclical pattern of kin-killing in the English court unresolved – and, as we discover in *1 Henry IV*, unfulfilled. Similarly, with the downfall of King Arthur's court, four of the best knights establish their homes in the Holy Land, "And these four knights did many battles upon the miscreants or Turks; and there they died upon a good Friday for God's sake" (526). The narrative move provides a sense of closure, but the knights' displacement does not resolve the central issues of murder and betrayal that occur within this "family tragedy." And

[23] The "younger brother" storyline "involves a traditional folktale motif in which a younger brother competes with an older brother in a contest to demonstrate his prowess" (Nolan 157).

of course, Arthur's removal to Avalon, destined to return when England needs him most, is the ultimate narrative act of deferral.

Henry's pardon of his cousin Aumerle offers a glimmer of hope that forgiveness will replace the policy of "weeding" troublemakers from the English court. However, Henry also orders the execution of "that consorted crew" that had conspired with Aumerle (5.3.137). Shakespeare presents a wide range of possibilities for dealing with civil dissention in *Richard II*. It is not clear that the playwright approves or disapproves of any of the methods: from trial by combat, to judicious "weeding," to selective forgiveness. Isabel represents a kind of doctrine of obedience based on the recognition of the king's blood and his ultimate authority. The play's action is motivated by the question, "what is the court's responsibility to the country when a king proves himself unworthy of his role?" For Isabel, the king's authority rests in his blood and bearing. Any act of rebellion contravenes the norms of the chivalric code. Her internal debate in Daniel, cited above, is a debate about appearance and substance, belief and disbelief. Daniel's emphasis on sight is represented in Shakespeare's Isabel when she says, "But soft, but see, or rather do not see / My fair rose wither" (5.1.7-8). For her it is impossible that Bolingbroke has "Transformed and weakened" Richard "both in shape and mind" (ll. 27; 26), because the king's body and mind are inviolate. In Malory, a knight's noble blood is always recognisable through his bearing and behaviour, even if he attempts to conceal his identity. Such a conflict between substance and appearances is embedded in Richard's "un-kinging" of himself (4.1.203-221). It is uncertain that Richard's "own" tears, hands, tongue and breath can repeal a divinely-ordained state (ll. 207-10). At stake in such a

debate is the ability of the court's power to depose a king who does not conform to kingly appearances, internally or externally.

Failures and Successes of Chivalry

It is not clear that Isabel's position is the right one, that hers is the path that would finally end civil dissention in the English court. However, her presence participates within the play's wider concern about the viability of chivalric ideals within a complicated system of English politics. As I have argued, Isabel's anger at the gardener in 3.4 and at Richard in 5.1 arises from the lords' and commons' failure to recognise Richard as their king. With the latter, the sensory appeal of chivalric spectacle undermines any adherence to the actual principles of chivalry. For the audience, the pleasures of chivalric spectacle are evoked but never shown. Bolingbroke's procession is described rather than presented, and Richard cancels Mowbray and Bolingbroke's trial by combat at the last moment. In this thwarting of expectations the audience "would thereby have encountered this history, that great glamorous dream of mediaevalism, as always already and irrecoverably lost" (Holderness 185). I have also argued, along with Holderness, that chivalric ideals, themes and images are manipulated according to the interests of the speaker. Henry swears by the "rites of knighthood" to defend his honour during his dispute with Mowbray (1.1.75). Mowbray views himself as "disgraced, impeached and baffled" by Bolingbroke's slander, which are likely "chivalric terms arranged in ascending order of ignominy" (Forker n. 1.1.170, p. 195). Richard seeks first to "atone" the knights, then to "see / Justice design the victor's

chivalry" (1.1.202-3). In all this, the play conveys a sense that chivalry contains noble ideals, but is finally untenable in actual government policy.

Isabel, however, represents the hope for atonement that chivalry can embody. The queen hearkens back to a past – a mythic past, of course, but a hopeful one – where, in its finest moments, it can give women positive influence over government and knightly behaviour. This hopefulness is presented in the resolution of Aumerle's treason plotline. Guilty of conspiracy, Aumerle goes to Henry IV to beg forgiveness. York wants Henry to condemn his son, while the duchess wants to save his life. Kneeling in front of the new king, York urges, "Speak it in French, King; say '*Pardonne-moi*' (5.3.118). York means that the king should politely refuse Aumerle's request for pardon. The duchess replies angrily to York,

> Dost thou teach Pardon pardon to destroy?
>
> ……..
>
> [To King Henry]
>
> Speak 'Pardon' as 'tis current in our land;
>
> The chopping French we do not understand. (5.3.119; 122-23)

Despite York's earlier evocation of an England unified by its hatred of the French, he here adopts the French language to convince his king of appropriate action. The duchess, however, desires to hear "pardon" as "'tis current in our land" – a rejection of French diplomatic language. While French is the language of legal execution in this scene, it is also the language of justice. York's plea to have his son killed seems morally reprehensible, but it is also the ultimate mark of loyalty to the sovereign. The conflict between loyalty to family and loyalty to a lord is

common in Arthurian romance.[24] Henry's forgiveness of Aumerle – thus preserving York's family – is a sign that "family centred devotion," a devotion to which Isabel adheres, is still strong in the English court (Ostovich 30).

Beyond the language of chivalry, with its attendant potential for manipulation, is the narrative of chivalry and the importance of female representations within those storylines. Richard's marriage to Isabel is arguably the most legitimising aspect of his rule. As Ostovich avers, "[e]choes of [Marian] devotion in the presentation of Isabel…can be understood as determinants that proclaim Richard II's true kingship authoritatively" (25). Equally important, Isabel's presence signifies English history as a national heroic narrative that legitimises Richard's reign. Isabel in fact fulfils chivalric elements, such as the trial by combat and the Bolingbroke procession, earlier denied to the audience. She signifies not the language of chivalry, but the hopeful narrative of romance. Even though Isabel rejects "cozening Hope" as a "flatterer, / A parasite, [and] a keeper-back of Death," the queen's fundamental role in the play is to suggest the great heights to which the English monarchy can aspire (2.2.69-70). The debased Richard is "the model where old Troy did stand" (5.1.11). Her negative assertion simultaneously raises the possibility of its opposite – that England's king has all the authority and magnificence of Roman antiquity.

[24] Witness Lancelot's internal conflict during his defence of Guinevere from charges of adultery: he is torn between his loyalty to Arthur, to his brothers-in-arms and to his lover. The story is told in "The Death of Arthur," pages 468-527).

Though chivalric ideals may not be tenable in practice, heroic stories maintain England's power in the human imagination, as Richard himself realises. To Isabel he urges,

> In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
> With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
> Of woeful ages long ago betid.
> And ere thou bid good night, to quite their griefs,
> Tell thou the lamentable tale of me
> And send the hearers weeping to their beds. (5.1.40-45)

The affective power of Arthurian romance is similar to the emotional effects Richard describes. Isabel, as a romance heroine, is an appropriate vehicle for the tale of Richard's deposition, since it is a story of male loyalties divided between kin and country. The historical Isabel was detained in England after Richard's death with the hope that she would wed Henry, Prince of Wales, later King Henry V (Froissart 473). In Shakespeare's history Isabel is returned to France after Richard's deposition. There is no question of her staying. Isabel's frustration results from her inability to fulfil her queenly role. The audience's frustration results from Henry IV's inability to recognise the power of Isabel's role in English politics, and her power to continue England's participation within a shared Anglo-French national heroic narrative.

Conclusion

The concept of *recognition* is always a part of stock characterization, and includes issues of identity, recognisability, trustworthiness and veracity. John Bunyan, notes Helen Cooper, "realized a good story composed of motifs that are already familiar is the most mind-engaging form that there is, and that romances are the very best such stories" (*English Romance* 4). My dissertation extends this idea: medieval stock characters from a variety of genres are also "mind-engaging," and Shakespeare's deployment and transformation of these types invigorate his English history plays. This is why Mistress Quickly is so compelling: her character simultaneously plays with received notions of medieval alewives while she engages in her own forms of reckoning others. Her interactions with other characters make audiences question assumptions about how to determine another person's identity. By virtue of her apparent recognisability, and her implicit questioning of other characters' recognisability, she engages her audience in the hermeneutics of identity.

When an audience member sees a recognisable type on stage, he or she will ask him/herself, probably unconsciously, "will this type conform to my expectations or thwart them?" It is as true of early modern drama as it is of present-day television shows, based as they are on well-worn formulae. Stock characters and situations help rather than hinder the popularity of these shows. While it may seem an unlikely comparison, recent sitcom success *Modern Family*

clearly illustrates the dramatic value of stock characters in genres that gesture towards an apparent objectivity, genres such as, and as diverse as, history plays and television "mockumentaries." This apparent objectivity is integral to the works' metathatricality, since they often draw attention to the artificiality of their construction. In the history play, metatheatricality emphasises the very constructedness of history; in the sitcom, metatheatricality emphasises the constructedness of the average television comedy. In each case, the formulae of genre and conventional characterisation are employed seemingly self-consciously, both to reinforce and thwart audience expectations.

Modern Family advertises in its title that its three featured families are "new" configurations, that this is what family looks like in today's society. The show features one Caucasian couple with three kids, an interracial May-December couple with a child from the mother's previous marriage, and a gay couple who have adopted a baby from Vietnam. What becomes clear throughout the series is that these "modern" families struggle with the very same issues faced by earlier generations of television families: proper parenthood, sexual identity, acceptance of difference, "keeping up with the Joneses," and personal sacrifice for the good of the group. Seemingly individualised characters are identifiable by stock traits: Claire is the "disciplinarian mother," Phil the "fun dad" by comparison; Cameron is the "flamboyant gay man" and his partner Mitchell the contrasting "control freak"; Gloria is the "warm Latina" and her older husband Jay the conservative "grumpy man," a kind of *senex iratus*. Even the relatively recent phenomenon of the "mockumentary," a television and film genre which gained popularity with Rob Reiner's 1984 *This is Spinal Tap*, has literary precedent in the pseudo-

journalistic work of Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which has a frame of apparent objectivity.

While viewers may tune in for the show's claim of innovation, *Modern Family* appeals to North American television audiences because of its recognisability and its new treatment of old themes. The family members are not stereotypes: they frequently do not engage in expected behaviour. For instance, Cameron's ostentation is often balanced by pragmatic concerns stemming from his rural childhood; Gloria's seemingly conventional Latino emotionality is off-set by her experiences in Columbian warfare. The families are middle-upper income, but the program purports to show a cross-section of American identities, incorporating previously under-represented demographics: immigrants, blended families and married gay couples. Like Shakespeare's histories, the program offers a window into the higher levels of society, providing the average viewer an escape from pressing financial troubles, but remaining socially pertinent because of its treatment of common family issues. The analogy is not perfect, but it does illustrate the degree to which supposedly "objective" cultural forms – one ostensibly representing historical "fact" and one representing journalistic "reality" – rely on common family concerns to provide a sense of a unified English or American community. Stock characters are essential to this process because their social roles are often primarily familial ones.

In each of the history plays I have discussed, family connections take precedence in the narratives because of the nature of English royal primogeniture, and because of the affective power of family tragedy. *King John*'s Bastard Faulconbridge is the heroic yet ultimately ineffectual prodigal son. In a romance

storyline similar to Sir Gareth's, he arrives at court as the unwittingly illegitimate son of Richard the Lionheart. Eleanor recognises him by his physical and verbal attributes: "He hath a trick of Coeur-de-Lion's face; / The accent of his tongue affecteth him" (1.1.85-86). The Bastard attempts to preserve the English "family" from the interference of external groups such as the Roman papacy and the Dauphin's armies. But, like Gareth, who dies the victim of Lancelot's hand, the Bastard expects a premature exit from the English court. Apostrophising to the dead King John, he proclaims, "I do but stay behind / To do the office for thee of revenge / And then my soul shall wait on thee to heaven" (5.7.70-72). For all his dramatic and supportive power in the rest of the play, the Bastard is an ephemeral, notably ahistorical, figure who cannot stop the divisive forces that have struck the kingdom.

Mistress Quickly is a wife working within the London economy, one who seems to remember everything Falstaff has told her, and who finally figures as a memorial record of English history, though it is a history which is different from "official" chronicle accounts. Her roles are often maternal: she looks after Doll when she is sick of a "calm" (*2 Henry IV* 2.4.36); she chastises the tavern quarrellers in *2 Henry IV* (2.4.201-4); and she cares for Falstaff on his death-bed, as described in *Henry V* (2.3). Her chastisements also call others to a "reckoning," as many mothers do to their children. Being a "poor widow of Eastcheap" (*2 Henry IV* 2.1.68), her memorial powers are similar to those of the widows in 4.4 *Richard III* who rehearse the deaths of their sons and curse their murderers. While Quickly's powers of recollection are frequently more comical than serious, her

dramatic function as a witness to time has a similar effect: to provide a female perspective on the recollection or "reckoning" of history.

Shakespeare introduces Cardinal Winchester as an interfering uncle, a man who manipulates the nepotistic culture of the English court to obtain his personal desires. Shakespeare's later complication of the character as a villain runs parallel to the play's complication of the existence of providential design within English history. As illustrated in the earlier two chapters, the seemingly recognisable stock character thwarts expectations by drawing attention to the insufficiency of narrative construction. Stories that recount history simply cannot account for all the variables and individual interests at play. Understanding history sometimes means disregarding "known" facts, even the possibility that God has predestined the future.

Isabel is a mother figure, like Mistress Quickly, but one who is frustrated by her inability to fulfil her roles properly. In the play she is never named – even Richard only calls her "Queen." Similar to unnamed Arthurian romance heroes, Isabel does not need to be particularlised. She is recognisable by virtue of her belief in inherent birthright, her support of her dispossessed husband and by her verbal and physical agency. Others fail to recognise her power in maintaining England's ties with France, thus continuing Henry V's legacy. Although the play does not suggest that chivalric tradition is monolithic and must be followed slavishly, Isabel's dismissal indicates their wider failure to acknowledge the atoning powers of this tradition.

These characters are all familiar, but their placement, or seeming displacement, into English history provides the genre with a social immediacy not

possible without them. The medieval social persons are likewise employed in various stock iterations of the Garcio, alewife, Corrupt Clergyman and romance heroine. These medieval stock characters often underpin didactic ideals about the centrality of the family within a Christian community, or support the idea of the Christian community *as* a large family. Though often didactic, these characters are not uncomplicated. Indeed, my intent has been to show that the tradition of stock characterisation is never simple, nor is it merely the deployment of mysteriously prefabricated archetypes into various works of literature and drama. Stock characterisation, whether medieval, early modern, or contemporary, is a literary process that incorporates figures which are traditional yet immediate, recognisable yet destabilising, protean yet enduring.

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