From the Editors

This volume is dedicated to James H. Forse

Quidditas is a Latin legal term that originally meant “the essential nature of a thing.” In fourteenth-century French the word became “quiddite.” In the early modern period, the English adaptation, “quiddity,” meant “logical subtleties” or “a captious nicety in argument” (OED), and is so used in Hamlet (“Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?” (Act V, scene 1, lines 95–97). Thus, the original Latin meaning, together with the later implied notions of intense scrutiny, systematic reasoning, and witty wordplay, is well suited as the title of the journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. Quidditas is hosted by Brigham Young University at http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra.

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Quidditas is the annual, online, open access journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. Its contents are eclectic. Quidditas accepts articles from all aspects of medieval and Renaissance and early modern disciplines: art, literature, history, music, philosophy, religion, languages, rhetoric, Islamic and New World cultures, global regions, comparative and interdisciplinary studies. Quidditas also accepts Notes for short articles pertaining to factual research, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other matters pertaining to research and teaching. The suggested length for articles is between 6,000 and 8,000 words (including footnotes) and up to 5,000 words for Notes (including footnotes). Quidditas additionally welcomes contributions to our In the Classroom section which seeks articles on teaching approaches and other aspects of pedagogy, and short reviews of individual textbooks and other published materials that instructors have found especially useful in teaching courses in medieval and early modern disciplines. Lastly, Quidditas accepts reviews of scholarly monographs for our Book Review section.

Articles in Quidditas are abstracted and indexed in MLA, Historical Abstracts, Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index, America: History and Life, EBSCOhost, Oxbridge Standard Periodical Directory, and Ex Libris have designated Quidditas as a peer-reviewed journal in its SFX Knowledgebase.

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Use *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed.). The author’s name must not appear within the text. All articles must include a short abstract (200 words maximum) before the main text, and a bibliography of works cited at the end. A cover sheet with the author’s name, address, telephone number, email address, and manuscript title must accompany submissions.

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In Memoriam

James H. Forse

This volume is dedicated to Professor James H. Forse who died at the age of 83 on April 24, 2023. He was a longtime member of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, and editor of Quidditas from 2003 to 2023.

Jim’s research and teaching focus was on Medieval and Renaissance Europe. He was the author of Art Imitates Business: Commercial and Political Influence in Elizabethan Theatre (Bowling Green State University Press, 1993), and published articles which have appeared in German History, The Journal of Medieval History, SRASP, Journal of Popular Culture, and Theatre Survey.

BOOK


ARTICLES

“Peers and Performers in the Reign of Henry VI,” Medieval English Theatre, 43 (2021), (British journal)
“Sapere videre” How a Spreadsheet Helps Knowing How to “See” Royal Power on Display in England’s Counties, 1277 to 1642, Quidditas, 40 (2019): 122-38
“Touring in Kent: Some Observations from Records Published to Date.” Early Theatre, 22 (2019).


“To Die or Not to Die, that is the Question: Borrowing and Adapting the King Lear Legend in the Anonymous The True Chronicle History of King Leir and Shakespeare’s King Lear.” Ben Jonson Journal, 21.1 (2014).


“Getting Your Name Out There: Traveling Acting Companies and Aristocratic Prestige in Tudor England.” Quidditas,


“Arden of Feversham and Romeo and Juliet: Two Elizabethan Ex-


“Romeo and Juliet: A Play for All Seasons, Or, How to Please a Patron, Pass the Censor, and Pack the Theatre.” *Selected Papers, Shakespeare and Renaissance Association of West Virginia*, 16 (1993).


Remembrances by colleagues and former students

I am unsure how long I knew Jim Forse. But, when I think of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, he is always there. I also don’t know how I first met him, but we saw each other regularly at the RMMRA conference meetings and would chat. I was honored when he first asked me to join him as Texts and Teaching Editor, then Assistant Editor, then co-Editor, of *Quidditas* and we had an easy camaraderie with a shared mission. I miss Jim’s emails and occasional phone calls. He made this job look easy—for which I’m quite perturbed! Jim was collegial and a warm mentor, who always had time for my pestering questions. Just as Paul Thomas mentored him, Jim mentored me and taught me the editorial ropes. I once asked him how someone who lived in what is clearly not the Rocky Mountain region ended up the editor of the RMMRA journal, he smiled and told me that when Paul asked and he thought about being able to go to conferences in places like Durango and Jackson, he was convinced.

One of the books Jim recommended to me many years ago was *Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey. This 1951 detective novel, in which a Scotland Yard Inspector investigates the alleged crimes of King Richard III of England, encapsulates Jim’s scholarly style in many ways, as he thought of himself as a historical detective of sorts. He thought of certain historical questions as a “case” to solve, probably why he has published at least 41 articles: there was always another problem to solve! Jim was an excellent scholar, a first-rate editor, and a better friend. I miss his gentle guidance and his warmth. It is to Jim that we dedicate this issue of *Quidditas*, which literally might not have survived without him!

*Dr. Ginger Smoak*

*Editor, Quidditas*

*RMMRA Past President*
The neat thing about being a scholar is that you stay around. Jim’s work is inspiring to (aspiring) scholars like myself, and I have a feeling that he will continue to exert that influence (perhaps even more so) now that he has gone to the next life. Although there’s certainly something to the idea that no one is happy who is still living, Jim did so much that still lives with us (and isn’t this the nature of history after all?) so that I sincerely believe that he had it both ways. He was a genuine scholar and editor who loved what he did happily, and the evidence of this argues strongly for his happiness in eternity.

Yet this is a bittersweet moment. As I reflect and write about Jim’s work with *Quidditas* and his many fine scholarly contributions, I’m saying goodbye to a mentor and a friend. I learned so much from him that I simply would not have discovered (or been “Forseted” to tackle) otherwise. He was also one of the few people who knew anything about Elko, a place he visited and enjoyed. He liked the desert, the “beautiful” canyon scenery, and one of the casinos (incidentally, the one that my mom and dad dealt at when I was a wee one). At the same time though, I’m now saying hello to readers of *Quidditas* as a new editor of the journal. I happily look forward to working with Ginger to carry on the excellent work Jim did with the journal over the years. I’m certain readers will agree that our first volume together is a great one.

*Steven Hrdlicka*

_Instructor of Humanities and English_

_Great Basin College, Elko NV_

A few buildings away from where I sit this sunny afternoon on the campus of Bowling Green State University, I met Jim Forse. I’m back at BGSU for a conference, and it seems fitting to be able to write a tribute to him in the place that served as his professional academic home and where our relationship as colleagues began. I chose BGSU for my Master’s degree almost 30 years ago, intending
to be a modernist. Jim changed all that, first with a class in medieval history that consistently made the rest of my other coursework a little less compelling and then with the introduction of a project that became my M.A. thesis. I spent two years talking with Jim about the Wars of the Roses and Richard III by day as his TA and about Elizabethan England and its relationship with Spain in the evenings for graduate coursework and my thesis. During my degree, I discovered what many other of his students and colleagues had already learned or would learn during his career: Jim was a generous mentor, always ready for a brainstorming session, always prepared with another source to consult that might offer a different perspective or the missing piece of information I’d been searching for, and always kind in criticism and effusive in praise.

Our devotion to the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association – mine acquired through Jim’s introduction and instruction – made our interactions a regular feature of my professional career for 20 years. I’m proud to say that I worked first as the Texts and Teaching Editor of *Quidditas* and then a co-editor for much of Jim’s tenure as the journal’s editor. He was a tireless promoter of the Association and its publication, and I have the many emails we sent over the years as evidence of his outstanding stewardship of the journal and his great pride in the scholarship *Quidditas* published. He worked hard to establish the journal as a highly regarded online presence in the field, and many graduate students and early career scholars benefited from the great care he showed in guiding their work through peer review and into print. The journal is one of the many legacies Jim leaves behind, and the RMMRA is stronger for his efforts and his dedication. Like others who knew and worked with Jim, I’ll miss his wit and his erudition. He was a fine scholar, an outstanding teacher, a supportive colleague, and an even better friend.

*Jennifer McNabb*

*Department Head and Professor of History*

*University of Northern Iowa*
It is no exaggeration to say that few if any in RMMRA have done more than Jim Forse for the Association, but to give a full accounting is virtually impossible because he did everything so quietly, generously, and expertly that we only caught glimpses of it. He accepted the post of editor in 2003 at a very difficult time for our journal and for the RMMRA. The journal had fallen behind, submissions were down, and its financial condition was considerably worse than precarious because of the escalating costs of copyediting, printing, and distribution. Further, the board had just voted to convert from a hard copy to an electronic journal. Jim nonetheless responded to President Paul Thomas’s recruitment efforts to become editor, and once he did, everything at our journal turned around like magic. Within a year or so he had brought the hard-copy journal up to date, created our electronic journal, and for the next twenty-one years he produced without fail annual electronic volumes including this year, when, with his health failing and long hospitalizations, he completed the current volume just before his untimely death.

In the early years of his tenure, he solved the distribution problem by sending an annual copy of the journal by CD to all members at his own expense. Later, he oversaw the digitization of the journal from its inception in 1980 that now permits scholars everywhere to access it at no cost from an electronic repository at Brigham Young University. The journal is also indexed in all standard sources and is a part of EBSCOhost Research Platform that annually returns several hundreds of dollars to the RMMRA. His creation recently of a spreadsheet with over 1000 email addresses and institutional affiliations for medieval and early modern scholars west of the Mississippi in the US and Canada is another mark of his unflaging dedication to our journal. For the last four years he has sent a PDF of the journal to the entire list. This year he also included the Call for Papers. As he said, “Whether or not it garners positive results, it at least gets our name out there.”
Jim’s contributions were not confined to the journal. As a scholar of medieval and early modern history and theater, he gave numerous papers at our annual conferences, won the West award for the best paper by a senior scholar, and probably could have won the same award more than once had he re-entered the competition. He was also a generous annual donor to the Association as only our treasurers know.

He will be remembered as a kind colleague and good friend dedicated to scholarship, to our journal, and to the Association.

Charles Smith
Professor Emeritus
Colorado State University

I first met Jim Forse twenty-five years ago in Big Sky, Montana when I attended my first RMMRA Executive Board meeting. He was very welcoming and immediately asked encouraging questions about my research and the paper I would be presenting. He was preparing to become editor of Quidditas and had innovative ideas for further developing the journal, eventually transitioning it to an online forum.

I found his own research on English Renaissance theater thoroughly researched, insightful and most importantly, interesting. While his publications were detailed, their engaging style drew in the reader. His conclusions provided a big picture approach to all of us in Renaissance studies, not just those concentrating on English literature and history. His articles and books include studies on traveling theatrical troupes, Thomas Heywood’s play Edward IV, Shakespeare and the London book trade and commercial and political influences in Elizabethan theater. He deservedly won the Delno West Award at least twice and I was fortunate to hear those prize-winning presentations in person.
While a faculty member at Bowling Green, Jim loved the West and particularly Las Vegas. He visited often and would call me and my husband to get together. While we shared passing remarks on the latest academic publications of note, our conversations were just as likely about the history of Las Vegas. He had multiple and varied interests, making him a fine conversationalist.

I considered Jim a friend as well as a mentor and I do miss him. His passing is a loss to Renaissance studies but his many substantive and generous contributions to the RMMRA will endure.

*Margaret Harp*

*Associate Professor; French Program Director*

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*
History and Directing Shakespeare

James H. Forse

In years past I have been asked, “where did you get that idea?”—from those who perused something I wrote concerning the history of Shakespearean theatre, and from those who saw Shakespearean plays I directed for my local community theatre. Sometimes the question was a compliment. Yet the question, I think, points to a sort of symbiosis that academic research and the practical dictates of directing a play can offer to anyone. For it’s truly hard for me to tell whether my research into theatre history has come to affect how I directed Shakespeare, or whether directing Shakespeare’s plays in a community theatre affected how I perceive early modern theatre history.

I began directing plays by Shakespeare before I began what I would call “serious” historical research into the theatre of his time. My first Shakespearean play was “The Scottish Play” (Macbeth), and I did the typical background research directors are wont to do—literary and dramatic criticisms, character analyses, research into the “historical” Scots King Macbeth and his times, and performance histories of the play. A couple of years later when I directed The Tempest I found that was not enough. Much of the conventional literature stressed the melancholy mood of the play as Shakespeare’s “farewell” to the stage, but a melancholy Tempest is not terribly funny; nor do most audiences know or care about Shakespeare’s “farewell” to the stage. When I discovered that the probable first staging of the play was part of royal marriage celebrations, I decided that maybe the melancholy motif comes from hindsight rather than auctorial or performance intent. That persuaded me the play might better be viewed and played as a meringue, or some other rich and elaborate dessert.

Meantime, I took advantage of my status as a tenured faculty member at Bowling Green State University to sit in on graduate classes offered by the Department of Theatre. Courses in acting and scene design, of course, were useful for my activities as a director, but the courses in theatre history began to raise questions that

1 Riverside, 1609.
2 Riverside, 1606.
later pushed me to pursue scholarly work. The first thing I noticed was that scholars who wrote most books on theatre history were those trained in literary criticism and analysis, not in history per se. It seemed to me, therefore, that many works on theatre history were somewhat subordinated to standards, or concerns, of literary criticism. For example, I found it peculiar that while older, standard discussions of Greek comedies categorized and characterized them as Old Comedy, Middle Comedy, and New Comedy, those categories, and correspondingly different characteristics, are based solely on 11 surviving comedies by Aristophanes (Old Comedy), on larger fragments from plays by Menander (New Comedy), and the barest scraps of plays written somewhat after the time of Aristophanes (Middle Comedy). And sometimes Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* is categorized as Middle Comedy.³ Much later I began to see assertions that the plays of Christopher Marlowe, and/or Ben Jonson were Shakespeare’s greatest rivals in popularity with Elizabethan audiences⁴ seemed based, for the most part, on their literary “quality.” Later, when I did a study of play script publications, that study suggested instead that Thomas Heywood (often dismissed as a “lightweight”) may well have been Shakespeare’s most serious rival among audiences of their time.⁵

Though at the time I directed *Tempest* I still had not yet been bitten by a desire to pursue theatre history as scholarly work, the community theatre environment in which I directed ultimately did later shape certain ways of looking at theatre-history. My theatre, Black Swamp Players, always has been a relatively poor theatre. If I had $300 or $400 to spend on a production I was lucky. Also, The Players always has been a kind of gypsy theatre that lacked a permanent home for performances. Both of those factors forced me as a director to think in terms of economical productions (i.e. costs need to be kept low enough to break-even), long-term utility for expenditures for costumes and properties (i.e. can these things be used several times again, and by other plays, casts and directors),


⁵ Forse, “Playwrights,” 27-38.
and relative minimalism in settings (i.e. what are the bare essentials needed to stage the play, and how portable are those essentials). Not surprisingly, when I began actual research into sixteenth-century theatre, these factors attracted me to documents like Henslowe’s *Diary* (the account book of the rival theatre and acting company of Shakespeare), and interested me in attempting to determine how much an Elizabethan production cost, what were a production’s probable returns, how much was invested in re-useable costumes and properties, how all that affected choice of plays and repertoires, and how could Elizabethan theatre businessmen keep costs down and profits up.

Because of that interest in money I’ve since been termed “the money man” by some early modern literary-trained historians—one review of my book (itself entitled *Art Imitates Business*) refers to my “consummately-commercial ideology.” Obviously the economics of staging Shakespeare for a community theatre pushed my research in a money-minded direction, and yes, has led me to believe that saving and making money were among the prime factors underlying almost all aspects of the theatre in Shakespeare’s time. Most recently I’ve discovered that the gypsy-like nature of my own theatre’s circumstances spurred my interest in research using the University of Toronto’s *Records of Early English Drama*. Those records not only yield information about traveling acting troupes, but also the rich, and often expensive pre-Reformation, local dramatic conditions in late medieval and early modern England.

I’ve also discovered that the community theatre setting may well approximate some of the constraints Shakespeare and his company faced. In community theatre generally one finds one’s cast comprised, at best, of six to eight very strong actors/actresses, and less experienced (or less talented) actors “underneath” as they say in the theatre world. Furthermore, except for the old “work-horse” musicals like *Music Man* or *Man of La Mancha*, one is not likely to have droves of potential actors available at auditions, or even willing

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6 Jaster, 498.
to be dragooned into the cast. In my case, over the years it became apparent that I had a “stable;” certain actors consistently showed up at auditions for Shakespearean plays. Hence I became accustomed to working with a small group of people able and willing to hold down the major roles in most any play by Shakespeare I directed. They too became used to working with each other, so much so that they could bail each other out when a slip in lines occurred, knew almost instinctively what probable vocal and physical reactions their fellow veterans might give, independently discussed and rehearsed scenes among themselves, and coached newer members of a cast in techniques and approaches which would best work them into the company. (We’ve all scattered over the years.)

I also discovered quickly that the versatility of individuals in my “stable” had limits. Bruce easily could play Macduff (Macbeth) or Prospero (Tempest) or Edmund (Lear) or Grumio (Shrew), but not easily Caliban (Tempest), the Fool (Lear) or Petruchio (Shrew). Kirk easily could play Petruchio (Shrew), or the Fool (Lear), or Father Capulet (R & J), but not easily Orsino (Twelfth Night), or Macbeth or Antipholus (Comedy of Errors). Craig easily could play Tranio (Shrew), or Edgar (Lear), or Hamlet, but not easily the Fool (Lear), or Trinculo (Tempest), or Claudius (Hamlet). Terry could play Pompey (Measure for Measure), or Horatio (Hamlet), or Friar Lawrence (R & J), but not easily Hamlet or Claudius (Hamlet), or Romeo. So it was not surprising to me to read that Shakespeare roles may have tailored roles for his partner Richard Burbage who could not sing, or for his partner Will Kempe who could dance a jig but not do subtle humor.

In short, before I read Bentley’s Profession of Dramatist concerning the functioning of the Elizabethan dramatist, and the functioning of the Elizabethan acting company, I already had experienced working within a situation somewhat similar to that which Bentley described. And problems in securing sufficient numbers of actors pushed me

7 Dramatist, 62-87.

8 Player, 12-112.
into the practice of doubling (and sometimes tripling) parts, which led to an interest in, and some disagreements with, scholarly articles that attempt to discuss the esthetics of that practice. For example, Kirk played Banquo and Young Siward in *Macbeth*, and later the Fool and Cornwall’s servant in *Lear*—which led him to quip that I was “determined to kill him off twice in every play.”

The first direct, concrete intersection between directing a Shakespearean play and scholarly, historical research began when I was scheduled to stage *The Taming of the Shrew*. I read the usual literature pertinent to production of that play, discovered and read with interest some of the newer feminist criticism, and made it a point to see the Stratford, Ont. production scheduled that year—one starring Len Cariou that received rave reviews and was later filmed for wide circulation. Despite all I had read, despite individual performances and scenes that were excellent at the Stratford performance, I found myself bored with the production about two-thirds way through the play. I thought that might be explained by a bad mood that day (I’m a chronic depressive), or by the fact that Shakespeare’s audience had different comedic tastes, but at any rate, since I was scheduled to direct a play that now seemed to bore me, I reckoned I’d better look into what is known about its staging and reception of *Shrew* during Shakespeare’s lifetime.

Serendipitously, that same year I also served on a dissertation committee for Ms Susan Wentworth, a doctoral candidate in theatre preparing a history of production/staging problems with *The Taming of the Shrew* about which actors and directors always complained. What came out of my own research and reviewing Ms Wentworth’s work surprised me. The play does not seem to have been popular in Shakespeare’s time like his *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. There is record of only one performance in his lifetime; it was never printed during his lifetime; it is not mentioned in the lists of his plays given by contemporary London theatre-goers, and the only other reference to its performance before the English Civil War is notice of a court
performance in 1633 before King Charles I. Shrew’s popularity seems to date to revivals of Shakespeare’s plays in the period of the Restoration of the monarchy, after the Oliver Cromwell’s government had shut down theatre for 20 years. And when revived, Shrew’s popularity was based not on the Shakespeare’s First Folio script but on Restoration adaptations like David Gerrick’s, which cut and pasted scenes and made the whole play into the so-called love affair between Kate and Petruchio (Gerrick even named the play as such).

Ms Wentworth’s study showed that complaints by actors, directors, and critics did not surface until 1844 (and then relatively quickly), when the actual First Folio script was used after a time-lapse of over 200 years. Wentworth’s examination of plot-books, reviews, directors’ and actors’ comments from 1844 to the late 20th century demonstrated that every time one loophole or inconsistency in the script was addressed by one or another staging convention or technique, other loopholes or inconsistencies surfaced. “Solving” one problem seemed to create new ones. In a conversation with Ms Wentworth I suggested that the First Folio script of Shrew contained a series of wonderful comedy skits for actors, but when combined together they did not result in a well-scripted play. There Ms Wentworth and I parted intellectual company. She was horrified that I suggested such a thing; I believed my conclusion explained the problems within the script.

That conclusion, and my own up-coming production of Shrew, set me to work examining what little we know of the circumstances of Shakespeare and his acting company at the time Shrew was first performed. One thing thrummed into the head of those of us trained in traditional historical studies is “when and where did such-and-such happen, and why then.” Research emphasizing those criteria led me to conclude that for years we had missed the point. It was not a play about male-female, love-hate relationships, about subjection, seduction, subordination, and so on. The “flaws” in Shrew reminded
of Mozart’s *A Musical Joke (Ein musikalischer Spass)*, where Mozart spoofed bad composers and inept musicians of his time. It seemed to me that *Shrew* might be a similar composition—a way for Shakespeare to parody the pompous acting style and sloppily written plays of his company’s rivals, particularly the Admiral’s Men. It may well have been meant as an in-joke for late sixteenth-century audiences familiar with London’s acting troupes—much like Moss Hart’s and George S. Kaufman’s *The Man Who Came to Dinner* was meant to amuse New York audiences in 1939 who were familiar with the Broadway theatre scene, and knew that.

So I staged it that way, with the twist that I made it also a self-parody of my own company—a modern, rinky-dink, community theatre. My one “adaptation” was to substitute the first “Mechanicals” scene from *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where Shakespeare himself scripted bad playwriting and bad actors, for the Christopher Sly Induction scene. That enabled me to introduce a group of modernized, amateur actors like Shakespeare’s Nick Bottom and Peter Quince—in my case a motorcycle-riding egotist who wanted to play everything became Petrucio, a director-manager who divided up the parts, played Baptista, while keeping an eye on the production when not on stage. The cyclist’s “riding buddy,” who tipped and hid bottles on stage where he sneaked drinks played Petrucio’s servant Grumio. Kate’s actress character was a bitchy community theatre actress who believes she is vastly more knowledgeable and talented than the rest of the cast. Lucentio’s actor-character was the amateur who gets stage fright. Hence, my actors had to perform layered roles—that is not only the role in *Shrew*, but the role of a caricature of a community theatre actor playing their respective. The “Green Room” back stage was visible to the audience, where actors off stage played cards, went over lines, read books, drank coffee (especially the actor playing Grumio who was force-fed coffee by the cast).

And with that approach, every single staging problem about which directors and critics had complained dissolved. My actors’ main challenge now became not how to make Shakespeare’s characters and the plots believable, but how to do a good job at portraying
realistic, but stereotyped, amateur actors doing bad acting. It was probably the most difficult acting my “stable” ever had attempted. For instance, my Petruchio worked hard (and succeeded) in gradually changing Patricia’s soliloquy “Have I not in my time heard lions roar?/ Have I not heard great ordnance in the field?” from the words of a boastful Petruchio into an egotistical actor losing control and becoming enthralled with the sound of his own voice. (Incidentally, those lines closely echo Tamburlaine’s soliloquy berating his sons [Tamburlaine, part 2, III] “Hast thou beheld a peal of ordnance strike/A ring of pikes, mingled with shot and horse?”). On the whole it worked. I knew that when the local newspaper reviewer remarked that the actor portraying Petruchio seemed to fall in love with the sound of his own voice. My staging certainly was the most difficult task I’d ever attempted. It included starting all scenes running smoothly, only to have them fall apart and the end. For example “Grumio” had tipped so much on stage and back stage (remember that was visible to the audience) that Petruchio and Kate had to physically move him off stage at the end of the “post-wedding” scene. The reviewer did realize that the scenes falling apart was intended, and remarked that the production was a very funny “parody” of Shakespeare. Those with little exposure to Shakespeare, or who professed to hate Shakespeare, raved about the production. So too, in the negative, did some of the “aficionados,” who accused me of not being “true” to Shakespeare (but some privately admitted they laughed themselves to tears). My retort was that I was being “truer” to Shakespeare than they knew, and to make the point, at least to myself, I wrote a paper (footnotes and all) to set forth arguments that my version really was what “traditionalists” call “doing it like Shakespeare did it.” With knocking knees I presented the paper at a Shakespeare conference before college professors of early modern literature, and discovered that they received my “reading” positively—suggesting ways to strengthen the argument further.

9 Shrew, I, 2.
10 Forse, Art, 114.
11 Shrew, III, 2.
12 Forse, Art, 101-19.
That was my first entrance into writing theatre history, and that got me started. What that view of the play seemed to suggest to me was that Shakespeare was interested in pleasing a mass, mixed-class audience (as opposed to an elite, sophisticated one) and making money. That led to other papers examining profit from the theatre, and profit’s impact on how the theatre was organized and functioned. Research for the *Shrew* paper continually had led to comparisons with the so-called Bad Quarto of *The Taming of A Shrew*, and the idea of unauthorized printings of plays. Since comparisons noted that the role of Christopher Sly, most likely Will Kemp’s role, was expanded, my experience with actor’s egos made me conclude that perhaps *The Taming of A Shrew* was the play as Kemp wished it, and that in turn led to a paper on Kemp as the probable source for most of the unauthorized printings of Shakespeare’s plays.\(^{13}\) That in turn led me to examine, and write about, how much money was at stake in the theatrical world of Shakespeare,\(^{14}\) how much Shakespeare himself may have earned, and what those earnings suggested in terms of Shakespeare’s view of his career (Forse *Art*, 49-70). At that point, for me at least, Shakespeare ceased to be the artist SHAKESPEARE (capital letters, trumpets, veneration, and all that) and instead began to look like a repertory actor who also wrote plays, much like figures from the now-defunct contract-system movie studio, or TV series like *Saturday Night Live*, *C. S. I.*, *Friends*, and so on.

Meantime, information I had absorbed from my historical research—on doubling, on certain roles written to fit certain specific actors, on Shakespeare creating situations and circumstances immediately understandable to the average sixteenth-century Londoner—began to affect the way I directed. Hence when I directed *Measure for Measure* I looked for some way to shape the play in a garb that would make easy identification of basic premises to an American audience. In its simplest terms the play is about cleaning up a town, “town-taming,” and what better way to make that point to Americans

\(^{13}\) Forse, *Art*, 121-38.

\(^{14}\) Forse, *Art*, 7-48.
than to set the play in the Old West with a diffident town marshal (the Duke) turning things over to the self-righteous “town-tamer” (Angelo, who was costumed in a black frock suit and carried a bull-whip coiled around his shoulder). When I came up short of actors to fill the roles, my historical investigations into doubling not only justified that practice, but solved yet another production problem.

My Eschalus was forced to drop out of the production, and there was no one available to cover the role. Bearing in mind Shakespeare’s practice of writing roles to fit a specific partner, I examined the script and discovered that substantial as the role was, it was not entirely necessary to successful resolution of the plot. Further, the lines themselves suggested the character Eschalus was a cross between the characters of Angelo and the Provost, and so that’s what happened to Eschalus’ lines—some went to Angelo, some to the Provost, and no one in the audiences, even a couple of Shakespeare aficionados, noticed that Eschalus was missing (or if they did, they didn’t find his absence disconcerting and never mentioned it).

By the same token, while doing Measure for Measure, I began to question a traditional preconception I’d accepted concerning casting of boys for female roles. During rehearsals, as I was listening to my intelligent, experienced, talented, female, 18 year old Isabella roll through one of her long speeches, but towards the end experiencing difficulties in sustaining volume and emotion, I said to myself: “that role wasn’t written for a pre-pubescent boy; it was written for an older male, perhaps even a partner.” Exploring that thought further I began to suspect: (1) depth and stamina, and perhaps sustained pleasantness of voice, would be beyond most pre-pubescent boy’s capabilities, and (2) the size of Isabella’s role, equal to any of the major supporting roles in the play, dictated against the good “business” of casting a boy-apprentice in such a role. One of the partners would be sloughing off. And so arose another article—to wit, that major female roles in Shakespeare’s repertoire, like perhaps Rosalind and Viola, and certainly Queen Margaret, the Nurse, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Cymbeline’s Queen, etc., were not written for boy-actors, but for a
member, or members, of Shakespeare’s partnership who specialized in female impersonation. After all, the age of Shakespeare’s heroines almost never is given. Among Shakespeare’s many plays, it is only Juliet whose young age virtually is hammered into the audience’s brains.

My graduate course work in theatre history stood me in good stead when I directed Comedy of Errors. A few years before, I had taken a seminar on Commedia del’Arte. Just as it was obvious that Commedia scenarii borrowed heavily from Plautus, most scholars observed so had Shakespeare for Comedy of Errors. That was in the back of my mind as I held auditions, and then the circumstances of directing in a small community theatre pushed Commedia to the forefront. More than usual, I had very, very few males audition for roles, but a more than usual number of females. I was forced by circumstance to do cross-gendered casting. Two young women of similar body-type stood out as potentials for the Dromio twins, and only one male was suitable for an Antipholus; but a young woman did have similar height, body shape, and timbre of voice. Staging the play as one done by a roving Commedia troupe seemed the solution. Remembering my readings on Commedia costuming, I set costumers to work on grotesque masks for most male characters (especially the two sets of twins), and on exaggerated and elaborately decorated codpieces. By that time the company had built up a fair stock of sixteenth-century costumes, with voluminous doublets that disguised shape, so between the masks and the over-sized codpieces (which embarrassed my male actors but my female actors seemed delighted to wear) the use of females “in drag” solved my inequities in male to female actors.

A similar crisscrossing of a director’s and an historian’s ideas arose when I directed Romeo and Juliet. Research into life in Shakespeare’s London, particularly objections to the theatre by city-fathers and moralists, made it clear that when he wrote the play in the mid-1590s London was a turbulent city. There were fears of disturbances

15 Forse, Art, 71-100.
of the peace, apprentice riots (or at least demonstrations), retainers of rival lords of the Privy Council sometimes brawled in the streets, and the city lacked institutions for law enforcement or riot control.\textsuperscript{16} It seemed obvious to me that the first scene of \textit{Romeo and Juliet} may have been set in Verona, but the circumstances would have resonated to Shakespeare’s audience that this Verona was “our town.” That suggested to me that an American audience could easily relate to the play if staged like Thornton Wilder’s \textit{Our Town}, but to make the family feud motif work best for Americans it needed to be \textit{Our Town} in Appalachia with two families who happened to be named Capulet and Montagu instead of Hatfield and McCoy.

During rehearsals that notion of Shakespeare’s \textit{Our Town} led me to investigate what else was going on in Shakespeare’s \textit{Our Town} (i.e. London, c. 1595), especially what may have induced him (remember the historian’s obsession with “why then”) to write that particular play at that particular time. Examining his source, Brooke’s \textit{Romeus and Juliet}, did not seem to answer that question until, researching another matter, I ran across references to the problems of the Danvers brothers in 1595-96, and how those problems involved, and embarrassed their patron the Earl of Southampton, who also probably was Shakespeare’s patron. From that I began to examine just how Shakespeare’s deviations from Brooke’s tale seemed to parallel episodes in the Danvers’ tale, for instance the way Tibault (Capulet) is killed by Romeo (Montegu) in \textit{R & J} is suspiciously like the way the Danvers brothers killed the member of another family with which their family had a long-standing feud, and though the Earl was not a female, his legal guardian was trying to force him into a marriage he did not want, and, in secret, the Earl secretly married someone else. Ultimately, much later, that line of research resulted in a paper on \textit{Romeo and Juliet} and the Earl of Southampton.

During rehearsals for \textit{R & J}, my actors, again, presented me with yet another facet to explore. Over and over again they expressed

\textsuperscript{16} Forse, \textit{Art}, 18.
consternation with how to make certain lines and scenes serious enough for a tragedy. It happened enough times that the old saw of “comic relief” for a tragedy began to ring hollow, and culminated at a rehearsal when Father Capulet, and Mother Capulet, and the Nurse, and Friar Lawrence, and Juliet all demanded that I help them keep straight faces while the Capulet household gave alternating bombastic lamentations over Juliet’s comatose body. At that point we all began to speculate that perhaps much of this play was meant to be funny, and when I examined the history of criticism, I discovered that it fell into the same mold as that of Shrew; from the end of the seventeenth century everybody assumed that the play was an attempt at classical tragedy, and that the seeming anomaly that 96% of the play comprised comic material was simply because Shakespeare was “learning” how to write tragedy. Out of all that came another article, comparing the large amount of comedic material in Romeo and Juliet to that of Arden of Feversham, and attempting to place both plays within the historical circumstances of their first performances, and the possible influences that time-frame, especially the desire to “sell” the production to citizen theatre-goers, may have exerted on the composition of the plays.

At the same time I incorporated drama into my teaching. Though personally I think Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar is a “snorer,” I did direct my freshman, World Civilization students to the small scene in which Anthony, Octavian, and Lepidus trade off names of those to kill. That scene captures the brutality of the Roman civil wars better than anything I know. I’ve also presented Jean Anouilh’s The Lark (L’alouette) in classes as the best interpretation of Joan of Arc in existence, because Anouilh rightly concludes, and convincingly demonstrates, that no matter what historians write, we can’t “understand” or “know” Joan of Arc; she’s become an icon or a legend; she’s beyond a real person. And I developed courses at the undergraduate level for the History Department, and at the graduate

17 Forse, “Arden.”
18 Caesar, IV, 1.
level for the Theatre Department, that I called “Shakespeare’s England.” I used Tudor era plays to examine the changing nature of the theatre from the early 16th to the early 17th century, and also use the history of theatre as a lens into the social and political issues of Shakespeare’s time.

I’ve not directed a Shakespearean play (or any play) for some years now. One reason is that I grew tired of my company’s gypsy existence (and the theatre never brought me those things people think it does—fame, wealth, sex). But equally important, I found my interests had shifted so strongly towards theatre history that I began thinking of only directing plays that would further my historical research. But it was those experiences in directing Shakespeare that strongly affected my “scholarly” endeavors, and, in turn that “scholarly” work redounded on my experiences in directing. Whether or not you agree or disagree with my descriptions of my staging and my research, let me still suggest that all of us who are fascinated with the theatre of Shakespeare’s age should attempt to become more actively involved in actually putting those plays on the stage. That experience may be the best way to test the plausibility of our scholarly hypotheses and to develop new ones.

**Bibliography**


**Obituary: Newcomer Funeral Home, Toledo**

James H. Forse, age 83, of Sylvania, OH, passed away peacefully Monday, April 24, 2023 at home with loving family by his side. He was born on January 26, 1940 to Leonard and Esther Forse in Binghamton, New York. James graduated from State University of New York at Albany with his Bachelors of Arts Degree and then obtained his Ph.D in History in 1967 from the University of Illinois. He taught for 44 years at Bowling Green State University, retiring in 2010. James was an accomplished book author of numerous articles in medieval history and Elizabethan Theatre. He was a mentor to many students, and an editor to the Rocky Mountain Medieval & Renaissance Journal for 19 years.

James made it a point to have strong bonds and connections not only with students but with his family. He adopted a family from church, and also made it a point to send monthly letters to his children and grandchildren for many years. He was a man of few words, but writer of thousands of meaningful ones. Something they will always cherish.

Left to cherish James’ memory are his loving wife of 61 years, Marilee “Lee” Forse; children, Catherine (John) Swope, Constance (Kenneth Jr.) Hicks and James (Becky) Forse; grandchildren, Zachariah (Meg), Savannah (Mike) Jeremiah, Autumn, Alexandra, Olivia, Victoria, Molly, Jackson, and Madelyn; great-grandchildren, Juniper and Micah; and many colleagues and dear friends. He was preceded in death by his parents.
A Miracle Through an Ymage: Gautier de Coinci’s Retouched Legend of Theophile

Isabella Williams
University of Utah

This article examines the use of the Old French word “ymage” in Gautier de Coinci’s early thirteenth-century Legend of Theophile. Gautier is the first author to write a version of the legend that includes an ymage, designating a material representation of the Virgin. Far from a subtle insertion, he mentions the term ten times, during every pivotal moment of the story, when terrestrial and celestial spheres collide. Critics acknowledge the centrality of Gautier in representing this revolutionary French period, during which time attitudes concerning ritualistic images were in a state of flux; yet, Gautier’s repetitive and groundbreaking use of the word ymage in this legend has not been fully explored. In both a diachronic and synchronic analysis, I demonstrate how this author represents a changing cultural context by evolving a popular legend with the incorporation of a mere detail, but one that transforms a key Christian ritual: prayer. His ymage, a material object, thrusts the entire momentum of the legend in a new direction, because the relationship between Heaven and Earth moves from inward communication to outward adoration of an ymage.

An image plays a central role in Gautier de Coinci’s thirteenth-century Legend of Theophile: this visible material object, a statue of the Virgin Mary, wields the power to reveal the invisible divine realm. Within the tapestry of Christian worship, where materiality prevails, the presence of an image may initially seem unremarkable. However, Gautier’s introduction of an image with a performative role entirely breaks from the established written tradition of the legend. None of the other early authors invoke the word “image” even once, whereas Gautier employs the word ten times. Though this may seem like a superficial lexical embellishment, its recurrence at every pivotal juncture along the protagonist’s journey makes it notable. An image is mentioned when Theophile first veers towards the Devil, and it reappears as he reorients himself towards the path of God, through his prayers to the Virgin. The Virgin herself invokes the image repeatedly in her dialogues with Theophile, and it assumes a dominant role in the climactic scene: Theophile’s death and the sub-
sequent ascent of his soul to Heaven. Remarkably, in the moments of communication between the human and the divine, it is only “images” that bear witness to these encounters—be it the animated statue of the Virgin, or the initiation of Theophile’s inner image, his imago. For Gautier, could the presence of these images be the harmonizing force between these two distinct spheres—the corporeal and the spiritual? In the course of this argument, I will propose that Gautier de Coinci modernizes a well-established story to highlight that the miracle it chronicles materialized not solely through Theophile’s broader acts of penitence, his introspective contemplation or the intervention of the Virgin, but also through the presence of these images.

Even though critics already acknowledge the centrality of Gautier de Coinci in representing this revolutionary period, his repetitive and revealing emphasis on the Old French word “ymage” in the Legend of Theophile has not been fully explored. Originating from the Latin imago and imaginem, ymage appears in the vernacular from about the twelfth-century and increases in prevalence parallelly to Gautier’s writing of his Miracles of the Virgin, in which resides the Legend of Theophile. I will use ymage throughout this paper when specifically talking about Gautier, or about this precise term. I will use image when generally denoting artistic representations and material objects and their history and presence within the Middle Ages. I put forward the Gautier legend as unique evidence of the shifting status of the ymage for two reasons. One, his fixation with, and repetition of, the word furnishes us with a case study of the complex term within one text. Two, because he follows a long line of authors of the legend, Gautier’s version can be compared with those before him. This comparison sheds light on how this single word can dramatically alter the presentation of the relationship between Earth and Heaven, anchoring it around a tangible, material object.

Images were central to the theological shift during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which beliefs behind ecclesiastical rituals, spiritual communication and the process of vision increasingly re-centered around material objects.1 Given that Gautier writes his

1 As discussed in greater detail below, see Camille, The Gothic Idol, Santerre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” and Baschet, L’Iconographie médiévale.
Miracles surrounded by this cultural evolution, it is first essential to situate this analysis, on his treatment of the word “ymage” in the Legend of Theophile, within the broader discussions on images during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

First, quite simply, what is an ymage? A. Tobler and E. Lommatzsch, Michael Camille and Jean-Marie Sansterre are among some notable authors who propose a tangible definition. The Tobler-Lommatzsch dictionary succinctly illuminates the wide-ranging physical possibilities, from artistic representations, such as figures, portraits, paintings and sculptures, to the more abstract manifestations of visions, apparitions, reflections and mirrors. Its limitless multiplicity is thus the key characteristic; an ymage can traverse the borders between concrete and abstract. Indeed, in Gautier’s Legend of Theophile, the word ymage seems to refer to a physical statue of the Virgin, but one that has the potential to animate. Camille separates this ymage from ordinary cult objects precisely because “it had miraculous powers and performed, breaking out of the ornamental and ritual encasement that kept it separate from the onlooker.” Rather than the object itself being supernatural, it acts as the earthly receptacle for divine powers. Sansterre elaborates on the ability of the Virgin’s, or indeed other celestial beings’, prototype to temporarily enter the material boundaries of an ymage, provisionally modifying its nature and animating its appearance.

While a heavenly power does not continuously

2 A. Tobler and E. Lommatzsch, Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, 1339-42.

3 Gautier’s ymage most likely signifies a statue of the Virgin, as demonstrated by the illuminated manuscript Besançon; see Root, The Legend of Theophile, Chapter 3, “The Intervention of the Virgin,” 105-163. I will use either statue or ymage to specifically name this object when referring to Gautier’s text.


5 Sansterre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 168-69. Sansterre analyzes effigies of the Virgin from the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth-century, examining contemporary beliefs towards the prototype and the image. The term “prototype” refers to the original form or being. Jerry Root elaborates on the Virgin’s identity as prototype in relation to her earthly ymages: “The legend (of Theophile) fuses his quest for his imago with the Virgin’s own capacity to incarnate herself as “ymage,” representation, alongside her identity as imago, image of God, and her identity as a prototype capable of infusing and informing her earthly manifestation” (105).
inform its representation, an *ymage* always holds this possibility for the human worshipper: the potential to transform and become a spiritual, communicative bridge. Thus, the adoration of a material *ymage* means to revere its animation potential, to worship the real divine being who may reside there at any time. This careful clarification separates the justified place of images within the church from idolatry practices; a distinction between simple material representation and earthly receptacle for a divine power may seem slight to modern readers, but it was crucial in maintaining worship towards the real being instead of human-crafted similitudes. The general consensus on the definition of an *ymage* helps situate this investigation into the specific employment of the term within the *Legend of Theophile*.

There has equally been much discussion on the role of the *ymage*: why did its presence become increasingly predominant during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? The changing status of images in the theory of vision, as well as in ritualistic practice, primarily explains its new significance. Cynthia Hahn broadly describes the development in the religious practice of seeing as passing from a “glance” to a “gaze.” From the thirteenth-century onwards, the belief in how sight entered the brain changed from instant, surprising and temporary strikes to a progressively interactive process, augmenting the responsibilities of both the viewer and object. This “gaze” requires that “the informed and disciplined eye lingers on the image and allows its visible details to arouse feeling” and that “a receptive and active soul cleansed and trained, constructed in solitary contemplation” approaches an image in order to reach a spiritual and intellectual vision. Camille expands on this development by comparing early and later ways of seeing in the Middle Ages as the gradual swing from the extramission to the intromission theories; “in earlier medieval image making and in the extramission theory of

6 See Russakoff, “Imaging the Miraculous,” 15-17, and Faur, “The Biblical Idea of Idolatry,” 10-15. For Baschet, images were not worshipped as an “object” but as a “sign” for what (or who) they represented (L’Iconographie médiévale, 44).

7 Other authors have also discussed this question; Root, *The Legend of Theophile*, details its physical possibilities and meanings (117). Avilés, “Imágenes vivientes,” further explores its dual nature, as the material *ymages* of the Virgin, principally as busts or statues, often appear parallelly to her *ymage* as an apparition (331-33).

8 Hahn, “Visio Dei,” 183; 169.
their apperception, the notion of likeness (similitude) was not strong because the object was always to some extent produced by the gaze. But the intromission model took the emphasis away from vision and onto the power of images themselves, whose eyes, as in cult statues and devotional images, could stare back.”

9 This duality in the source of the vision increases its potential and strength. For Jérôme Baschet, an image becomes a *transitus* (passage), or the tool that inspires sight to transcend the visible world to the invisible. These are not ordinary images, but ones that hold an intimate relationship with a saintly figure, whose prototype can both inhabit and desert it, initiating and removing the higher plane of sight. 10 This brief contextualization of the evolving concepts behind the production of vision designates a new importance to objects, elucidating why images were increasingly incorporated in written and visual works, and how their role interacted with the larger legend, story or message.

Caroline Walker Bynum cautions against the dangers of exclusively attributing the importance of images to their role in facilitating vision and visual transcendence. In doing so, she contends, we overlook their fundamental state, their materiality. During the Middle Ages, the concept of materiality, *matter*, was far from inanimate and lifeless; it was vibrant and living. It served as “the locus of change,” the very creation of God through which He could act. As Bynum remarks, “in their insistent materiality, images do more than comment on, refer to, provide signs of, or gesture toward the divine. They lift matter toward God and reveal God through matter.”

11 In fact, devotional objects from the Middle Ages celebrated rather than concealed their matter, emphasizing the materials that made them over mere mimetic likeness. 12 Their material nature infused them with power and imbued them with devotional significance, given that “the distinction between materiality and spirituality was, in itself, porous.”

When initiating a

9 Camille, “Before the Gaze,” 207.


12 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 20-21 & 41. An early version of object veneration can be seen with relics. As extensions of the saints themselves, medieval attitudes towards relics differed from those towards human-crafted images.
devotional ritual with an image, the worshipper’s senses first engaged with the tangible presence before them, awakening and stimulating the senses. Subsequently, this interaction would lead them towards internal contemplation and spiritual imagery.

Medieval objects were porous loci between material and divine, inherent in their very existence as matter, and such understanding of objects persisted, more or less, throughout the medieval period. For the purpose of a discussion around a corpus of the *Legend of Theophile*, it is important to recognize that other changes likely occurred around the thirteenth-century. Gautier de Coinci, in the early 1200s, introduced a material object to the tradition of story. This raises the question: why did this shift occur at this particular time? While delving into a comprehensive historical examination of various images and their evolving significance in medieval Christianity runs the risk of diverting our focus from Gautier de Coinci, it’s essential to briefly acknowledge some theological transformations that occurred across multiple disciplines, as previously discussed in the context of visual practice. This broader perspective helps to conceptualize the contemporary circumstances that enabled this author to integrate an image into a church ritual.

There was an inherent paradox within the medieval theology of images. It would be impossible to point to one or two figures and declare that is when images and their animation became acceptable in the church. Some scholars may consider Gregory the Great, who advocated for images as visual aids to guide supplicants toward divine vision, communication or clarity, as laying the foundation for their acceptance. However, divisive debate followed, and it wasn’t until thirteenth-century when authoritative theologians came to some consensus, legitimizing the use of images in Western Christianity. For instance, Thomas Aquinas played a pivotal role in their endorsement, as tools to stimulate the senses in the pursuit of transcendent sight and communication. Nonetheless,


15 Justification for ritualistic images appeared in theological discussion in the sixth-century. However, this was strongly denied over the next few centuries. Freedburg, *The Power of Images*, presents a detailed doctrinal history of images within the church, establishing that a more-or-less agreement over their use didn’t arrive until the thirteenth-
Bynum maintains that “theorists, church authorities, spiritual advisors, and the ordinary faithful were all ambivalent about exactly the materiality they utilized and venerated.”

Gautier positioned himself within this ongoing discussion, drawing upon prevailing ideas of the time, that images possessed power, rooted in the divinity of their matter and their visual function as signs.

Mariology was equally in the throes of development and transformation during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. This religious theory directly coincides with that of animated images, since during this period, they most popularly depicted the Virgin Mary, as exemplified by Gautier’s statue. The question arises: why did Gautier, and many others, prioritize the animation of Marian images? Most scholars connect the two themes through the Assumption and Incarnation theories. Robert Maniura differentiates the cult of Mary from that of saints generally by highlighting the absence of her body under the Assumption theory. This absence complicated the implementation of relic worship, since there were no bodily remains. It remains intriguing that Mary, who left no physical remnants, emerged as one of the primary symbols for the connection between Earth and Heaven. Incarnation theology helps to breakdown the paradox. During the Incarnation, “Jesus made flesh” becomes conceivable thanks to the century under influential writings from those like Saint Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas (162-6). Sansterre also chronicles the western European history of animated images in texts (“Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 163-66).


17 A full response to this question would intersect various academic disciplines, including Mariology, the significance of the body, gender studies and material studies and is beyond the scope of this paper. See, Freedburg, *The Power of Images*, 299, Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 300, Sansterre, “Vivantes ou comme vivantes,” 167, and Russakoff, “Imaging the Miraculous,” 10.

18 Maniura, “Persuading the Absent Saint,” 263.

19 Warner establishes that the Marian cult had long used images but “there were no tangible relics of her person for early Christians to venerate” (*Alone of All Her Sex*, 296-7 & 300). Gertsman notes the contradiction in “Marian statuary coming to life” when her “living body has no wondrously transforming signifier on earth to begin with” (*Worlds Within*, 105).
mother who bestowed her son with flesh and humanity.\textsuperscript{20} Through Mary’s very body, the divine became accessible. As such, the veneration of Marian material representations celebrated her corporality and aimed to initiate a similar type of inter-realm communication. In an extension of the Incarnation, Mary assumes the role of \textit{media-trix}, uniquely positioned as an intercessor between humankind and Christ due to her maternal status.\textsuperscript{21}

The context presented thus far establishes the framework for comprehending Gautier’s lexical contribution to the \textit{Legend of Theophile}, scaffolding his writing in a dynamic theological evolution of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, an evolution driven by visionary theories, medieval attitudes toward living matter, the endorsement of ecclesiastical images by influential Christian theologians and the remarkable proliferation of images within the sphere of Mariology. One additional noteworthy aspect is the explicit appearance of the word “\textit{ymage}” in the corpus of medieval literary works. The introduction of this word in vernacular, Old French, texts seems to align with the theoretical evolution during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as it did not widely emerge before this period. A quick search in the Anglo-Norman dictionary primarily yields results from these centuries. This coincides with the surge in animated imagery and the expanded use of devotional icons, as discussed earlier in Bynum’s study.\textsuperscript{22} The corpus of the \textit{Legend of Theophile} itself offers valuable evidence of the chronological progression toward the adoption of this term, seeing that no author prior Gautier employs the word “\textit{ymage}.”

In fact, Gautier de Coinci is one of the central early authors in dem-

\textsuperscript{20} Loth and Michel, “Incarnation,” 1145. In \textit{Fragmentation and Redemption}, Bynum establishes the importance of Mary’s body in Incarnation (210).

\textsuperscript{21} Warner centers the Virgin’s “wonder-working” intercession on the mother-son relationship (291-92). In “The Persuasive Power,” Ryan says, “the role of Mary in the late medieval period is clearly that of Advocate who pleads for mercy on behalf of humanity,” (66).

onstrating the arrival of the word in vernacular texts. Marie-Laure Savoye meticulously compares the prevalence and the treatment of the word ymage across Gautier’s larger body of work, the Miracles of Nostre Dame, with the slightly earlier collection of Le Gracial by Williams Adgar. Savoye finds that, across Adgar’s whole collection, the noun only appears six times, and when it enters the text, it normally has to be accompanied by the religious place to which it belongs, or specified with ‘de...(person)’ in order to further explain its position and purpose in the story. It is a sporadic addition, and the syntax considers the ymage of the Virgin as a rare and unique object. Whereas, some fifty to sixty years later, Gautier frequently uses the term across his miracles to an extent that “devant l’ymage Nostre Dame” becomes a metric rhythm. Jerry Root and Anna Russakoff equally highlight the word in Gautier’s work, as well as acknowledge his general predisposition to a multitude of terms denoting the ritualistic and visual role of material items. The research establishes Gautier as a forebearer in written preoccupation with images and as an important participant in the new cultural context of the thirteenth-century.

This research leads to crucial questions regarding Gautier’s work: Does his portrayal of the ymage align with the theological currents underpinning emerging visionary practices, ecclesiastical rituals and Marian devotion? How does his departure from the lexical conventions employed by previous authors of the same legend impact the broader message of Theophile’s contrition and absolution? Does Gautier stand as an anomaly, or do his contemporaries echo his in-

23 Savoye, “De fleurs,” 71-8, studies the importance of the term given to a statue or an icon.


26 Savoye, “De fleurs,” 74.

27 Russakoff, “Imaging the miraculous,” 15, 40, and Root, The Legend of Theophilus, 159. Russakoff says: “The term most commonly used in Gautier de Coinci’s text to refer to panel paintings, altar pieces, sculptures, and other physical representations of the Virgin, as well as to dreams and visions, is the Old French ymage;” she also discusses other terms that he uses: tavlete, ymage, ycone and ymage. Root demonstrates the widespread interest of Gautier in terms similar to an ymage: tavlete, iconye, mariole and imagete.
sistence of the *y*mage as a vehicle for transitus?

In constructing a comparative analysis, I put five versions of the *Legend of Theophile* in dialogue with each other, from Paul the Deacon (9th century), Fulbert (1025), William of Malmesbury (1130), William Adgar (c.a. 1170-90) and Gautier de Coinci (1220-35), revealing that, whereas the first four authors never mention an *y*mage, or indeed any significant material object, Gautier incorporates the word ten times. He primarily includes it in two pre-existing events: the first and last prayer to the Virgin, or, the moments of penitence and atonement. For his final inclusions, he creates two original quotes from two different characters. Just as Elina Gertsman uses the Shrine Madonna as a *punctum*: “a wound, a point of entry into the late medieval visual culture,”28 I propose that the word *y*mage in Gautier’s text becomes a gateway into thirteenth-century image culture. As one of the earliest Western authors to place such textual emphasis on a material, devotional and animated image, he exemplifies a contemporary evolution, as his Theophile initiates divine contact through devotion centered on an exterior, human-crafted statue, rather than simply his own interior dedication. The repetition of the position of this object draws the whole penitential process and dialogues with the Virgin outwards, more tangible to reader of the legend.

**A Comparative Analysis: Theophile’s Prayers**

Gautier de Coinci inserts the word *y*mage in two moments that appear consistently across all versions of the *Legend of Theophile*: his two prayers to the Virgin, during his penitential rituals and before his death. These instants are striking as side-by-side comparisons between the older legends and Gautier’s text, as they are otherwise exactly the same. Gautier has simply added one extra lexical element, but one that unlocks multiple implications.

Theophile’s penitence is remarkably consistent amongst all four pre-thirteenth-century legends, from Paul, Fulbert, Malmesbury and

Adgar. William of Adgar pens the earliest vernacular rendition. As the most concise and chronologically the closest to the central text under discussion, Gautier’s, his text serves as an optimal reference point for comparing the pre-1200 Legend of Theophile corpus to Gautier’s version. Adgar states:

El temple Nostre Dame ala/ E humblement s’agenuilla,/ Requist de ses mesfaiz pardun;/ Urat od grant devotian./ Jor e nuit sanz definement/ Urat a la dame humblement.\(^{29}\) [He went into the Chapelle of Our Lady and humbly knelt. He asked to be pardoned of his crimes. He prayed devotedly. Day and night, without stop, he humbly prayed to Our Lady.]

Adgar summarizes the physical and emotional attributes to a successful prayer. He explicitly twice mentions “urat” (pray), and the word “s’agenuilla” (knelt) provides the mental imagery of this position. Furthermore, he emphasizes the internal prayer conditions. One, to do so with great intent, purpose, and passion, or “od grant devotion.” Two, to “humblement” lower one’s own importance to the divine being. Three, to demonstrate commitment, praying “jor e nuit,” neglecting the corporal body’s needs in favor of the soul’s quest for salvation. Thus, the image of a man in prayer is both directly described three times, and three necessary characteristics for it are given; within a few sentences, Adgar has underlined the importance of a prayer in at least six different manners.

While Adgar’s linguistic imagery might strike with particular impact, in truth, he merely echoes the contemporary literature concerning the stages of penitence, imagery that resounds throughout the versions of the legend from Paul,\(^{30}\) Fulbert\(^{31}\) and Malmesbury.\(^{32}\) In his quest for redemption, Theophile embarks upon a meticulously crafted series: enter the church, prostrate, pray, pray some more,

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29 Adgar, “Miracle 26,” v. 493-98; translation mine.


demonstrate corporal punishment through vigil, fasting or another form of self-infliction. The text swiftly moves through each action, lending the impression that Theophile conscientiously checks off some prescribed list that a sinner must follow. Indeed, Andrea Hopkins confirms that penance was a highly ritualized practice during the Middle Ages. Medieval confessional manuals were abundant, offering systematic instruction that emphasized private and introspective prayer.33 For Eric Palazzo, each interior action was carefully designed to engage the five senses, empathetically mirroring Christ’s crucifixion.34 Under each author, Theophile’s penitence demonstrates Palazzo’s successful prayer. Cries, fasting, vigils, each deliberate penitential step, heighten the sensory experience, drawing Theophile’s entire being into the process and goal of his prayer. However, a significant distinction between the pre-1200 corpus, as represented by Adgar, and Gautier’s portrayal of penitence is the balance between inner contemplation and a more externally-focused prayer. None of the earlier authors describe Theophile as praying ‘to’ or looking ‘at’ a thing, an item belonging to the material world. This drastically changes under Gautier de Coinci’s early thirteenth-century legend, where prayer as a form of inner contemplation significantly diminishes.

Gautier has Theophile say:

A son saint temple m’en irai,/ Toute ma vie i gemirai./ Et nuit et jor entier
corage/ Li prierai **devant s’ymage**/ En souspirant a nus genouz/ Qu’a
son chier fil, qui tant est douz,/ Me face ma pais et m’acorde.35 [I will
go to her holy temple and there I will moan for the rest my life. Night
and day, with all my heart, I will pray before her statue, sighing on bare
knees, that she reconcile me and bring me to peace with her dear son.]


34  Palazzo, *Peindre c’est prier*, 13. In “La Culture de l’imago,” Schmitt also insists upon
the gravity in worshipping the material representation in order to reach the prototype, be-
cause they became inextricably linked to the spiritual being that they represented, and they
became important in stimulating the interior mind of the devotee (8, 20).

35  Gautier de Coinci, *The Legend of Theophilus by Gautier de Coinci*, v. 847-53; emphasis
mine.
Under Gautier, prayer, which was previously an internal, subjective action taking place within the supplicant’s own mind, is transformed into a tangible outward act with a specific external focus. In the phrase, “I will pray before her statue,” he could have easily ended it with “li priérai,” I will pray, as seen under the earlier authors. Yet, the seemingly superfluous “devant s’ymage” alters the meaning of the phrase, because it suggests that he focuses his action on the statue, the Old French *ymage*, itself. The imagery of Theophile kneeling before it creates the impression that he directs his communication towards the *ymage*. The statue becomes the physical destination on Earth, rendering the monumental task of contacting the spiritual domain more attainable and visible.\(^{36}\)

Whilst this lexical addition intrigues in its originality, Savoye proposes that the presence of a statue of the Virgin within the church would have been a given,\(^ {37}\) hence the lack of specificity with this detail in the texts of Paul, Fulbert, Malmesbury and Adgar. However, whilst this could be a legitimate explanation for a shortened genre of writing, like Fulbert’s sermon, where the whole legend is condensed to a page, it seems unlikely that the other, more detail-orientated authors would leave out not just the specific word *ymage* from their longer texts, but also any clue that such an item was in the church. For example, Adgar dedicates 22 verses to describe comprehensively Theophile’s first prayer to the Virgin (v. 491-513). If the statue was so essential to the author in initiating contact with her at this point, one would expect there to be some indication of that, especially since the other characteristics of prayer (fasting, on the knees, in the church, etc.) were equally, if not more so, a given for contemporary readers. The transformation from a widespread lack of an *ymage* amongst these initial writers, to the sudden preponderance

\(^{36}\) The choice of words is important in its nuance; Gautier doesn’t say he prays “to” the statue but rather “before” it. The former preposition would suggest a worship of an *ymage*. Instead, “devant” simply specifies the place of the prayer. The *ymage* becomes the precise location to carry out the ritual, and the overarching presence that he likely contemplates as mental imagery, enhancing and sustaining Theophile’s concentration on the Virgin herself.

\(^{37}\) Savoye, “De fleurs,” 74.
of the term and its encompassing ideas in Gautier’s writing, rather suggests that something drastic has changed contextually to allow this to happen.

Within Gautier’s version of the legend, the Virgin herself validates Theophile’s employment of her material copy in his prayer:

Mais tante larme en as ploree/ Et m’ymage as tant aoree/ Que toz li cuers de toi m’apite./ Por ce que tant par est parfite/ Et tant vraie ta repentance/ Et qu’en moi as tele fiance./ A mon douz fil ta pais querrai.”

[But you have cried so many tears and so adored my statue that I feel pity for you with all my heart. Because your repentance is so complete and so true and because you have such faith in me, I will ask my son to forgive you.]

While Paul and Adgar mention that Theophile’s tears pleased Christ, Gautier delves much deeper into the visible components of penitence. Through the rhyming actions, *ploree* and *aoree*, Gautier’s Virgin emphasizes the tears and the worship of her *ymage* as evidence of successful contrition, even over that of interior prayers and bodily punishment. Theophile’s tears demonstrate sincere “repentance,” which aligns with medieval contrition theory; Hopkins asserts, “the state of mind of the penitent was all-important; the tears were therefore essential outward signs of genuine interior grief,” and the symbolism of penitential tears predates Gautier’s era, as evidenced in the works of Paul and Adgar. Unique to Gautier’s text, the Virgin (and not Christ, as Paul and Adgar specify) is pleased about Theophile’s behavior towards her statue, because its adoration enables her to perceive Theophile’s “fiance” (faith). It is as though Mary believes that, while Theophile’s tears are physical manifestations of the torment of his soul, his adoration of her *ymage* proves his unequivocal belief in her, most likely as *mediatrix*.

Gautier’s inclusion of the *ymage* implies three conclusions thus far: Theophile clearly directs his prayers to the statue, as the earthly receptacle for spiritual communication; an object assists in sharpening

38 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 1131-37; emphasis mine.

the sight of the worshipper; and, the ritualist inclusion of an *ymage* serves as tangible proof of devotion. The tangibility of the *ymage* encompasses its influence within Theophile’s penitential actions. Gautier consistently mentions words such as prayer and repentance within the same breath as the *ymage*, extracting the internal belief from the confines of the mind, as an exterior object heightens, directs and reveals the otherwise invisible act. The entire communication between terrestrial and spiritual domains becomes more concrete, linked to a real object. As he looks up from his position of prayer, one can imagine that both the Virgin and her *ymage* occupy his line of sight, as demonstrated in illustrations of Gautier’s manuscript. 40 Thus, not only has the prayer become more external, but so has the apparition, and it is the presence of the *ymage* that remains consistent across both of these changes. Gautier’s *ymage* has solidified the communication between the Virgin and Theophile into a perceptible event, and it becomes the bridge between the two worlds.

Gautier de Coinci incorporates an *ymage* to expand on another pre-existing event within the *Legend of Theophile*: the protagonist’s return to the church at the end of the legend to die. Neither Fulbert nor Malmesbury explicitly mention the location of the death, but both Paul and Adgar provide similar accounts, to which Gautier differs with his five-time repetition of the word *ymage*. Another comparative analysis of the three descriptions reinforces the implications of the term.

Paul places Theophile’s death “to the venerable temple of the mother of God […] where he saw the blessed vision.” 41 Adgar adds some detail:

> Theophle i fuḍ, li honurables./ Li honuret Theophle estut/ El liu u la dame lui aparut./ La u il vit l’avisun/ Declina sei li saint barun./ Treis

40 See the Besançon manuscript for illustrations of Theophile, the Virgin and her *ymage* all in a visionary line (*fols* 13, 14, 15). She even points to her *ymage* in *fol.* 13 as if to praise and underline Theophile’s inclusion of it within his prayer (Root, *The Theophilus Legend*, 129). See Root, 128-131, for a more detailed analysis of the power behind double “images” of the Virgin in a single folio of a manuscript of this legend.

Adgar essentially reiterates the same declaration: Theophile takes up his humbly lowered stance on the exact spot of the Virgin’s apparition. Thus, he selects his prayer position according to interior directions, via a memory of a spiritual occurrence privately shared between a divine being and the suppliant. Theophile’s deliberate placement originates from his internal vision. In contrast, Gautier de Coinci draws the significance of the location of death outwards, repeatedly and insistently connecting Theophile’s position with the ymage, an object of both material and spiritual domains. The initial two mentions of the term add a layer of precision to the climatic finale. Theophile did not simply enter the Virgin’s church; he prostrated before her ymage. He orientated himself via material, rather than internal, markers. This richer mental imagery, closely associated with the physical world, becomes more replicable for readers looking to the legend as a sort of guide to spiritual communication.

Reminiscent of Gautier’s penitence, the ymage then assumes a significant role in the ritual:

Trois jors demora toz entiers/ En orison devant s’ymage./ Tant la pria d’entier corage,/ De chaut cuer, d’ardant et d’engrez/ Qu’aïnc en trois jors ne plus qu’uns graz/ Ne se crolla ne ne se mut.”

Success requires a prolonged combination of Theophile’s positioning before the Virgin’s statue and his earnest interior intention, and


44 Gautier, The Legend of Theophilus, v.1752-57; emphasis mine.
neither his corporal positioning nor his concentration moved as much as a ‘stone.’ A fruitful prayer depends upon both physical and mental dedication. Here, the text suggests that the ymage aids both sides of the coin, in qualifying correct physical placement and in sharpening the content and destination of the prayer; Theophile purposely places his body “devant s’ymage” so that his prayers become that much more “ardent,” directed towards her ymage right in front of him. In fact, Gautier’s phrase, “ne plus qu’uns graz,” implies more than corporal stillness, inferring that Theophile is himself becoming like a statue. In an inversion of the Pygmalion myth, Theophile morphs into stone, using the ymage as verbatim inspiration and guidance to reach the spiritual world.

Gautier’s next incorporation of the ymage in this sequence expands its role from a guide towards a higher vision, to a component of the sight itself: “Puis ne lor dit ne plus ne mains, / Mais vers l’ymage estent ses mains” (Then he said no more but stretched out his hand toward the statue). The author provides insight into the beliefs of his protagonist, because this is not a gesture that one would give to an ordinary object. It is almost as though he is trying to communicate with it. He speaks no more, stops his own actions, and signals to the statue, as if to say, your turn. Then, a few lines later: “La bouche ovri et rendi l’ame/ Devant l’ymage Nostre Dame” (his mouth opened and his soul issued forth, in front of the statue of Notre Dame). For the reader of Old French, these verses flow out of the mouth, as the rhythm glides through the intentional language, ame, ymage, Dame, gracefully pausing over the perceptible rhymes bookending the sequence. A musical emphasis draws the senses to the key progression between these three nouns, from the soul to the statue of the Virgin to the Lady herself. Gautier textually displays Baschet’s idea of transitus: the soul travels through the ymage, the bridge to another spiritual plane. Consequently, the ymage does

45  Gautier, The Legend of Theophilus, v. 1767-68; emphasis mine.
46  Gautier, The Legend of Theophilus, v.1775-76; emphasis mine.
not simply help situate Theophile to communicate with Heaven, but it is part of the communication itself.

Gautier de Coinci’s introduction of the *ymage* within Theophile’s death convincingly alters the appearance and underlying meaning of this culminative communication between the two realms. This is not a subtle modification. Rather, the five-time repetition of the *ymage* strikingly drives the legend towards new meaning. Firstly, a physical representation helps guide the corporal positioning of the suppliant, as well as crystalizes the continuous mental imagery of the content and direction of the prayer. Secondly, the *ymage* and the Virgin’s apparitions are lexically mentioned together, mirroring contemporary theory, that the *ymage* is not merely a lifeless object, but contains an essence of the divine and is the required receptacle for spiritual communication. Finally, Theophile’s actions present a highly interactive prayer ritual, both his own comportment and an interplay with the *ymage* complete the rite. Gautier does not tediously nor purposelessly repeat himself in the final prayer of Theophile, as each inclusion underlines a nuance in the relationship between worshiper and the heavenly recipient.

**Gautier de Coinci: The *Ymage* and *Imago Dei***

A comparison across two consistent moments within the *Legend of Theophile* demonstrates Gautier’s lexical introduction of an *ymage*, a material object that completes the penitential rituals. His text indicates that, by the beginning of the thirteenth-century, it has become a key component in focusing prayer and demonstrating sufficient adoration of the Virgin herself. The *ymage* quickly transcends its physical role, becoming essential in the spiritual communication between Earth and Heaven. The Virgin appears, helps Theophile and welcomes his soul in large part because of his adoration of her *ymage*. Then, in lines unique to his version, Gautier firmly elevates its spiritual dimension by linking it to the idea of resemblance, or, *imago dei*.

Originating from Genesis 1:26, *imago* is the idea that man is made
in the likeness of God. According to Robert Javelet, the ideas around the Latin *imago* and *similitudo* often converge, in the cases where they emphasize the importance of image and resemblance. The ultimate example of both is in man’s successful mirroring of God, and this denotes an interior, rather than exterior, reflection. As such, embarking on the motions of prayer rituals will not on its own lead to atonement. The sinner must also look inwards, recognize himself as an image of God and behave accordingly.

The concept of *imago dei*, man’s likeness to God, seems inconsequential to the *ymage* as a material object, a connective support or even as animated by the prototype. However, Javelet indicates the importance of resemblance in divine communication and atonement, the key destination of Gautier’s *Legend of Theophile*; such an orientation is a similarly essential prerequisite as penitential rituals. Gautier equally highlights these dual conditions, by linguistically connecting both the ritualistic object and the concept of *imago dei* with the same word. He textually nudges a comparison between the two manifestations of an *ymage*, and, indeed, in both senses the term conveys the key characteristic: spiritual potential. Gazing, considering and recognizing the material *ymage* as well as Man’s inner *ymage* become two demonstrations of *transitus*, raising the suppliant to a higher existence and abilities, as commented on by the Virgin:

Theophilé, Theophilé, Or ont dyable tot filé, Or ont dyable tout perdu, Or sont il mat et esperdu Quant reconnois d’entier corage Le roi qui te fist a *s’ymage.*

[Theophilus, now the demons have fled, now the demons have lost, now they are beaten and in disarray because you recognize with all your heart the king who made you in his image.]

This declaration by the Virgin follows Theophile’s credo, his profuse affirmation of his belief in God, Christ and the Holy Mother, undoing his previous denial of all of the above under the Devil. Interestingly, the Virgin seems to be crediting his realignment with his *ymage, imago*, as much as his exteriorly proclaimed credo in


50 Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v.1241-46; emphasis mine.
vanquishing evil. His sincere and devoted penitential actions help align him closer with his existing potential *imago*, two key factors in earning this recognition from the Virgin and in reaching his most spiritual existence.

In this vein, we can view the series of penitential steps within the legend as a progression through different images towards resemblance; sincere and devoted contemplation of each represents a *transitus* process, elevating Theophile to a new spiritual sight and existence. He uses the material *ymage*, or statue, of the Virgin to focus his prayer, successfully calling upon her through this contemplation. Her prototype appears before him, a type of image slightly closer to her true form. His adoration of, and communication with, her prototype, eventually urges her to truly look upon him in acceptance and recognition. Theophile himself admits that “ne sai que dire ne que faire/ Se ta douceurs ne me regarde” (I know not what to say or do if you do not look at me with your kind regard).\(^5^1\) Her “regard” was his aim all along.

The Jew, the Earthly intermediary and representative for the Devil, distrusts the Virgin’s “regard:”

\[
\text{Jamais de li ne te souviengne/ Seur totes riens de ce te garde/ Que nes s'ymage ne regarde:/ Ne t'en porroit nus biens venir.}^5^2
\]

[Never think back on her. Above all, avoid looking at her statue. No good can come from doing that.]

Instead of the *ymage’s* physical form, the Jew specifically suspects its “regard,” its gaze, likely because it signifies the presence of the Virgin herself and the commencement of her intervention. Adrienne Williams Boyarin explains: “Theophilus is the archetype sinner of Marian literature, and Mary is, in this story, a powerful legal advocate with particular power over the written word and with a special ability to intercede where Jews are concerned.”\(^5^3\) Mary’s interces-


\(^{52}\) Gautier, *The Legend of Theophilus*, v. 486-89; emphasis mine.
sory power in the Legend of Theophile is partially derived from her believed control over legal and textual affairs. Consequently, she occupies a unique position capable of dismantling the pernicious legal authority that holds sway over Theophile, providing insight into the Jew’s apprehension. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the Jew’s mistrust stems from a material statue and its initial display of animation, its “regard.” Using the ideas of both Bynum and Baschet as context, this quote suggests a belief in the power of an imago, which derives from its material existence, as well as from its role as sign directing towards the signified. It acts as an earthly receptacle that can be imbued with life by the prototype, with the first indication of this animation being the exchange in the “regard.”

The specific animation of the Virgin’s gaze holds great significance in the discourse of imago. As an imago of God herself, the Virgin possesses the spiritual authority to illuminate Theophile’s own imago, as like calls to like, and her direct gaze symbolizes the recognition of the goodness, or godliness, within him. Root says, “it is not sufficient for Theophilus to look at the Virgin’s image, the real magic happens when the image looks at him.” Her “regard” marks the start of forgiveness, paving way for Theophile to progress along the path towards complete resemblance. In order to move through the series of images, Theophile must sustain sincere and profound devotion. As analyzed during his prayer, he humbly directs his pleas towards the statue of the Virgin, in order to access, or ‘see,’ the object begin to animate, as the prototype increasingly inhabits its representation. Logically, we can suppose that he must apply the same worship towards himself; with genuine interior contemplation,

53 Boyarin, Miracles of the Virgin, 42. Boyarin analyzes the Miracles of the Virgin generally, with emphasis on the Theophile text, as a literary genre that presents shifting cultural concerns. Studying the inherent antismemitism in the legend, Boyarin views Mary as a means to address the Jewish figure (62-3, 73-4). Gautier’s choices in the Legend of Theophile are as much influenced by antismemitism, as by other key factors such as visual and material theology, especially in his representation of the Virgin.

54 Javelet, Image et ressemblance, 363-67. Javelet discusses the hierarchy in resemblances, in which the Virgin finds herself at the summit (after Christ), explaining her role as mediator, and as guide towards successful imago.

Theophile has the potential to expose his inner *ymage* and achieve the highest possible state of resemblance. Thus, the ritual of prayer directs Theophile through a series of images that progressively move closer to the spiritual plane, starting from the material statue, then the prototype, and on to the Virgin considered as an imago, eventually leading to himself.

Both the Jew and the Virgin allude to the possibility of Theophile re-orientating himself along the path to resemblance and finding his *imago*. The Jew fears the reciprocal gaze of the Virgin’s *ymage*, as the first animated response from the prototype and a significant step along the route towards resemblance, realizing his potential as an *ymage* (*imago*) of God, as ultimately commended by the Virgin. Consequently, Gautier’s term *ymage* represents the stages along this progression and the ability to spiritually transit between them. The *ymage* as a material statue, the *ymage* in the process of animation by a divine power and the *ymage* as man’s alignment with God become pointers on the journey from the physical world towards the divine.

**Synchronic Cross-Genre Analysis: Le Roman de la Rose**

A diachronic comparison between Gautier de Coinci’s *Legend of Theophile* and its larger corpus spotlights the repetitive addition of the word *ymage* and expounds on the consequential impacts to the larger legend. The *ymage* in Gautier is most striking for its requisite presence in church ritual as an enhancive tool for sight and memory and for its role as the potential bridge to spiritual communication and resemblance (*imago*). Shifting our analytical view, a synchronic exploration of how “*ymage*” is used outside of ecclesiastical contexts could provide insights into how religious doctrine was being interpreted and integrated into broader cultural and linguistic settings.

By examining contemporary theological beliefs and considering miraculous accounts from various authors, we can gain valuable insights into Gautier’s writing and the creative choices he made within it. However, this contextualization can be expanded further.
To what extent did the elevated status of images in the thirteenth-century permeate society? Were objects revered for their inherent material power beyond the confines of religious settings? Did they function, as Baschet suggests, as signs that guided viewers towards transcendent ideas or visions, even in other literary forms? One way to address these questions and broaden our understanding is to cast a wider analytical net by comparing a religious work, such as Gautier’s, with one from a different genre, like Guillaume de Lorris’ *Le Roman de la Rose*.

One of the principal works of literature from the early thirteenth-century is *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris. Written in roughly the same time period as Gautier’s legend, between 1225-35, the courtly love poem presents an opportunity to delve deeper into the contemporary French ideology, as both writers experienced a similar cultural atmosphere that helped form the realm of possibility encircling their texts. Despite the vastly different genres, themes and characters explored across the two literary pieces, the word *ymage* appears frequently within the Roman (fifteen times), principally to denote the painted figures on the wall of the enclosed garden, in which unwinds the tale. Furthermore, Baschet’s key definition of the *ymage*, a material support for spiritual *transitus*, strikingly emerges in the form of another object: the fountain of Narcissus. An analysis of both the explicit appearance of the noun to denote the painted figures, and the implicit expression of the key characteristics of an *ymage*, in the form of a fountain, corroborates how Gautier uses the term.

**Ymage: Paintings and Personifications**

The story starts as the narrator walks through an idyllic natural setting until he discovers a garden enclosed by a high and decorated wall. It is within the descriptions of these painted decorations that the reader encounters the word *ymage* thirteen times. They are pic-

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56 There are 250 known surviving manuscripts of the poem from the Middle Ages (British Library). Two authors completed the full poem, in two different stages: Guillaume de Lorris (ca. 1230) and Jean de Meun (ca. 1275). This analysis only includes the first part of the poem, by Guillaume, as this author writes during the same time period as Gautier.
torial representations of the antipathetic human conditions to love; the first of several groups of personifications through which the narrator, alongside the reader, must progress, in an amorous allegorical development.

Accordingly, in *Le Roman de la Rose*, the term *ymage* most commonly signifies a personification. It is evident that this concept differs from Gautier’s *ymage*, which refers to a statue of the Virgin. However, what stands out in Guillaume’s use of personifications is that they initially appear as works of art; they possess a tangible, material form. Logically, it follows that they derive at least some of their power from their materiality, aligning with Bynum’s argument regarding medieval images. Additionally, an exploration of personifications by Katharine Breen reveals intriguing similarities in their role to what Baschet argues for devotional images: they serve as bridges between the tangible, often material, and the abstract or difficult-to-conceptualize ideas. Breen notes that “although the goal is spiritual transcendence, the means of elevation are strikingly concrete and mechanical.” Personification “mediates between individuals or particulars on the one hand and universals or concepts on the other.”

The narrator in *Le Roman de la Rose* presents this first group of personifications in the following passage:

Les *ymages* et les paintures/ Le mur volentiers regardai;/ Si conterai et vous dirai/ De ces *ymages* les semblances/ Si cum moi vint en remembrances.”

In striking fashion, the text introduces the concepts of material *ymages* and memory simultaneously, rhyming the “semblance” of the *ymages* with the narrator’s “remembrance.”


their appearance from his memory, where they have resided for the five years since his dream. Memory “is crucial for understanding the power of images in devotional strategies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries;” the purpose behind their creation wasn’t so much to achieve realistic accuracy or to demonstrate creativity, but to ensure the object was powerful enough to imprint itself on the memory. The role of a material object within the recollection process equally recalls Palazzo’s argument that images provided tangible support in better implicating the senses in prayer ritual. Guillaume associates ymages with both the visual sensory system and successful recollection, as his protagonist draws an exact description of all ten representations precisely because the powerful visual images imprinted in his mind. The visually stimulating ymages in Le Roman de la Rose corroborate Gautier’s ymage which equally works as a sensory and memory support. The statue helps Theophile to crystallize his prayer to the Virgin and to eventually see her, and the text repeatedly informs us that Theophile returns to the church based on a memory of her apparitions, which is guided by the statue, as the symbol that stimulates remembrance. For both authors, the ymage provokes a potential for strong vision and memory, via contemplation and ritual.

Guillaume’s introduction of these figures interestingly sets the ymage apart from regular artistic and material representations. The connective “et”, between “ymages” and “paintures,” linguistically separates the words; the conjunction becomes an impermeable barrier between two noninterchangeable concepts. Perhaps the author wishes to differentiate between art mediums, as in ‘some are carved and some are painted.’ However, the text disproves this, as it repeats the ‘painted’ quality to these portraits. Rather, the author carefully selects the term ymage, because it carries weight in the physical and abstract planes; the painted personifications not only exist on this wall, but also as an idea, a deeper meaning, of the conditions


60 Palazzo, Peindre c’est prier, 17, 135.

61 For instance, “mout sot bien paintre” (Guillaume, Le Roman de la Rose, v.163; emphasis mine); “aprés fu painte Convoitise” (Guillaume, Le Roman de la Rose, v.169; emphasis mine).
they depict. Like Gautier who decides on the word *ymage*, instead of various other possibilities,\textsuperscript{62} Guillaume establishes the distinction between this word and the inanimate ‘paintings.’ The two authors purposefully select a term with the power to convey, initially, a material work of art, but one that then holds animation potential.

In meticulously describing each personified *ymage*, Guillaume continues to employ the word as a denotation of two existences. He comments on both their physical descriptions and their dynamic personalities: artistic paintings on the surface level, real characters underneath. “Une *ymage* ot aprés escrite,/ Qui sembloit bien estre ypocrite;/ Papelardie ert appellee” (the image that was represented next certainly looked like a hypocrite, and her name was Religious Hypocrisy).\textsuperscript{63} Rather than simply describing her physical attributes, or the quality of the painting, the text primarily presents the *ymage* as a real character, who effuses an emotive atmosphere. Whilst the narrator gazes at the *ymages*, lending his full concentration, they begin to move in a type of visionary development, recalling Theophile contemplating the statue with such dedicated devotion that the real Virgin animates the vessel. Guillaume remains consistent in this dualistic description of his *ymages*:

\textit{Une *ymage* qui Vilonnie/ Avoir non revi devers destre,/ Qui estoit au-ques d’autel estre/ Cum ces deus et d’autel futere;/ Bien sembloit male creature./ Et sembloit bien estre outrageuse/ Et mesdisans et rampo-neuse./Mout sot bien paindre et bien portraire/ Cis qui sot tel *ymage* faire./ Qu’el sembloit bien chose vilaine.

The text praises the painter’s abilities precisely because the *ymage*

\textsuperscript{62} Root lists the diverse terms that Gautier uses across his writing: \textit{tavlete, iconye, mariole} and \textit{imagete} (\textit{The Theophilus Legend}, 159). Yet, within the \textit{Legend of Theophile}, Gautier only choses to use *ymage*.

\textsuperscript{63} Guillaume de Lorris, \textit{Le Roman de la Rose}, v. 407-09; emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{64} Guillaume de Lorris, \textit{Le Roman de la Rose}, v.156-65; emphasis mine.
The artist is so skilled because their work transcends that of a portrait; it becomes an *ymage*, originating as skilled material representation that breathes life the more the viewer gazes at it. The carefully selective use of the word *ymage* becomes even more apparent in view of the whole poem, which solely designates this first group of personifications with this noun. Their premier form, as artwork, categorizes the only difference between this group and the other personifications in the text, who solely manifest as actors in the narrative (and never as paintings, statues or other physical representations). Therefore, just as Gautier purposes the term to denote a material statue that holds the potential to animate, Guillaume’s *ymages* first present themselves as static and lifeless art, before the figures progressively animate with prolonged examination, metamorphosizing into lifelike postures and expressions. To be nominated an *ymage*, two stages seem to be required: inanimate art and emerging visions.

**The Fountain as Transitus**

The fountain scene in *Le Roman de la Rose* represents the plot’s turning point, shifting the beginning scenes of wonderous discovery towards questing purpose, as the aqueous substance discloses the protagonist’s objective: the recipient of his love, a perfect rosebud. Although never directly referred to with the word *ymage*, an analysis of this scene reveals an object working in a remarkably similar manner to Gautier’s *ymages*, the statue of the Virgin, because both items act as an intermediary between a viewer and expanded clarity and sight.65

The narrator comes upon a marble fountain, with a description designating it as the very same of the story of Narcissus. What follows is a meticulous description of an almost ritualist approach, contemplation and interaction with the object. To start, the protagonist re-

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65 Trivellone argues that many different images can possess power for people of the Middle Ages: “Les images qui ne figurent pas le Christ, la Vierge ou les saints peuvent également posséder un pouvoir: c’est le cas des enseignes médiévales aux sujets les plus variés” (“Images, Rites,” 776).
De la fontainne m’apressai; Quant je fus près, si m’abessai/ Por veoir l’iaue qui coroit;/ Et la gravele qui paroit/ Au fons, plus clere qu’argens fins.”

[I drew near to the spring and, on reaching it, bent down to see the running water and the gravel, brighter than fine silver, that seethed in its depths.]

Then, he reveals:

Ou fons de la fontainne aval/ Avoit deus pierres de cristal/ Qu’a grant entente remirai.”

[Down at the bottom of the spring were two crystals, which I gazed at most attentively.]

How Guillaume’s narrator approaches the fountain bears a striking likeness to Theophile’s integration of the Virgin’s statue within his prayer ritual. Drawing near, the narrator inclines, for practical access and to display a respectful attitude towards the fountain. He then studies its contents, giving a plethora of details demonstrating his serious contemplation. This is not a brief glance, but a serious ‘gaze,’ recalling the language of Cynthia Hahn, in which the viewer dedicates full concentration, and the material item returns its image in a dual exchange. Most strikingly, the narrator-lover’s first two actions towards the fountain are the exact same as Theophile with his ymage, seeing that both characters humbly kneel before the material object before profoundly gazing at it.

The fountain then reveals its depths:

Quant li solaus, qui tout aguiete;/ Ses rais en la fontainne giete;/ Et la clartés aval descent,/ Lors perent colors plus de cent.”

[When the all-seeing sun sends down its rays into the spring, and the light descends into its depths, more than a hundred colours appear in the crystal.]


The narrator perceives:

Ou miroër, entre mil choses/ Choisi rosiers chargiès de roses/ Qui estoient en un destour,/ D’une haie clos tout entour.”

[In the mirror, among a thousand other things, rose-bushes laden with roses in a secluded place completely enclosed by a hedge.]

The narrator gazes into the fountain for long enough to be granted a “merveilles” (marvel) in the form of sunlight richly lighting up the crystals and the aqueous depths. The manipulation of the fountain by the sun can be compared to the Virgin acting through her ymage, as similar exterior, celestial forces wondrously performing through the material object, breathing life into its borders in order to share a divine vision with the viewer. The fountain eventually clears but does not return to its physical interior (water, gravel, and crystal); rather, the colorful light shifts to expose a different vision, that of the rosebush containing perfectly beautiful rosebuds. Before the fountain scene, the lover seemed to search for lovely things and the general idea of love, but it was not until the fountain showed him the ideal rosebuds that he could perceive the object of this faith and realize the path to reach it. Similarly, Theophile experiences a crisis of consciousness, comprehending that he needs to change course, make penitence and contact the Virgin. However, it is her ymage that provides the link to the spiritual world, allows her to appear before him and sets Theophile on the path towards his true desire, salvation. Therefore, both material objects, Guillaume’s fountain and Gautier’s statue, perform as Baschet’s transitus between the visible world and the desired divine communication; the ymages guide the viewers to new spiritual visions.

A synchronic study of Le Roman de la Rose with Gautier’s Legend of Theophile presents a strikingly similar treatment of the word ymage and of significant material objects. Guillaume’s personified ymages on the wall of the garden demonstrate the uniqueness of this specific word amongst multiple others to denote art and representations.

70 Guillaume de Lorris, Le Roman de la Rose, v. 1615-18.

71 Guillaume de Lorris, Le Roman de la Rose, v. 1541.
Guillaume refers to them primarily as *ymages* because they exist in two planes, as their physical paintings and as the conditions that they represent; the more one considers them, the more their first existence metamorphosizes into human figures. Likewise, Gautier denotes the material representation of the Virgin as an *ymage*, because this particular word translates its animation potential. Secondly, like the *ymage* of the Virgin, Narcissus’ fountain acts as the most significant object within *Le Roman de la Rose*, turning the plot towards a clear direction, and both Guillaume’s and Gautier’s protagonists take the same ritualistic steps to approach, consider and use these objects. They then share a common role: they provide an elevated sight and purpose through spiritual intervention.

**Conclusion**

The version of the *Legend of Theophile* by Gautier de Coinci breaks from the literary tradition, because Gautier introduces an *ymage* into every key moment of the legend: the initial turn towards the Devil, Theophile’s penitence and communication with the Virgin, and Theophile’s return to the church at the end of the story to die. The author insists upon the importance of an object in directing the legend towards the conclusion of the ascension of Theophile’s soul to Heaven. Although unnecessary even half a century earlier under Adgar, Gautier considered an *ymage* as the essential component in spiritual communication, seeing that his legend repeatedly mentions the word in both prayers. The statue of the Virgin acts as the receptacle of Theophile’s pleas, as the vessel through which the Virgin appears and, finally, as the welcoming site of his soul. Her *ymage* becomes the bridge. The significance of this transformation to the legend cannot be overstated, because Gautier essentially changes the nature of one of the most sanctified and prescribed ecclesiastic rituals; prayer moves from an internal event to an external phenomenon, centered on a physical object. Indeed, the entire progression of the legend becomes a development through increasingly spiritual *ymages*, from the Virgin’s statue, to its animation, to her apparition, to Theophile’s ascent to Heaven and full alignment with his *imago*,...
the highest manifestation of an ymage. Thus, the ymage changes the relationship between Earth and Heaven, as the prayer ritual, the apparition and the forgiveness of the Virgin, and the ability to find one’s own imago all originate around the presence of a material object. The ymage is both physical and spiritual, literal and abstract, and it connotes the most miraculous and divine events visible to a worthy human.

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From Heldris de Cornwall’s *Le Roman de Silence* to Gian Francesco Straparola’s *Le Piacevoli Notti*. New Insights into a Significant Reception Process Across Centuries, Languages, and Genres

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Although we assume that the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman romance *Roman de Silence* by Heldris de Cornwall experienced no reception at all apart from one manuscript containing the text, there is a considerable likelihood that the sixteenth-century Venetian author Gian Francesco Straparola somehow gained access to the medieval text and adapted it for one of the stories contained in his famous collection, *Le Piacevoli Notti* (1550 and 1553). Even though we cannot yet determine the exact process of reception, the strong similarities between both works go far beyond global archetypal themes. Straparola’s work hence demonstrates that Heldris’s work was known even long after the thirteenth century, or was simply rediscovered in the sixteenth century and put to good use in literary terms.

Introduction

It is not that long ago that *Le Roman de Silence* by the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman poet Heldris de Cornwall (or de Cornuaille) was still completely unknown to modern French medievalists and other scholars. Neither the author’s name nor the title of his romance figured in any of the standard literary histories, whether focused on French literature or on world literature at large.¹ The manuscript of this Anglo-Norman verse narrative was re-discovered not until 1911 by W. H. Stevenson in Wollaton Hall in Nottingham, in a crate erroneously labeled “unimportant documents,” obviously in full disregard of the actual literary quality hidden in it. The manuscript, now in the Wollaton Library Collection (WLC/LM/6), held by the Manuscripts and Special Collections of the University

¹ There is, for example, no reference to Heldris in the famous *Kindlers Neues Literatur Lexikon*; in *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, ed. Beatrice Didier. 3 vols; in *De la littérature française*, ed. Denis Hollier, or in many other relevant literary histories. By contrast, recent online encyclopedias now include respectable entries on Heldris and his romance.
of Nottingham, contains, apart from Heldris’s work, Le roman de Troie, Ille et Galeron, Le roman d’Alixandre (at least 4000 verses of the complete text), La chanson d’Aspremont, most of La Vengeance Raguïdel, four anonymous fabliaux, six fabliaux by Gautier li Leus, and Li dis Raoul de Hosdaing. So, altogether, here we face a quite respectable selection of significant texts of major importance for medieval French literature, and the Roman de Silence constitutes an important addition.\(^2\)

Despite early efforts by scholars such as Heinrich Gelzer (1927),\(^3\) and then by Lewis Thorpe who edited the text for the first time in a serial fashion in the Nottingham Mediaeval Studies from 1961 to 1967, and then, in book form, in 1972,\(^4\) it took still quite some time to realize the enormous literary potentials and meaning of Le Roman de Silence. But since then, there has been an explosion of new interpretive efforts with this text, resulting in further editions and translations, and also numerous critical studies.\(^5\)

In other words, although Heldris’s romance has survived in only one thirteenth-century manuscript, recent research has amply documented and illustrated its great value as a literary work where such major issues of gender identity and the conflict or tension between nature and nurture are explored in depth.\(^6\) The poet signaled,

\(^2\) See the introduction to Heldris de Cornuaille, Le Roman de Silence, trans. Regina Psaki, XII–XIII. Cf. also the introduction and notes by Sarah Roche-Mahdi in her critical edition, Silence.

\(^3\) Heinrich Gelzer, “Der Silenceroman von Heldris de Cornuaille.”

\(^4\) Michèle Perret, “Travesties et transsexuelles.” For a criticism of Thorpe’s 1972 edition, see Sarah Roche-Mahdi, newly ed. and trans. with intro. and notes, Silence, xxiii–xxiv; I will quote from this edition below. See also Inci Bozkaya, “Iluminiertes Schweigen.” For a useful pedagogically developed webpage on the Roman de Silence, see Debora B. Schwartz, “Gender-Bending.”

\(^5\) See W. H. Stevenson, Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton; Lewis Thorpe, Le Roman de Silence; the complete work was then published as Le Roman de Silence: A Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Verse-Romance by Heldris de Cornuaille, ed. Lewis Thorpe.

for instance, that women could perform as major minstrels as well, although in the present context only in the disguise of a man. And the entire romance is really predicated on the presence of numerous secrets, that is, not only the secret of Silence’s true identity but also the secrets which Merlin at the end knows how to reveal, which unravels the entire structure of pretenses both by the queen and by Silence herself.7

Studying the Roman de Silence thus continues to promise to yield significant insights into fundamental issues of late medieval literature, especially regarding the gender relationship, that is, above all, male perspectives on women and their public performance. Moreover, the author presents very contrastive female figures and questions, so it seems, the traditionally binary concept about women held by patriarchal society.

**Cross-Dressing in Medieval Literature**

Heldris’s work is not the only one in medieval literature where cross-dressing takes place, but here the poet certainly goes beyond the standard playfulness of this strategy because the public switching of the gender roles assumes a significant political and economic function existentially determining the future of a noble family and their only daughter. In other literary examples with this strategy at play, cross-dressing serves primarily to safeguard a marriage or to secure a love relationship. We could, for instance, refer to verse narratives such as Dietrich von der Gletze’s Diu Borte, the anonymous Aucassin et Nicolette, and to the quasi-autobiographical romance Frauendienst by Ulrich von Liechtenstein where the switching of gender roles matters significantly (all, thirteenth century). Cross-dressing also took place many times in hagiography and martyrology – see the famous figure of Marina the Monk (d. 508) – but then for rather different purposes and intentions – and happened also on the theater stage.8

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7 Classen, *The Secret in Medieval Literature*, ch. 4.

8 Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender*; Hotchkiss, *Clothes make the man*; Clark and Sponsler, “Queer Play”; see also the contributions to *Gender Blending: Transvestism*. 
Reception History of Medieval Literature: Manuscripts

One of the mystifying questions regarding Heldris’s romance pertains to the fact that it has survived in only one manuscript. We cannot say at all whether there were later copies, whether other poets picked up that material and transmitted it orally, or whether the topic and theme of this text displeased the contemporary audience so profoundly that it was soon forgotten and ignored. No other poet ever referred to Heldris or to Silence, as far as we can currently say, and there are, at least to my knowledge, no traces of this romance in other works from the late Middle Ages and the early modern time. A new discovery to be presented here, however, could suggest that we might be simply victims of wrong perceptions regarding the true success of literary works from the Middle Ages, hence of this Roman de Silence as well, and that we would have to approach this phenomenon with much greater care and sensitivity, never ignoring the great possibility of oral transmission, for example, or the preservation of an individual text within another context, adapted for a variety of purposes.

A major example illustrating the complexity of this issue would be the Old High German “Hildebrandslied,” copied down only once in a Fulda manuscript sometime during the 820s, but a considerably transformed adaptation, the “Jüngere Hildebrandslied,” appeared in 1472 in Kaspar von Röhn’s song collection, in the so-called Dresdner Heldenbuch. Despite a number of references to the hero Hildebrand in various heroic epics, the jump over more than 600 years can only be explained through a reference to a variety of vocal transmissions.

At any rate, the greatest number of medieval manuscripts – literary, liturgical, legal, chronicle, medical, and other texts – was lost or deliberately destroyed in the subsequent centuries, and many times we today can only guess the actual reception history of an individual work, relying, for instance, on comments by later poets or on the visual representation of a specific romance (tapestry, wall frescoes, ivory caskets, tile works, etc.).


10 As to the reception of the Tristan material, for instance, see Stephany Cain Van d’Elden, Tristan and Isolde.
de Silence, however, it still seems as if the work did not find any approval among the public and quickly disappeared again, maybe because the theme of cross-dressing was too provocative, disturbing or even abhorrent. To be sure, later poets did not refer to this work; there are no extra-literary reflections, and no other manuscript copy has ever surfaced. Would we thus have to admit that the Roman de Silence had been doomed to death already in the thirteenth century? The anonymous author of an online article on this text in the French version of Wikipedia, reiterating what many other scholars have already observed, simply states: “Le roman n’a jamais été copié au Moyen Age, et a donc eu peu d’influence.”

Gender Identity in Medieval Literature

There could be many different factors and reasons why Heldris failed to appeal to his audience, whereas modern research has responded with great enthusiasm to this text, recognizing its considerable potentiality as a literary reflection of many significant topics and themes. After all, the female protagonist, operating most of the time as a male, triumphing regularly over all of her opponents or competitors, basically ridicules the entire class of knights through her display of bravery and skill in tournaments and military conflicts. Silence succeeds in defeating all of her enemies and can repeatedly rescue the king from dangerous situations. Male gender identity apparently meant little when the opposite was experimented with, so the masking of Silence actually unmasks the pretenses of medieval courtly literature. However, there is no indication anywhere that Silence cross-dresses for erotic reasons; instead, it proves to be a

11 Bozkaya, “lluminiertes Schweigen.”

12 https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Roman_de_Silence (last accessed on July 26, 2022). Of course, there is still no agreement whether we can rely on such an open-access encyclopedia, and this article is certainly not a stellar contribution, apart from providing a plot summary and a good bibliography. For students, this is certainly a useful tool, but the danger is, of course, that they then will not read the original text.

simple necessity for economic and political reasons and has nothing
to do with her gender identity, as much as the allegorical figures of
Nature and Nurture debate the development with Silence throughout
the romance. For instance, at the very end, when Merlin is about
to reveal her true gender identity, Silence reflects with deep regret,
"‘Dolans,’ fait-il, ‘por que amenai / Merlin? com mar I assenai! . . .
Don’t g’iere tols desiretez” (6442–47; “‘What a fool I was,’ he said,
‘why did I bring / Merlin here? What a catastrophe! . . . so that I will
be disinherited’”).

Moreover, Heldris addressed many critical issues of his time and
might thus have irked his patrons too much. Those are, for instance,
the political structure under an unreliable and untrustworthy king
who arbitrarily sets up his rules regarding inheritance rights, banning
women entirely from succeeding their fathers among the aristocratic
class; the common problem with betrayal, disloyalty, and cheating;
and finally, the horrible role which the queen plays, undermining the
ethical and moral principles at court despite her exposed position.
All of those issues, addressed within a courtly romance, could have
easily turned the audience away from this text. The other examples
of literary cross-dressing mentioned above did also not experience
any significant success, although we regard them today with
considerable respect and great interest particularly concerning the
playful treatment of the gender roles.\textsuperscript{14} But even there, the cross-
dressing never reveals any particular interest in gender-bending and
cannot be associated with unusual erotic desires.

Survival of Medieval Texts

Considering the general situation with medieval texts and their
fairly slim survival success,\textsuperscript{15} it does not come as a complete
surprise that \textit{Le Romance de Silence} exists only in one manuscript.


\textsuperscript{15} Recent calculations have revealed that a huge percentage of medieval literature, in Latin or in the various vernaculars, has simply been lost for us today. Cf. Haye, \textit{Verlorenes Mittelalter}; see also Becht-Jurden, “Die verlorene Handschrift.”
Nevertheless, this very poor evidence does not necessarily carry all that much weight because we just do not know enough about the actual reception on the ground, so to speak.

Several scenarios deserve to be imagined and explored to cast more light on this curious phenomenon. First, a specific text indeed might not have appealed to the audience and was hence not copied again by other scribes – the patrons then simply denied its further dissemination. After all, vellum or parchment was very expensive, and only special texts were deemed worthy enough to be recorded for posterity. Second, due to a massive loss of manuscripts as a result of external circumstances (fire, water damage, book worms, the consequences of war, deliberate destruction, etc.), a specific work might have disappeared from our view even though it might have enjoyed a noteworthy popularity at its time. Third, a literary work might not have been copied again after its first recording in a manuscript because it was quickly translated into an oral version, which might have been considered sufficient for the further transmission. Fourth, a romance might not have found many enthusiasts at its time but was later picked up again and then even copied down in a manuscript, possibly for historical reasons.

The last option is best illustrated by the so-called Ambraser Heldenbuch, copied down by the Innsbruck toll keeper Hans Ried on behalf of his patron, Emperor Maximilian I, between ca. 1504 and 1516 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. nova 2663). It consists of a large number of heroic epic poems, courtly romances, short verse narratives, and also a travelogue about Prester John in India – the term “Heldenbuch” hence means surprisingly little, being undermined by many of the included texts that belong to a really different genre.16 Some of the texts contained here have survived in no other medieval manuscript, but we do not know for sure whether the emperor just aimed at having available an idiosyncratic and

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16 Kaiser Maximilian I. und das Ambraser Heldenbuch; for a complete facsimile with transcription and critical editions of the individual texts, see now the amazing online edition along with a transcription and the texts of the critical editions: Ambraser Heldenbuch: Gesamtranskription mit Manuskriptbild, ed. Mario Klarer. 11 Vols.
representative collection of high medieval poems for his own self-glorification as the ‘last knight,’ as he enjoyed presenting himself, or whether he pursued personal interests.\footnote{Müller, \textit{Gedechtnus}.}

Hartmann von Aue’s \textit{Diu Klage}, for instance, is preserved only in this manuscript, although the poet had extensive success with his other works.\footnote{Hartmann von Aue, \textit{Die Klage}.} Other major pieces that are contained in this early sixteenth-century manuscript and that date from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, for instance, are the anonymous “Mauritius von Craûn” and \textit{Kudrun}.\footnote{Kudrun. \textit{Mittelhochdeutsch / Neuhochdeutsch}.} But the quantity of manuscript copies is not a reliable figure for us today to determine the specific literary quality of a medieval or early modern work.\footnote{Classen, “The Survival of Medieval Literature.” There I highlight the wider range of medieval sources used by Straparola, as Heldris’s romance proves to be only one of many in that context. In other words, further research will certainly recognize the great value of Straparola’s \textit{Piacevoli notti} as a insightful ‘quarry’ of medieval sources.}

\textbf{From the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Century}

In light of these observations, we are encouraged to question once again whether the \textit{Roman de Silence} really did not meet much or any approval at its time or in subsequent centuries. The only available manuscript seems to indicate that this was, indeed, the case. However, completely unknown to French medieval scholarship, Heldris’s work appears to have attracted the attention by the sixteenth-century Venetian author Gian Francesco Straparola who included an almost perfect one-to-one translation of the Anglo-Norman/French romance into his Italian collection of prose tales, the \textit{Piacevoli notti}. The first volume appeared in print in 1550, the second in 1553, and soon thereafter this anthology enjoyed a long-term and expansive popularity, far into the early nineteenth century, and was also translated into various European languages. Numerous further translations and new editions have appeared since then, documenting the enormous appeal of this significant collection.
throughout time and across many languages. In many ways, we might identify it as a major literary bridge between the Middle Ages and the modern age, with many different motives and themes in the various tales which the author had recovered from medieval sources but adapted to the stylistic and material taste of sixteenth-century Venetian society.

**Heldris de Cornwall**

One of the major themes in the late medieval French work by Heldris de Cornouaille is ultimately based on the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife who tries to seduce him to sleep with her (Genesis 39:5–20). Since he refuses out of his sense of loyalty and deference to his lord, Potiphar, she turns the argument around and charges him for having tried to rape her. This is exactly the same situation also in the late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *lai*, “Lanval,” by Marie de France. Strikingly, we observe very similar cases both in the Old French *Roman de Silence* and in Straparola’s story (IV.1) in his collection, which might be coincidental, but which quickly proves to be intriguing evidence that the latter relied heavily on a source unknown to Italian Renaissance scholarship, Heldris’s work, either in the original or in a later version, perhaps already translated into Italian.


22 Tiemann, *Josef und die Frau Potipars im populärkulturellen*; Yohannan, *Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife in World Literature*; Merzetti, *I volti della moglie di Putifarre nella letteratura francese*; most recently, Wouters, “Revisiting Potiphar’s Wife: A European Perspective on a Character in Early Modern Drama”; and Vine’s, “The Many Wives of Potiphar: Rape Culture in Medieval Romance.” She argues, in a rather extremist fashion, that in most literary cases of rape the actions of the male perpetrators are identified as acceptable. I am afraid, however, that she ignores much of the relevant narrative context and seems to follow, in an anachronistic fashion, the current battle-cry of the ‘Me-Too’ movement and thus subscribes to a slippery concept of the *histoire larmoyante*. As bad as the situation of women was in the Middle Ages regarding the danger of rape, we cannot ignore the many specific legal protections they enjoyed to fight against their perpetrators. And we can also not forget that many male (!) authors specifically condemned rape in very explicit terms (e.g., Wolfram von Eschenbach in his Parzival; here not consulted). Even the long narrative tradition of “Potiphar’s Wife” confirms this observation, against Vine’s claim.
Gian Francesco Straparola

Let us first get a better idea about Straparola and his *Piacevoli notti*, a major collection of entertaining and didactic narratives, first published in one volume in 1550, and then in 1553 in two volumes. We know almost nothing in biographical terms about the poet who only mentions in the title pages of his *Canzoniere* – a collection of sonnets and satirical songs – and the *Piacevoli notti* that he originated from Caravaggio, ca. 29 miles east of Milan, but there are numerous linguistic references in his work to confirm that he must have lived a long time until his death in Venice. The fact that he uses the Paduan dialect in one of his tales, refers to numerous locations in and around Padua, and calls that city a site of great learnedness, strongly suggests that he must have studied there, a little outside of Venice to the west.\(^23\)

Similar to his many predecessors within this genre, Straparola drew extensively from earlier sources, such as Girolamo Morlini’s *Novellae, fabulae, comoedia*, which had appeared in Naples in 1520,\(^24\) but he was also familiar with classical literature, with the tradition of the triumvirate of early Renaissance literature, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, and he culled much material from the anonymous *Gesta Romanorum*. Specific comparative analysis, however, has not yet been carried out. Here I will offer another valuable source that appears to have been available to Straparola through various possible channels and translations, that is, Heldris’s *Roman de Silence*.\(^25\) Defending himself against charges of plagiarism, however, the poet admitted in a seemingly open fashion in the prologue to the second volume that the stories were not his own creation, but those by the ladies or gentlemen who serve as storytellers, similarly as in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and later in Marguerite de Navarre’s

\(23\) Straparola, *Ergötzliche Nächte*, German trans. by Hanns Floerke.


\(25\) Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather*, 82-87.
Heptaméron: “I have written them down quite faithfully according to
the way they were recounted by ten young maidens at that gathering”
(257). This is simply an expansion of what he had already indicated
in the prologue to the first volume: “he did not write them as he
wished to, but as he heard them from those women who recounted
them, neither adding nor subtracting a thing” (45).

The Piacevoli notti proved to be a great success in the early modern
book market. New editions appeared, for instance, in 1555, 1558,
1560, 1573, 1580, 1584, 1586, 1597, 1599, 1604, 1608, 1612, 1650,
etc., a French translation in 1560, 1585, 1596, 1601, 1611, 1726, a
Latin in 1634 (selection), an English translation in 1609 and 1729
(via a translation of one of Perrault’s fairy tales), a German translation
in 1791 and 1799, and so forth.26 As scholars have regularly
emphasized, Straparola can be counted among the first inventors
of fairy tales, as reflected especially in his second volume, which
hence also explains the enormous range of modern translations of
his collection of tales/fairy tales. The first story told in the eleventh
night, for instance, became the basis for the famous “Il gatto con gli
stivali” or “Der gestiefelte Kater” or “Puss in Boots.” The original
source of this story can be found in the Panchatantra, first printed
in Italian translation in 1540, but Straparola gave it the form through
which it later influenced deeply famous authors of fairy tales such as
Charles Perrault (1628–1703) with his Histoires ou contes du temps
passé (1697), Ludwig Tieck (1797), and the Brothers Grimm (1812),
and then the world of movies, dance, and music until the present.27

One of the stories deserves our particular attention because it might
have been based on the Roman de Silence or a later variant unknown
to us today. For the purpose of the subsequent comparative analysis

26 I have culled those dates from a search in WorldCat and Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog,
and the list is certainly not even close to be exhaustive; see also Pirovano, “Per l’edizione
de Le Piacevoli notti di Giovan Francesco Straparola.”

27 For a good listing taking us from Tieck’s version in 1797 up to modern times, including
movies, screenplays, mangas, novels, comic books, and video games, see online at https://
Here we come across a good example that individual articles in this online encyclopedia
can be of a high scholarly caliber.
and in light of the fact that Straparola’s version might not be known much at all among current scholarship outside of Italian Studies or Folklore Studies (fairy tales), we need at first a brief plot summary with critical comments.

**The Cross-Dressing Lady**

In the first narrative told by the lady Fiordiana in the fourth evening, we hear about a king of Thebes in Egypt, Ricardo, who marries the noble lady Valeriana, the daughter of the king of Scotland, Marliano. The two have three worthy and beautiful daughters whom the parents later marry off splendidly to mighty rulers, handing over to them great dowries, whereas the couple keeps rather little for themselves. Years later, however, Ricardo’s wife becomes pregnant again and delivers yet another daughter who is called Costanza.

Already in her young years, she learns quickly everything her teachers instruct her in both embroidery and singing, in playing music, dancing, and the like, probably quite typical for a female student. Moreover, Costanza dedicates herself to the intensive study of literature and then even to the “art of war, taming horses, wielding weapons, and jousting” (174), often defeating her male opponents as if she were a tom-boy. This proves to be already the first clue as to the direct relationship between this Italian story and the *Roman de Silence* because this young woman can take on the characteristics of either gender depending on the circumstances.

When the time has come for Costanza to get married, however, the parents are worried because they do not have enough property left to give their daughter a worthy dowry, but they hope that she would accept as a husband a worthy and noble man, irrespective of his social rank within the aristocracy. The young woman quickly decides to refuse this offer, insisting to her father that she would never marry anyone who would not fit her social status and that of her family. Thereupon she leaves the court, changes her name to Costanzo, and obviously cross-dresses so as not to be recognized as a woman. When she reaches the city Costanza, ruled by Cacco, king of Bettinia, she is immediately invited in by the king to join his service.
Again, as in the biblical account of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, Cacco’s wife then falls in love with this young ‘man’ and begins to woo him. However, Costanzo refuses, just as Joseph or later Lanval did, and the subsequent development then follows the same basic concept with only minor deviations from the source narratives, whatever they might have been. To be sure, the female protagonist emerges as triumphant, able to resist all seduction attempts, defeating the queen and proving her own character qualities.

However, in contrast to the biblical and medieval sources, the queen does not resort to the charge that Costanzo had tried to rape her, but her hatred of this ‘man’ proves to be equally burning and disastrous. She can only think of ways to get him killed, so she urges her husband to send the young man out to catch one of the horrifying satyrs, hybrid beings who attack villagers, farmers, causing much harm. The queen knows only too well that there is no one who would be able or willing to risk his own life trying to capture one of those mysterious creatures, although the king is most desirous to own one of them like an exotic animal in a zoo. For him, to hold a satyr as a creature for his entertainment would be a great delight, but up to that point, no one at his court had been able to fulfill his wish.

In short, the queen skillfully coaxes her husband to force Costanzo to risk his life in the attempt to overwhelm one of the satyrs and to bring it back with him to the court. She assumes that even that brave and strong man would not be able to carry out that task, so she expects Costanzo to meet his death in that adventure since no one else has yet accomplished it. The young man immediately declares his willingness to take on this challenge for the king although he knows only too well that the driving force behind this request was the queen, now his mortal enemy. However, instead of simply moving toward the satyrs, who would easily overwhelm and kill him, he requests several objects to be prepared with which he can set up a trap for the satyrs, using food and alcohol to make them all fall asleep. This facilitates it for him, indeed, to capture one of the satyrs and to transport him back to the court.
The most important aspects of the entire story emerge only then because the tied-up satyr responds to several events around them in a rather curious manner. Observing a peasant father following the funeral procession for his dead son, the satyr smiles, but does not reveal the reason for his behavior. Once Costanzo has arrived at the city market square, where an execution is about to happen, the satyr laughs out loudly, though it does not say anything to explain the cause of this laughter. At court, where the courtiers welcome Costanzo joyfully calling out his name, the satyr laughs even harder. But when the king and the queen are addressed by the young man, the satyr burst out in laughter more than ever before, yet it all remains a mystery.

The queen, still trying to torture the young knight, convinces her husband to force Costanzo once again to try the seemingly impossible, to make the satyr speak. When the former threatens him with death in the case of continued silence but promises him freedom otherwise, the truth is finally revealed. The satyr could see through the exterior illusion and recognize the truth behind things surrounding him, and since he understood in each situation how fake everything was, although those attending did not fully realize it, he burst out laughing. Most importantly then proves to be what he reveals about the court at large and Costanzo in particular: “everyone was yelling Costanzo, Costanzo!’ and you are, however, Costanza” (180).

The protagonist realizes immediately that his disguise as a man is about to dawn upon the king, so he diverts the latter’s attention and inquires about the last scene, also at court when he and the satyr had stood in front of the royal couple. The truth then comes out, destroying the queen and her entire court: “the king, and even you,

28 For the history of laughter as an epistemological phenomenon, see the contributions to Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences, ed. Albrecht Classen; cf. also Velten, Scurrilitas: das Lachen, die Komik und der Körper in Literatur und Kultur des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. This particular episode in Straparola’s tale or in the Roman de Silence, which I will discuss below, has not been addressed yet within that context.
still believe that the maidens who serve the queen are maidens; however, the majority of them are not maidens” (180).

Upon the king’s investigation, everyone’s true gender identity is then revealed, which elevates Costanzo’s or rather Costanza’s estimation due to his unswerving loyalty, bravery, and fidelity. Her cross-dressing appears as having been a simple strategy born out of external necessities and hence fully excusable. The queen and her fake maidens, by contrast, are quickly condemned to death and burnt in a huge fire. Subsequently, the king marries Costanza, and her entire family feels deeply happy about it, which thus concludes this account in a dignified and satisfying manner, as sentimental as it might sound: “And so Costanza, noble and magnanimous, became a queen as a reward for her good service and lived with King Cacco for a long time” (180).

**Surprising Reception History**

Suzanne Magnanini comments in a note accompanying this story in its English translation that the motif contained in this tale can be traced to the narrative archetype “A Young Woman Disguised as a Man Is Wooed by the Queen.” 29 We can certainly agree with that, but this would only refer to the episode in which the queen tries to seduce Costanzo and would not explain further the wider context of this tale and its source. From here, we can step back and examine more in detail why and how Heldris’s *Roman de Silence* might be the most likely source for Straparola, at least in this one case, despite the vast historical distance, the linguistic difference, and the geographical span from thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman England to sixteenth-century Venice.

Heldris’s romance consists of 6706 verses and thus represents a complex, fully developed narrative about the life of the young woman Silence who has to be raised as a boy and then act as a man because King Evan had forbidden that women would be allowed to succeed to their father’s thrones since two worthy counts had died in a duel fighting over their wives’ inheritance, with both women

being sisters: “Ja feme n’ient mais iretere” (314; no woman shall ever inherit again). At the end of the romance, Evan lifts that ban again because he has witnessed Silence’s enormous bravery and loyalty, but the major thrust of the romance is driven by this legal condition which chagrins Silence’s parents so much that they raise their daughter as a boy.

In Straparola’s much shorter prose version, the parents of the fourth daughter simply cannot grant her sufficient dowry for a marriage with a worthy king, so the young woman decides on her own to cross-dress and to pretend to be a knight. Nevertheless, the outcome proves to be exactly the same in both texts, with the female protagonist demonstrating outstanding military prowess, knightly skill, and political circumspection. No one is able to recognize her true gender identity, except for the satyr (in Straparola’s version) who breaks out in loud laughter when he hears the members of the court calling out this woman’s male name. In Heldris’s romance, the female protagonist, in her male disguise, has to capture Merlin, the most powerful medieval magician, who does not allow anyone to achieve that goal except for a woman who could hunt him down and capture him, which is then actually the case.

In both works, the fe/male protagonist knows much about the customs and weaknesses of this mysterious being, Merlin and/or the satyr, which also entails that s/he is fully aware about the difficulty if not impossibility of accomplishing the task set to him/her unless s/he gets some mechanical, physical support to achieve that task. Smartness thus replaces physical prowess, or, rationality enters the literary stage, and this both in the thirteenth and in the sixteenth century.\(^{30}\)

For Straparola, a reference to Merlin, the ‘classical’ medieval magician and prophet, would have appeared to be out of place, whereas the inclusion of satyrs, certainly creatures from classical antiquity, proved to be a constructive alternative.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Cf. my pertinent reflections on this topic in a different context: Classen, “Self-Control, Rationality, Ethics, and Mutual Respect.”

\(^{31}\) Riggs, “Faun and Satyr.” For an impressive overview from antiquity to the modern world up to the immediate present, with an extensive bibliography, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr#cite_note-FOOTNOTERoom1983270-110 (last accessed on July 27, 2022).
Merlin and the Satyr: The Truth Revealed

The most important feature shared by both texts consists of Merlin’s or the satyr’s laughter respectively. They both laugh about the same situations, and explain them, once they have started to talk, the same way. In detail, we notice a few differences as to what finally makes the mysterious figure talk, but they only support further the claim that Straparola had some kind of version of the *Roman de Silence* in front of him. In Heldris’s work, the king threatens Merlin with death, whereas in the *Piacevoli Notti*, it is Costanzo who warns the satyr about the dire consequences of his silence. But both times, the queen emerges as the decisive factor threatening her enemy into accepting the challenge, not only to capture a satyr but then also to make him talk. When Merlin refers to the crowd of Christians visiting an abbot and his monks, he laughed because “Under their feet was a treasure, / huge quantities of gold and silver” (6335‒36); in Straparola, the satyr comments that when the crowd watched the imminent execution, he laughed because “a thousand thieves, who have stolen thousands of florins from the public and deserve a thousand gallows, were there in the square to stare at a poor wretch who was led to the gallows and had only snatched ten florins to support perhaps himself and his family” (179).

Both here and there, the narrative highlights the discrepancy between illusion and reality, which only the satyr or Merlin respectively understands. Although both are then hesitant to reveal the truth, and although the Old French narrator invests much time and space for the elaboration of the thoughts going through the heads of the five involved persons (Silence, Merlin, the nun, the queen, and the king), the outcome is exactly the same. Silence’s gender identity is revealed, along with the identity of the nun who is the queen’s male lover. In Straparola’s version, the queen is surrounded by an entire court of maids who all turn out to be men who served as the queen’s lovers, or perhaps more like her gigolos.

Merlin laughs also because he himself was deceived by Silence, whereas the satyr then falls silent and leaves all matters to the king,
who has then the nun and his own wife investigated and quickly executed, him by hanging, her by drawing and quartering (6656), whereas Silence receives highest praise, of course. In the sixteenth-century version, the queen and her maids are all burned at the stake. The outcome of the story then runs further parallel, with the queen dead, Silence exposed as a maid, and the king happy to marry her “in the presence of all of the barons and knights” (Straparola, 180). In Heldris’s romance, the king at first expresses his admiration for the young woman: “Indeed, the price of your loyalty / is far above that of my royalty” (6633–34). Then he revokes his own rigid inheritance law, and finally marries her, after she has shed all of her external traces of manhood: “Tolt quanque or sor le cors de malle” (6673).

Both texts conclude with the same outcome, the marriage, and the parents both of Silence and Costanza (now with the real name in the feminine) arrive at court and join the celebrations, deeply happy about the development for their daughter. But there is also a significant difference because Heldris concludes his narrative account with final comments about the need to praise virtuous and noble ladies and to ignore the fact that there also evil women whose appearance should not cast a shadow on the good ones: “A good woman should neither take offense / nor blame herself for someone else’s faults” (6699–70). Straparola formulates more plainly: “And so Costanza, noble and magnanimous, became a queen as a reward for her good service and lived with King Cacco for a long time” (180). Structurally, however, we face exactly the same situation, and there is no doubt in my mind that Heldris’s romance obviously did not simply disappear in the dust of history and experienced, instead, although it is still impossible to confirm through what channels, a new reception in sixteenth-century Venetian literature.

Heldris has the parents of their single daughter raise her as a male, whereas Costanza in Straparola’s version decides on cross-dressing by herself out of the necessity to find her own way in life and to realize her own destiny in the role of a man. In the romance, legal
issues are of central concerns which make the parents decide on changing their daughter’s gender at least externally. In Straparola’s story, there are economic and social concerns because the parents have given away too much of their properties and can no longer marry off their daughter to a royal marriage partner. In Heldris’s text, Queen Eufeme did not only try to seduce Silence but she also then made every possible effort to get him killed/executed because of his alleged rape attempt – the motif of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. Straparola, by contrast, only presents the queen as attempting to convince Costanzo rhetorically to grant her his love, though without success. There is no charge of rape.

We could list more differences between both texts, but those could be easily overshadowed by many similarities, which ultimately strongly outweigh the former. Altogether, this allows us to conclude that the Roman de Silence appears to have survived beyond the thirteenth century somehow, that it was probably translated into an Italian version, and that it thus reached Straparola who recognized the high literary quality of this obscure narrative and utilized it for his own purposes. The difference in genre – courtly romance (if that is the correct term) versus prose short narrative – are obvious since Heldris elaborated the origin of his protagonist considerably, added many adventurous episodes and narrative layers, explained the reasons for the need to cross-dress in an alternative way, etc. But altogether, we can confirm that there are strong correlations between both texts in thematic, conceptual, and structural terms, not to mention the fundamental similarities in the shared motif.

**Conclusion**

If this argument can be upheld, a number of significant consequences emerge. First, we will have to revisit the entire question of whether the survival of a text in only one manuscript is really decisive enough to determine its actual reception history. Then, we can draw direct lines of literary influence across the centuries and languages, not to speak of the different social frameworks for the individual audiences. Third, even if we were to question the hypothesis that
Heldris’s *Roman de Silence* continued to experience a much longer afterlife than the one manuscript seems to indicate, we can certainly confirm that the theme addressed by Heldris obviously appealed to Straparola as well. We cannot say anything about his actual use of sources since there are no explicit references in any of his tales or in the two prologues to volume one and volume two. Nevertheless, placing the thirteenth-century text next to the sixteenth-century story, we can plainly recognize very strong parallels and hence textual indications that the older one could have influenced the later one.

There are, of course, other options to explain the astounding similarities, but they seem to be rather far-fetched. Straparola could have enjoyed exploring this theme just on his own, without any knowledge of the Old French source, especially since he experimented with the idea of cross-dressing – which finds its expression only in this one story. He might have learned about it through some other narrative collections, but it remains very difficult to determine any specifics. Or, just like Heldris, he was fascinated by the motif of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife and expanded on this by means of the cross-dressing theme.

None of those suggestions prove to be very convincing; instead, our best bet still seems to be to assume that the *Roman de Silence* was copied in more than one manuscript, or was translated into some other romance language and thus made its way to Italy in the sixteenth century, unless it survived through oral channels. We are facing a mysterious riddle, but it is a most exciting and important phenomenon which promises to shed new light both on Heldris’s and on Straparola’s work. If this connection holds, we could proceed more assuredly concerning manuscript transmissions, the global reception process, and the translation of literary texts into different languages, either in written or in oral form. We do not need to be concerned with some external variances between both works since they represent two individual genres and are aimed at very different audiences. For Heldris, for instance, the entire issue was predicated on the discussion between nature and nurture, and Silence herself
reflects deeply on her sexual identity (e.g., 2823–702), which is ultimately restored, allowing heterosexuality to return to that center. In the case of Straparola’s narrative, the issue of gender matters less significantly, whereas the economic factors assume central importance.

However we might judge the direct connections between the thirteenth- and the sixteenth-century text, both authors certainly shared the same interest and were dedicated to operating playfully with the issue of cross-dressing and the allusion to gender-bending, although in both cases, ultimately sexual heteronormativity is reestablished and solidified because Silence and, respectively, Costanza are dismasked and return to their traditional gender role which they happily embrace. Nevertheless, in both cases, we clearly observe that the poets projected many possibilities for their female protagonists to function fully within a male-dominated society and to triumph over all their opponents.

We do not know at all to whom Heldris might have addressed his text – though we may assume that it was a courtly group predominantly of female listeners/readers – but we can be sure that Straparola composed his works particularly for a female audience within Venetian society. In either case, however, the narrative elements and structure of the tale clearly indicate that the female protagonist deserves greatest respect and admiration for her boldness, intelligence, bravery, and creativity in maneuvering through life, overcoming numerous barriers and severe challenges. It seems very understandable why Straparola ultimately decided to draw from the Old French/Anglo-Norman romance and to make its essential narrative motifs to his own. Through our close analysis of the *Piacevoli notti* and its sources, we can now conclude that the tradition of medieval literature did not simply peter out by 1500 giving room for Reformation and Renaissance thought. On the contrary, the alleged paradigm shift did not fully occur, as dramatic the transformations of society, technology, medicine, and science certainly proved to be.
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Bibliography


Heldris de Cornuaille. Le Roman de Silence: A Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Verse-Romance


*Leaf from the manuscript “Le Roman de Silence”*

*University of Nottingham*
Langland, Father of American Literatures

John M. Bowers
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Geoffrey Chaucer's position as “father of English literature” has been steadily challenged in recent years. This paper both proposes and interrogates the other fourteenth-century English poet William Langland's possible claims as the origin for the Puritan tradition of New England and, hence, the later traditions of American literatures—in the plural. We know that the first copy of his satirical, theological dream-vision Piers Plowman arrived in New England in 1630 with the father of Anne Bradstreet, and as a result any patriarchal genealogy is already problematic because the first author in the American family-tree was a woman. Rather than the linearity of the English tradition, America offers a sprawling mosaic of minority writings marked by spiritual restlessness, calls for social reform, and the urgent need for self-definition, all already established in the English Puritan Piers tradition. The discussion ends with Florence Converse's largely (and aptly) forgotten novel Long Will (1908) that sought to retrieve the lost life-story of the author of Piers Plowman.

My book Chaucer and Langland: The Antagonistic Tradition interrogated Geoffrey Chaucer's position as the Father of English Poetry imposing coherence upon the English literary tradition through genealogical affiliation. Meanwhile the controversial fourteenth-century visionary poem Piers Plowman, virtuously anonymous since the time of its release in the late 1370s, lurked as a shadow-presence because its author, seeking safety during dangerous times, had disappeared into a near-invisibility until Walter W. Skeat conjectured about his name and career in his monumental 1886 edition. This article follows the largely subliminal afterlife of Piers among seventeenth-century Puritans including those who migrated to New England and formed a textual community fostering later American literatures—in the plural. What secures this line of transmission is the discovery that Thomas Dudley, father of Anne Bradstreet, carried with him a copy of Langland's book across the Atlantic aboard the Arbella in 1630.1 Bradstreet, of course, became

1 McCarl, The Plowman's Tale, 9. This was almost certainly Robert Crowley’s 1550 edition, or later reprint, which named the author as Langland, albeit “Roberte Langelande.”
America’s first notable English-language poet and thereby the taproot of the Puritan tradition in the New World. In spite of my title, Langland emerges not so much as the progenitor as a prototype for a tradition that remains essentially a mosaic of minority writings marked by spiritual restlessness, calls for social reform, and the urgent need for self-definition already established in the English *Piers* tradition.²

Yet things are never that simple with Langland. Dudley did own a copy of *Piers* when his estate entered probate in 1653, and there is the presumption that the book passed to his son Joseph Dudley who graduated from Harvard College in 1665. There is further presumption that Joseph donated his copy to the Harvard Library where it perished in the fire of 1764. The first printed catalogue of the Harvard College Library did list a 1650 edition of *Pierce Plowman*,³ but this could not have been Dudley’s copy and therefore not the one available as Bradstreet’s background for *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* in 1650. This typifies the frustration in tracing Langland’s influence upon American letters. Dots do not connect as they do in the English Chaucerian tradition to Lydgate, Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton, and beyond. Even if Helen Vendler shrewdly spots the linkage between Langland and Adrienne Rich by way of Walt Whitman, we cannot find evidence that the author of *Leaves of Grass* ever spent time loafing over *Piers Plowman*.⁴

Cultural studies usually insist that the center produces the margins, but Langland’s legacy exemplifies the process by which the margin creates and maintains the Chaucerian center. In terms of chronology, Langlandian literature emerged *before* the creation of the majority position. *Piers* was read and imitated during the later fourteenth-century, manuscripts were copied, leaders of the 1381 English


³ I am grateful to Harvard librarian Susan Halpert for providing information on the earliest *Piers* holdings.

Rising appropriated its title-character’s name, and Lollard heretics found support for their reformist agenda in the poem’s religious satires at a time when Chaucer wrote for a narrow coterie and left his works to be copied and circulated only in the decades after his death in 1400. Though pushed farther to the margins during the fifteenth century, *Piers* would remain permanently available as the model for later fringe discourses. When the Puritans moved to New England, their own minority writings moved from the periphery to the authority-position so that the transplanted textual community began generating new alterities which would eventually make their own bids for centrality.

Protestantism had made explicit the longstanding Christian tenet that the “elect” would comprise only a small minority. Once these nonconformists arrived in New England, Puritan instincts continued to confer special authority to fringe voices constituting what has been called an *official marginality* where “the periphery is never someplace else.” Originally conceived in opposition, *Piers* remained in England on this periphery where it was steadily consigned by the official discourses. Provoking repudiation, the poem demanded exclusion as the fundamental grounds for constructing the majority identity in which its own ingredients stubbornly and subversively inhered. Thus early Tudor publishers even credited Chaucer with his own *Plowman’s Tale.*

When Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes the minority performer “who dwells at the margins of discourse,” he describes textual strategies traceable back to Langland’s paradigmatic practices. Because these contests are negotiated within tight parameters of language, geography, and even technologies of textual production, many of the factors that had excluded Gates’s minority productions from


7 Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 52.
the mainstream canon—such as contested authorship, uncertain dating, and indeterminate layers of revision—are the same issues still swirling around *Piers Plowman.*

Christopher Hill made the steady case that Lollardy’s core values—which were also Langland’s values—led directly into the mainstream of seventeenth-century Puritanism. Crowley’s preface to his 1550 edition had already linked Langland with Wyclif as harbingers of the Protestant movement, and John Bunyan found in *The Book of Martyrs* the heroic history of the reform movement descending from Wyclif and early Lollard preachers. Langland’s name continued to be invoked in this reformist reading of English history by Thomas Fuller in 1662, and *Piers* was still studied during the seventeenth century by men such as Gerard Langbaine. Thus Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* almost inevitably echoed Langland’s opening lines: “As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream.” Barbara Johnson’s *Reading “Piers Plowman” and “The Pilgrim’s Progress”* finds the fingerprints if not the smoking gun, so to speak, when investigating Bunyan’s indebtedness to Langland. So too with Langland’s presence across the Atlantic. When he was a lad in Boston, Benjamin Franklin began his education by reading *Pilgrim’s Progress* which transmitted the progressive values of this nonconformist culture.

8 Warner, *The Lost History of “Piers Plowman.”


10 Hill, *A Tinker and a Poor Man,* 29.


If Bunyan was not directly influenced by *Piers*,\(^{15}\) the real question is what “influence” means within the Langlandian tradition. Puritan writers show few signs of careful reading, seldom cite Langland’s name even after 1550, and typically demonstrate only a second-hand knowledge, even blurring the distinction between Piers and the author himself. When the Puritans migrated to New England, this vagueness about the Langland tradition arrived with them. Whether or not she spent long hours with her father’s copy of *Piers*, Anne Bradstreet found spiritual meanings in commonplace objects such as a tree or a sea-tossed boat which had already figured in Langland’s allegories. Her *Contemplations* made the restless search for faith both its subject and structural principle, doubling back and wandering off to pick up another subject rather than moving directly to her alliterative conclusion—“Their parts, their ports, their pomp’s all laid in th’ dust”—in a manner reminiscent of her fourteenth-century antecedent.\(^{16}\)

As a subliminal subtext, Langland’s vision of the remaking of England in a new spiritual form abetted Puritan confidence that a Christian community could be remade in New England. This transplanted culture was self-evidently Langlandian, and yet Langland himself cannot be installed as Father of American Literature because the trope of paternity had already been claimed by the official Chaucerian tradition. From the outset, then, the American tradition stubbornly resisted formulation as a family-tree of authors linked by acknowledged descent from a single founder.\(^{17}\) Although William Faulkner famously hailed Mark Twain as the Father of American Literature, many other nineteenth-century predecessors could lay claims to this title. Faulkner himself was a devoted reader of Melville. If Anne Bradstreet is our first poet, moreover, the Father of American literature would have been a woman.\(^{18}\)

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15 Coulton, *Medieval Panorama*, 539-40, 543 and 550, makes Bunyan’s knowledge of Langland almost axiomatic.

16 *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, 204-14 (line 230).

17 Baker, “Figurations for a New American Literary History.”

18 For a tradition not configured as patriarchal succession, see Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History*, 1380-1589.
Langland’s vision of a society remade under the trope of pilgrimage was enacted as a program of emigration and colonization utterly different from the Dutch in New Amsterdam or the gentleman-adventurers in Virginia. Though they understood that their voyage was a one-way journey for resettlement, these Plymouth colonists conceived of themselves as they are still popularly known—“Pilgrims”—which was already a Langlandian conceit.19 The New England experience rendered itself meaningful in terms of Israel’s settlement as a minority population with special providential status in the land of Canaan. Puritan writers such as William Bradford, John Winthrop, Edward Taylor, and Cotton Mather took as their paradigm the Book of Exodus where the chosen people endured a prolonged sojourn in a wilderness.20 Piers had also proposed one final quest for an ideal form of Christian livelihood that would find expression in Samuel Danforth’s famous sermon *Errand into the Wilderness* (1670).21 As the poet of landscapes without borders or place names, Langland set the terms of escape with the ever-ready option to “go west” yet again.

Established in their New England theocracy, these Puritans revived the short-lived optimism of Edwardine Protestants such as writer and publisher Robert Crowley. The American Puritan foundation privileged books and education for a textual community engaged in religious enquiry, moral scrutiny, and sustained reforms—all intellectual projects descending from Wyclif’s Oxford of the 1370s. In addition to his 1550 edition of *Piers*, Crowley’s polemical poetry maintained a readership among these radical Protestants, influencing in turn the Bay Psalm Book (1640) and Michael Wigglesworth’s *The Day of Doom* (1662).22 America would become the land of second chances where Langland’s kind of literature would gain new

19 Burrow, “The Action of Langland’s Second Vision.”
20 Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 263-82.
21 This becomes the paradigmatic text for Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*.
purchase in this overseas community even if not acknowledged by those who wrote under its remote influence.

Morton Bloomfield’s classic interpretation of Piers Plowman as a “Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse” established the terms for considering the Puritan millennialism of the translatio regni basic to the formation of American identity.23 Langland’s vision of a transformed Christian society resurfaces in what Bercovitch characterizes as the exuberant national eschatology.24 With his pervasive fiction of beginning-anew, Langland’s purposeful forgetting of native antecedents provided the model for the strategic amnesia of American writers who typically behave as if they belonged to no established tradition and were inventing their literature from scratch. With literary history no less than national history, Ernest Renan’s dictum is worth repeating: “the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things.”25 The myth of the Puritan origins effaced their roiling prehistory as persecuted dissidents with their own internal discourses.26 Also largely erased as part of this collective amnesia was the textual memory of Piers as a literary forerunner.

Reclamation of Puritan literary history became the achievement of scholars such as Perry Miller and Kenneth Murdock followed by Sacvan Bercovitch and Emory Elliott.27 In a ground-breaking collection of essays, Elliott made grand claims for the reach of this undertaking: “Puritanism contained the seeds of political and social ideals, structures of thought and language, and literary themes which inspired both the content and the forms of much American writing

23 Bloomfield, “Piers Plowman” as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, 175-77.
26 Gay, A Loss of Mastery: Puritan Historians in Colonial America, 3-25.
27 Murdocks’s project was epitomized by Literature and Theology in Colonial England.
from 1700 to the present.”

These New Englanders harbored the fantasy of intellectual pioneers for “a world in which the critics and intellectuals of society were not marginal but actually in power.”

As the earliest version of this fantasy, *Piers* provided ethical values and textual strategies that remained embedded in the deep-structures of American writing across an astonishing range of genres.

The novel’s emergence in the American literary canon followed upon the fact that, from its inception with Defoe and Fielding, the genre had been dismissed by the official literary world and remained a medium for the excluded, especially women. Resembling *Piers* through its dialogic deployment of official-sounding voices, Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798) employed actual ventriloquism to elude and baffle social authorities. Never managing the chivalric revivals of Sir Walter Scott, the darker medievalism of the American Gothic retains this distinctly Langlandian stamp. To revisit Leslie Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel* is to realize how American fiction remains steadily estranged from Chaucer’s humorous world where even the tragic *Troilus and Criseyde* was rendered fumbling, parodic, and sometimes downright funny.

*Piers Plowman*’s allegory as a method for formulating the self’s spiritual progress, with its lapses and setbacks, moved from Puritan devotional practices into literary works, remaining a potent ingredient in the symbolic narratives of Hawthorne and Melville. Despite its Chaucerian title, Hawthorne’s “The Canterbury Pilgrims” reads more like a Langlandian parable. As a descendant of William Pynchon, who arrived in New England with Governor Winthrop only to be condemned as a heretic for publishing *The Meritorious Price of

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29 Fisher, “American Literary and Cultural Studies since the Civil War,” 235.


32 Waggoner, “Hawthorne’s ‘Canterbury Pilgrims’: Theme and Structure.”
Our Redemption, Thomas Pynchon carries forward the tradition of Puritan pugnaciousness. Even the name of the wayward protagonist of Gravity’s Rainbow—Slothrop—has moral-symbolic meaning descending from Langland’s privileging of Sloth as the besetting vice of his own errant dreamer. Langland’s incorporation of the ancient eremitic vice of acedia, which included random wandering among its symptoms, enabled the sprawling picaresque quality of Piers and thereafter much travel-narrative of the American mainstream from Twain’s Innocents Abroad to Paul Theroux’s Great Railway Bazaar and beyond.

From his entry under the persona of a “heremite vnholy of werkes” (B.Pro.3), Langland cast himself as the perennial misfit estranged from any official clerical status as priest, monk, or friar. Langland assigned his fictive alter-ego to the underclass neighborhood of Cornhill where his fringe identity as a member of the “clerical proletariat” was confirmed by the existence of a wife and daughter. Residual Puritan anticlericalism ensured that no clergyman in American fiction from the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale to Elmer Gantry – with the movie versions of Jim Bakker (and Tammy Faye) – escapes condemnation for failing to maintain the ideals of his religious calling.

Archbishop William Laud heard seventeenth-century Puritans described as opposing “all that ever authority ordains for them.” Revalued as the spirit of resistance by the nineteenth century, the adversarial zeal of this tradition found new expression among American intellectuals who revived the reform-minded radicalism of the fifteenth century and railed against a national culture dominated

35 Langland, Piers Plowman, ed. Schmidt, 2-3.
36 McHardy, “Careers and Disappointments in the Late-Medieval Church.”
by big business, corrupt politicians, and materialist complacency. The icons of American literature, whether authors such as Thoreau and Whitman or fictional characters such as Hester Prynn and Huck Finn, retain the oppositional imprint of their Langlandian forebear. The standard American hero became the misfit, the drifter, the outlaw, the bad boy—all of them avatars of the unemployed wanderer and self-styled lowlife Long Will. Though Jack Kerouac was educated at Columbia University, he epitomized this practice of identifying with the lower classes, casting himself as the poor-boy hero of *On the Road* and embracing the economic as well as ethnic under-culture of America as his own visionary equivalent of the Fair Field Full of Folk seen out the window of a speeding Studebaker.

In his spiritual autobiography *Personal Narrative* (1740), Jonathan Edwards rendered an account of his inner experiences by way of a narrator troubled by depression and a loss of direction as one more echo of the Langlandian voice sounded in American letters.\(^{38}\) Permanently distrustful of mere storytelling, the personal essays of Emerson and Thoreau continued this first-person scrutiny of self and society inherited ultimately from *Piers Plowman*. Episodic, autobiographical, and often preachy, *Walden* emerges as the quintessentially Langlandian successor championing hard work, simple living, social justice, and even ecological responsibility—anticipated by Will’s vision of Kynd—against the corrupt collusion of government and mercantile capitalism originally represented by Lady Mede.\(^{39}\)

Puritans such as Cotton Mather in his *Essays to Do Good* (1710) had fully inherited Langland’s hostility to idleness and his horror of waste, while productive labor emerged as a spiritual as well as a social duty.\(^{40}\) But American writers also inherited Langland’s anxieties that the act of writing constituted no legitimate form of good works. “You write a book,” Gertrude Stein lamented, “and while you write it you are ashamed.”\(^{41}\) This Puritan imperative of

\(^{38}\) Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*.

\(^{39}\) Gilmore, “Walden and the ‘Curse of Trade’.”

\(^{40}\) Levin, “Essays to Do Good for the Glory of God: Cotton Mather’s Bonifacius.”

gainful employment continues to challenge the status of writing unless somehow useful in the manner of instructional manuals from *The Farmer’s Almanac* to oddball classics like *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* and *The Whole Earth Catalog*. Edward Taylor may have guiltily deprecated his verse as “ragged nonsense” and “sylabicated jumble,” but he remained nonetheless obsessed with writing, producing over 3,100 manuscript pages with confidence in the *process itself* as a form of Christian action. With *Piers* lurking in the background, Taylor provides an early American example of the preoccupation with process which will characterize so many other wayward masterpieces such as *Moby Dick*.

By converting heresy into the new orthodoxy, Puritans had endorsed a transvaluation of values which became basic to later cultural enterprises. Extending the homoerotic imagery suffusing *Preparatory Meditations* of Edward Taylor—who first used the *calamus* in his poetry—Walt Whitman champions a new minority community of men in same-sex relations. Casting himself as the poetic loafer who retreats “to the bank by the wood,” Whitman stands as the clearest incarnation of the Langlandian poet at the center of a new literary mainstream. He writes with no acknowledgment of prior writers. He creates the energetic language of resistance in his vernacular long-lines. He finds a deeply human divinity “in my own face in the glass.” He enters into dialogue with his own Soul and Speech. And he engages in bold authorial inscription with the internal signature “Walt Whitman, an American.” Much like his fourteenth-century predecessor, Whitman had only one great poem which he spent his lifetime revising. Three years after Whitman’s death came the trial of Oscar Wilde—an event deeply felt in the United States after Wilde’s reading-tour of 1882—so that the nascent gay tradition

42 Kenner, *A Homemade World*.

43 Keller, “The Example of Edward Taylor,” considers process as the key motive for *Preparatory Meditations*.


45 These lines come from the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*; see Whitman, *Selected Poems*, 15-66.

46 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 180-85, describes the hostile reception in the Puritan stronghold of Boston.
went deeper underground, much like the outlawed Lollard tradition during the fifteenth century, only to emerge with renewed vitality after Stonewall in the 1970s.

Unlike their British counterparts such as Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott who published their novels anonymously, American writers are prone to pseudonyms such as Mark Twain, O. Henry and Dr. Seuss.\(^47\) When Joyce Carol Oates writes mystery novels, for example, she becomes Rosamond Smith. In contrast to Chaucer who made multiple efforts at attaching his real name to works in colophons and even running headers in manuscripts such as Ellesmere, the author of *Piers* sheltered under the pseudonym Will Langland which can be extracted from his text only with some ingenuity at decoding—“I haue lyued in lond, quod I, my name is Longe Wille” (B.15.152)—whereas the only witness to his real name remains a manuscript memorandum saying he was William Rokele.\(^48\)

Other American writers such as Thomas Pynchon take this process one step further, perpetuating the particularly Langlandian quality of evasion and escape from public scrutiny. Edward Taylor had established a model for American writers who followed this alternative path, as did Emily Dickinson in the next century, wishing paradoxically to address a reading public while courting obscurity. Writers in the Chaucerian tradition have been publicity-seekers, but Langlandian writers such as J. D. Salinger have cultivated the mystique of retreat and isolation. Another writer who keeps a low profile, Don DeLillo in his *Mao II* offers the disturbing account of novelist Bill Gray (a pen-name) who spent a quarter-century evading publicity while his status as a literary legend grew: “The narrower the boundaries of my life, the more I exagerate myself.”\(^49\)

The near despair expressed by Langland’s poem resurfaced in the anguish of emigrant Puritans such as Anne Bradstreet who felt the

\(^{47}\) Budd, *Our Mark Twain*, studies the cultivation of authorial identity made possible by assuming a pen-name.


frustration that an ideal renewal had not materialized in the New World. These Puritans then mobilized the rhetoric of the jeremiad and pointed to calamities as evidence that the people had fallen away from the high purposes of their forefathers. Just as Langland’s vision of social decline sought remedy in a return to earlier Christian standards, these jeremiads enshrined the achievements of the Pilgrim Fathers and privileged a lost ideal that would remain the goal of moral and social recuperation.

While the Puritan jeremiad persisted among writers like Mark Twain and Norman Mailer, the Langlandian spirit of social discontent lingers at the juncture of high culture and popular activism in the work of fumbling, obsessive satirists such as Michael Moore. The New Yorker published a Langland-like profile of the disheveled malcontent and professional trouble-maker that resonates over six centuries:

… a satirist disguised as a loser . . . a working-class malcontent eternally in mourning for the betrayed paradise of his youth . . . He can’t seem to understand the way capitalism works in this country, and he pads around asking questions about it . . . He will never be much of a thinker or social analyst, and he can be stunningly unfair. He seizes on the hapless surfaces of American life and projects his feelings of contempt onto them . . . Moore’s satirical scattershot method offers no way of distinguishing between real and pathological terrors. He implicates himself in what he hates and fears, and he emerges as a wounded patriot searching for a small measure of clarity.

The Landlandian tradition continues asserting itself in jagged, jumpy documentaries such as Capitalism: A Love Story and Michael Moore


51 Miller, Errand into the Wilderness, examined the persistent role of Puritan jeremiad in American culture.

52 Minter, “The Puritan Jeremiad as a Literary Form.”

53 Denby, “The Current Cinema”; I have condensed his review of Bowling for Columbine.
in *TrumpLand* endlessly agonizing over social ills without providing any clear solution or even hope that gross failing can be remedied.

While minority-identifying critics have moved away from political master-narratives to more nuanced readings of individual texts, Langlandian studies have moved in opposite directions to reinstate *Piers* in an historical context in which Langland steadily provokes and invariably loses these contests, destined always to remain Chaucer’s Other and emerge as the prototype for the minority author. Puritan advocacy of the ancient Christian *sermo humilis* meant an antagonism to the High Culture that created canonic authors, and consequently these writers kept their own new literature closer to the popular terrain where American literature has largely remained. Long dismissed as rude and rustic, Langland’s language anticipated this standard. E. R. Curtius’s pronouncement that “canon formation in literature must always proceed to a selection of classics” applied to the masterworks of the European tradition, but nothing in his notion prevents selection from outsider writings. If Chaucer was installed to represent the Best, Langland champions the Rest.

Newer classroom anthologies which widen the American canon to include the diversities of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality extend in a sense the organizing principle in older surveys which began with Puritan writings. This is because the Puritans themselves had constructed an identity based upon their own minority status. Quickly, however, theirs became another instance of the oppressed becoming the oppressors. For example, while the Lollard movement had a long history of including outspoken women such as Margery Baxter and Avice Moon, American Puritans replicated the structures of patriarchal authority to exclude dissonant female voices. Con-

54 Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 259.

55 Elliott, gen. ed., *The Columbia Literary History of the United States*, was designed to revise older literary surveys such as Bradley, Beatty, and Long’s *The American Tradition in Literature*. 
demned as a “disturber of Israel,” Anne Hutchinson represents the
new minority at the heart of the old one.  

A whole range of Puritan projects such as Cotton Mather’s Nehe-
miah enforced a sense of homogeneity which excluded heretics and
demonized Natives to re-create the beleaguered community of the
faithful previously imagined by Langland in the siege upon Unity
Barn. The adversarial stance of the old Lollards became the stern de-
fensiveness of newly empowered Puritans. Reclamation of their his-
tory would then privilege their foundational myth to the exclusion
of others. In 1607 Captain John Smith’s ship arrived at Jamestown,
and in 1610 Pedro de Peralta established the Spanish in the territory
of New Mexico.  

Hardly a lone outpost, that is, the Massachusetts
Puritans already constituted just one more regional culture. And
since Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá published his Historia de la Nueva
México in 1610 and Captain Smith completed his Generall Historie
of Virginia fourteen years later, Puritan writings formed a regional
literature and not the solitary book culture as it was represented by
later New Englanders publishing mostly in Boston.

New England was similarly exaggerated as the major entry-point for
British immigration, while the Southern colonies were discounted
despite the intellectual as well as political leadership of Jefferson,
Washington, and Madison. F. O. Matthiessen’s American Renais-
sance (1941) gave new vitality to the prevailing notion of New
England’s literary dominance by enshrining Hawthorne, Melville,
Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman in a fraternal pantheon. Dubbing
them “Renaissance” authors meant constructing an American tra-
dition running parallel to the familiar periods in English literature

56 Lang, Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent.

57 Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away, 52-54, and Wilson, The

58 Baym, “Early Histories of American Literature.”

59 These misrepresentations are corrected by Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folk-
ways in America.
with Puritans cast vaguely in the role of medieval forerunners. The ways in which Bradstreet, Wigglesworth, and Edwards were rendered largely invisible repeated the process by which Langland had been mostly erased from English literary tradition.

Attractive as it remains, Matthiesen’s story of American literature falters and loses its coherence partly because the Puritan foundations were never successfully formulated as part of a genealogical narrative. Langland himself was no storyteller, and the Langlandian heritage’s distrust of master-narratives continues to frustrate literary history as plot-summary. As Bercovitch has noted, “we have nothing in America like the English line from Milton to Wordsworth to explain the ‘Puritanism’ of Hawthorne or Melville.” Under the long-term influence of Lollard iconoclasm, Puritan sensibilities dismissed the veneration of authors and balked at honoring writers as iconic presences. John Berryman’s *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* (1956) represents a singular attempt to establish a retroactive relationship with a seventeenth-century Puritan poet, though not as a founding father but rather as a remote sister-spirit or elusive fantasy-lover.

By contrast with the internationalist outlook in Chaucer’s writings, Langlandian literature turns inward as befitting America’s sense of self-containment verging upon isolationism. Native Americans have sought to revive their tribal traditions fostering a new generation of writers, largely out of oral cultures, and in the American Southwest, Latinx scholars have engaged in literary reclamation of texts in both Spanish and English while living storytellers such as Rudolfo Anaya


61 Benson, “The Frustration of Narrative and the Reader in *Piers Plowman*.”


have drawn upon their own richly imagined roots in New Mexico.\textsuperscript{64} These internal developments push back the boundaries to expand the arena for including more and more participation. For Langland originally, what remains anxiously at stake is the minority author’s rightful status \textit{as} a spokesperson for fellow outsiders. Cross-over writers invoke the regionalism of geography and ethnicity only to complicate their own author-positions. Thus probably the most popular New Mexico novel \textit{The Milagro Beanfield War} was written by the Anglo transplant John Nichols.

Langland’s emotive style of the vernacular sermon offered the model for African-American writers such as Toni Morrison whose forceful, cadenced prose derives much of its eloquence from the pulpit.\textsuperscript{65} Langland embedded Latin scripture in his poem only to erode the authority of this privileged language even as he appropriated scholastic disputation to expose its inability to reach unassailable conclusions. Langland’s strategies for mocking official discourses have been identified in the typical American practices of the trickster figure and the performance artist.\textsuperscript{66} Caginess, feigned rusticity, and the fool’s bravery form the catalogue of the minority writer’s ploys.

Though Langland spent most of his career in London, the initial action situated itself in the Malvern Hills, and his Worcestershire dialect served as a constant reminder of provincial identity even as \textit{Piers} was copied by London scribes.\textsuperscript{67} Similarly the colonial poet Edward Taylor, though his early education took place in England, located himself on the Massachusetts frontier where domestic isolation transformed the furthest fringe of the English-speaking world into a spiritual center. These markers of regionalism resisted the im-

\textsuperscript{64} Anaya has edited \textit{Voces: An Anthology of Nuevo Mexicano Writers} and co-edited with Lomeli \textit{Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland.}

\textsuperscript{65} Owst, \textit{Literature and Pulpit}, “A Literary Echo of the Social Gospel,” 548-93, anchors \textit{Piers Plowman} in the preaching tradition.

\textsuperscript{66} Gates, \textit{Signifying Monkey}, 44-88.

\textsuperscript{67} Bowers, “Two Professional Readers of Chaucer and Langland.”
petus for a centralized national culture and anticipated the diversity of sectional voices in more recent American literatures. Whereas Puritan minority status was defined by religion, later regionalisms would divide along the geographic fracture-lines of the North and the South, and later the West. Nineteenth-century immigration with the arrivals of the Irish, Italians, Chinese, and Jewish peoples would expand this sense of diversity from the geographic to the ethnic.

Assimilation became impossible for many of these newcomers permanently estranged by racial and religious identities so that diversity communities, including the longstanding Latinx and Native American cultures, resisted the homogenizing process of the nation-state’s summons to union *e pluribus unum*. Identities based on gender and sexuality become non-negotiable regionalisms of personhood that hearken back to Langland’s discourse of self-inscription free from any ready-made social categories. The notorious absence of authoritative voices in *Piers* demonstrates how the banishment of any monopoly of power clears the ground for such self-authorization.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. admitted that “virtually no scholar today would contend that the texts written by Black authors cohere into a tradition because the authors share certain innate characteristics.” This sense of artistic isolation from any genealogical tradition has served as the hallmark of diversity authors from Langland onward. When Anne Hudson concluded that “*Piers Plowman* in the two and a half centuries after its composition was more honored in the name than in the reading,” she points to the paradigmatic nature of later Langlandian writers negligent at actually reading their founding author and therefore unable to render visible, stable, and consistent a lineage of named successors.

68 Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*.
70 Hudson, “The Legacy of Piers Plowman,” 263.
Because their first settlements were unified solely by a sense of religious mission, the Puritan colonists already constituted the *mosaic tribe* basic to later national developments. Tichi, “Spiritual Biography and the ‘Lords Remembrancers’.” Unlike the English tradition, American literature never configured itself as an interconnected genealogy with a definite moment of origin and founding figure. If any paternity resides with the Puritans of New England—a claim that might be legitimately contested by Virginians—this paternity was subject to a regressive lineage going back to Old England, one which could not be acknowledged by writers asserting their newness as the first condition for creating something entirely their own. What has been described as “the paradoxical centrality of the marginal text” leads to the sweeping conclusion that American literature constitutes *nothing but* marginal texts replicating the original Langlandian heritage in its resistance to any internal coherence or self-conscious linkages. Rather than the bold strokes of the Chaucer tradition in England, American literature has steadily developed as a many-colored mosaic of regional and ethnic writings.

Thus the “tradition” of American fiction becomes its most brazen fiction. The lack of generational linkages from any *fons et origo* exposes its essential character as a constellation of individual writers representing a diverse and constantly diversifying culture. In what Walt Whitman looked forward to as “that composite American identity of the future” in his letter to gentlemen at Santa Fe, American literature consequently lacks a clear, uncontested sense of paternity because even Langland refuses to materialize as a patriarchal figure for this literary history.

I want to conclude by considering a novel nicely representing these Langlandian literary qualities. The fact that its author is now mostly forgotten is itself tellingly Langlandian. In 1908, Florence Converse published a fictional account of Langland’s life entitled *Long Will*.

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71 Tichi, “Spiritual Biography and the ‘Lords Remembrancers’.”
72 Tichi, “American Literary Studies to the Civil War,” 216.
73 Quoted from Whitman’s letter of 1883 by Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 188-89.
Completed concurrently with her M.A. in English at Wellesley College, the novel took fullest advantage of the scholarly discoveries of Skeat’s 1886 edition of *Piers Plowman* with its “Author’s Life.” Therein William Langland was said to have been born in Shropshire, he wandered in the hills above Malvern Priory, and then he went to reside at Cornhill in London. In England’s capital he married and had a daughter while living a disreputable clerical life, and he continued working doggedly at his poem into the 1390s.

Identifying herself as a Socialist, Converse offered an account of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 that fully supports Derek Pearsall’s view that the late nineteenth century considered Langland’s poem a document of social history, and Converse would have found these notions in Skeat’s edition where his “Criticisms of the Poem” began with Isaac D’Israeli’s pronouncement: “Our author’s indignant spirit, indeed, is vehemently democratic.” Converse’s decision to endow Langland with the virtues of individuality, hard work, and democratic ideals brought to her account of the author a steady advocacy for the rights of other disenfranchised talents, including women like herself. As a fantasy projection, young Calote becomes the story’s real protagonist, championing the cause of the oppressed farmers and traveling as far as Yorkshire to incite the people to revolution.

Despite the charm of a medievalism popularized by Mark Twain during this period, Converse’s *Long Will* incorporates other deeply subversive ingredients. From 1919 until 1961, she lived with her former teacher Miss Vida Scudder, “the beloved friend with whom she made her home for many happy years,” wrote the *Wellesley Alumnae Magazine* in 1967 before same-sex partners were acknowledged.

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75 Pearsall, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Langland*, x.

as such publicly.\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Long Will} in fact fictionalizes two transgressive love-triangles. In the one, violating boundaries of class, Jack Straw and the young nobleman Etienne Fitzwarine both love the poet’s daughter Calote. In the other, challenging boundaries of gender and sexuality, Calote and Richard II both love the handsome young Etienne. “Ay, me,” King Richard sighs longingly, “I would thou didst love thy King but the half as well as thou lovest this peasant maid.”\textsuperscript{78}

As the prototype of the American writer, her Langland becomes a poet of the common people working outside the influences of foreign literatures, the burdens of native traditions, and the constraints of institutional employment. In her Epilogue, Converse follows Skeat’s biographical speculations to describe Langland’s retreat westward to Worcestershire where he dies in the arms of his beloved older teacher Brother Oswyn, reputed as the \textit{Pearl Poet}. In his desertion of London, Langland anticipates the American instinct for contributing to social confusion (including the muddled textual state of his poem) and then moving somewhere else instead of cleaning it up. Like Huck Finn lighting out for the Western Territories, Long Will makes his final escape to the Malvern Hills.

Converse’s historical novel partook of the utopian ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement with its yearning for an end to labor exploitation through a return to medieval practices.\textsuperscript{79} Taking Langland as her model, Converse also represents the particularly American version of a self-educated writer who assaults the status-quo from within the intellectual establishment. By appropriating the individualism, self-reliance, and democratic consciousness that had already fixed themselves in Puritan-derived vocabulary, her \textit{Long Will} then looked forward to the post-1960s project of recognizing and including an

\textsuperscript{77} I am grateful to Wellesley College Archivist Wilma R. Slaight as well as Wellesley English Professor Kathryn Lynch for providing much background information on Florence Converse.

\textsuperscript{78} Converse, \textit{Long Will}, 134.

\textsuperscript{79} Lears, \textit{No Place for Grace}. 
ever-widening range of communities such as women, gays and lesbians, and newer non-European immigrants.

It is easy enough for English literary historians to locate Chaucer. We can even stand in front of his tomb in Westminster Abbey, or at least the tomb installed by an Elizabethan admirer in 1556, as the first in Poets’ Corner giving official visibility to the genealogy of English authors. Meanwhile on this side of the Atlantic, Henry Louis Gates Jr. has redefined his academic career and currently presides over the series Finding Your Roots - for which the PBS website says he “has explored the ancestry of dozens of influential people from diverse backgrounds” – in personalized versions of this article’s quest to discover the lost and largely unknown genealogies of America’s literatures.

John M. Bowers is an internationally known educator and expert on medieval English literature with books on Chaucer, Langland, and the “Gawain” Poet as well as dozens of articles on writers from St. Augustine to Shakespeare. Educated at Duke, Virginia, and Oxford where he was a Rhodes Scholar, he has taught at Caltech and Princeton. His work has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and his Great Courses lecture series The Western Literary Canon in Context has sold tens of thousands of copies. His award-winning book Tolkien’s Lost Chaucer was based on his discovery of an unpublished, unknown book by the author of The Lord of the Rings.

80 Dane, Who Is Buried in Chaucer’s Tomb?, 11-32.
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Hamlet in Cinema: Oedipus Lives On

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I have often questioned why Shakespeare’s Hamlet, a play more than 400 years old, remains tied to a century-old Freudian concept. Since Freud’s Oedipus Complex has been disproven, what purpose does it still serve and why are directors still intrigued by this interpretation of Hamlet? In 1949, Dr. Ernest Jones published his book, Hamlet and Oedipus (1949), but at the time he was also collaborating with Laurence Olivier to create the first movie adaptation of Hamlet to embrace the Oedipus Complex. I believe that because of Jones and Olivier Shakespeare’s Hamlet will always be connected to psychoanalysis. While the Oedipus Complex may not be mentioned often by modern Shakespearean scholars, we still see it heavily influencing cinema, even 21st-century productions of Hamlet. New generations of audiences are still introduced to psychoanalysis by actors and directors, who bring Hamlet to life. I argue that cinematic interpretations of Hamlet reflect the changing psychological views of their day and continue to influence the audience’s knowledge of—and attitude toward—the field of psychoanalysis by exploring the psyche of Hamlet. This paper will offer a sampling of psychoanalysis in cinema and how it has changed over time by examining three movie productions: Laurence Olivier’s 1948 Hamlet, Franco Zeffirelli’s 1990 Hamlet, and Robert Icke’s 2018 Hamlet.

Psychoanalysis Review

While some aspects of psychoanalysis are still found relevant and useful today, other aspects, like Freud’s Oedipus Complex, have not retained the same validity. According to Dr. Susan Krauss Whitbourne:

   Psychologists today talk about the psychodynamic, not the psychoanalytic perspective. As such, this perspective refers to the dynamic forces within our personalities whose shifting movements underlie much of the basis for our observable behavior. Psychoanalysis is a much narrower term referring to the Freudian-based notion that to understand, and treat, abnormal behavior, our unconscious conflicts must be worked through. (qtd. in Cherry).

1 Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus.

2 Cherry, “How Psychoanalysis Influenced the Field of Psychology.”
This means that though psychoanalysis may not be applied often in modern psychology, the ideas it sparked, especially how to approach mental illness, were very instrumental to modern methods and views of mental health.

In 1899 Freud introduced the Oedipus Complex as “a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex; a crucial stage in the normal developmental process. Sigmund Freud introduced the concept in his [book] *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899)” (Britannica). But Freud borrowed the name from Greek mythology: *Oedipus: King of Thebes*, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. Around 429 BCE, Sophocles wrote an Athenian tragedy called *Oedipus Rex*, mentioned often in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In the play, Oedipus has become the king of Thebes while unwittingly fulfilling a prophecy that he would kill his father, Laius (the previous king), and marry his mother, Jocasta. In the play, Oedipus searches for the murderer of Laius (his father) in order to end a plague ravaging Thebes, unaware that the killer he is looking for is himself. The play ends in death: Oedipus horrified at his patricide and incest proceeds to gouge out his own eyes in despair, and Jocasta (his mother) hangs herself.

Some scholars argue that the Oedipus Complex cannot be a valid reading of *Hamlet* since Freud was born after Shakespeare, but *Oedipus Rex* was written well before Shakespeare lived. In fact, the similarities between young and Oedipus are uncanny for lack of a better word. Both cause the death of their mother through rash decisions while seeking revenge for their father. Regardless of *Hamlet*’s connection to the original Greek play, I argue that the Oedipus Complex is still hinted at and sometimes fully embraced in modern interpretations of *Hamlet*, and we owe that more to Sir Ernest Jones than we do to Freud. Dr. Ernest Jones, a Welsh neurologist, was the
first to apply a full-scale psychoanalytic treatment of Hamlet in an essay in *The American Journal of Psychology* in 1910 (he later revised and expanded this article into a book in 1949). He was the first English-speaking academic to talk about the Oedipus Complex and is a big reason it became mainstream in English-speaking countries.

Jones argued that Hamlet, a psychoneurotic, “suffered from manic-depressive hysteria combined with an abulia (an inability to exercise will power and come to decisions)—all of which may be traced to the hero’s severely repressed oedipal feelings.” Concerning the hesitancy of Hamlet to act on his Ghost Father’s wishes, Jones stated that, “Hamlet does not fulfill this duty until absolutely forced to do so by physical circumstances—and, even then, only after Gertrude, his mother, is dead.” According to Jones, Hamlet’s attitude toward Claudius is due to, “the apparent hatred of Gertrude’s relationship with Claudius, especially his obsession with their intimacy.” Finally, Jones argued that Hamlet’s dismissive attitude of Ophelia is also due to oedipal feelings: “The total reaction culminates in the bitter misogyny of his outburst against Ophelia, who is devastation at having to bear a reaction so wholly out of proportion to her own offense and has no idea that in reviling her Hamlet is really expressing his bitter resentment against his mother.”

Such an application of the oedipal complex to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was so compelling that Jones was approached about collaborating with Laurence Olivier on a motion picture, almost immediately after publication. While there are hundreds of cinematic versions of Hamlet today, Olivier’s *Hamlet* still stands out as an original work that had lasting influence on this play.

3 Guerin et al., *Handbook*, 162.

Olivier’s Hamlet is one of the oldest and most direct interpretations of the Oedipus Complex. It received such a favorable reaction that Olivier won an Academy for Best Picture and Best Actor; quite impressive, considering the limited technology Olivier was working with and the conservative views of a 1950’s audience. In later interpretations of Hamlet’s oedipal desires, Hamlet seems to be unaware of his “repressed” desires, but Olivier portrays a Hamlet that is not only aware of his attraction but expresses it both verbally and through body language. Early in the play, Hamlet and Gertrude display an affectionate relationship in Act 1, scene 2. Gertrude asks Hamlet to stay: “Go not to Wittenberg” (1.2.23). Hamlet looks upon Gertrude, obviously glancing down at her breasts before replying, “I shall in all my best obey you, madam” (1.2.24). Claudius delights at Hamlet’s compliance, turning away to address his subjects, and Gertrude kisses Hamlet in parting. They kiss at least four full seconds (06:17); so long in fact that King Claudius appears uncomfortable and interrupts them with, “Madam, come” (1.2.26) as he reclaims his distracted bride.

Later, in the infamous bedroom scene, Hamlet expresses his wishes to be with his mother, masked by seeking revenge for his father. In a calm, but determined tone, Hamlet says, “You are the Queen, your
husband’s brother’s wife / And (would it were not so) you are my mother” (3.4.20-21). With a psychoanalytic lens, this line can have a completely different meaning than the reprimand and insult the audience is familiar with. If Olivier’s Hamlet has acknowledged and is aware of his incestuous desire, then this line could also express Hamlet’s regret that Gertrude is his kin, instead of his wife. Upset by Gertrude’s dismissive reply, Hamlet forcefully throws Gertrude to her bed and insists she not move. He says, “You go not till I set you up a glass [mirror] / Where you may see the (inmost) part of you” (3.4.24-25). Again—under the premise of blaming his mother for infidelity and murder—Hamlet expresses his hope (quite forcefully) that she will realize and return his affections, or the “inmost” part of Hamlet. In addition, Hamlet exposes his jealousy as he urges his mother to refrain from sleeping with the King (his uncle and stepfather) that night. Hamlet says “But, go not to my uncle’s bed. / Assume virtue if you have it not” (3.4.80-81). Hamlet’s gentle tone and affectionate manner (1:36:50) reveal his possible embarrassment of requesting this of her. Finally, after all is said and done, Hamlet asks his mother to keep these affairs secret, to not tell Claudius, which is proof of his insecurities and self-doubt. Gertrude promises to not tell the King about what has happened or about Hamlet’s strange behavior, and they depart in another long kiss.

In the scene just described (Act 3 scene 4), Hamlet displays typical symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder. When Gertrude responds to Hamlet killing Polonius with, “What bloody deed is this!” (3.4.33), he responds defensively, almost immediately deflecting blame to Gertrude: “Almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother” (3.4.34-35). Indeed, the speed with which he kills Polonius (without even knowing his identity), his forcefulness with Gertrude, and his refusal to acknowledge blame, show extreme rage and denial, both symptoms of narcissism. In “Olivier, Hamlet, and Freud,” Peter Donaldson explains:

Olivier’s Hamlet is a character of a markedly narcissistic cast, in whose makeup isolation, depression, rage, and fantasies of uniqueness and omnipotence play their part. Recent psychoanalytic literature is particularly
According to Donaldson, Hamlet’s oedipal affections sometimes “mask” other neurotic behaviors that have stemmed from Hamlet’s insecurities (or “worth of self”). As the field of psychology develops, we are given the language and knowledge to look beyond Freud’s original ideas and to express such traits in Hamlet. However, these traits can change with varying interpretations.

1990 Hamlet—Directed by Franco Zeffirelli
Starring Mel Gibson and Glenn Close

The Franco Zeffirelli version of Hamlet takes a more modern and “physical” approach to the same bedroom scene, viewed earlier (Act 3 Scene 4), by employing sarcastic tones, teasing, anger, yelling, and physical altercation (with the help of Hamlet’s sword). In the first few moments of the scene Hamlet enters the room, swinging his sword playfully and looking around—almost begging his mother to challenge him (1:17:22), before asking Gertrude (who is obviously upset), “Now, mother, what’s the matter?” (3.4.11). Mel Gibson, who plays Hamlet, masters the persona of an annoyed and distraught teenager, with aggressive glances that challenge Gertrude’s Matronly authority. Gertrude (played by Glenn Close) tries to have a serious conversation but is frustrated when Hamlet will not give her a direct answer. She asks “Have you forgot me?” (3.4.18) and Gibson’s Hamlet replies with a very sarcastic tone, “No, by the rood, not so. / You are the Queen, your husband’s brother’s wife.” Here, Hamlet’s tone switches from sarcastic to angry, as he turns the conversation into an accusation of his mother’s fidelity and angrily insults Gertrude by saying, “And (would it were not so) you are my mother” (3.4.21). Gertrude—who has had enough—slaps Hamlet across the face and walks away to leave, but Hamlet stops with a


6 Ebert, “Hamlet Movie Review.”
booming, animalistic roar (1:18:02). It is almost as if he—through the roar—transforms into a dangerous monster.

Gibson’s Hamlet displays some aspects of narcissistic personality disorder, but overall seems very normal and grounded until the slap, when he suddenly flips from an arrogant joker to a menacing threat. Hamlet detains his mother with the use of his sword, poking her back toward her bed until she cries “Help,” and Polonius stirs. Hamlet, hearing someone else near, turns and immediately stabs the unknown person through the curtain with his sword. It is here, and his use of the word “dead” (3.4.29) that reveals Hamlet’s deteriorating mental state. Upon stabbing and killing a person, Hamlet turns around and poses grandly—almost jokingly—at his defeat, while Gertrude screams, horrified (1:18:28). The phrase “dead” becomes a sort of “ta-da” moment that shows his disregard for life. The fact that Gibson’s Hamlet can react so rashly and comically in the murder of an unknown person shows more than oedipal jealousy or narcissism: it shows a deeply disturbed psyche, and it only escalates from here.

In an analysis of Zeffirelli’s Hamlet that shifts Laura Mulvey’s psychoanalytic “Male Gaze” to “Homosexual Gaze,” William Van Watson explains the symbolic nature of Hamlet’s sword (that draws on Lacanian principles of psychoanalysis). According to Van Wat-

son, the sword is a phallic symbol as well as a crucifix (both in shape and meaning) that Hamlet is tied to throughout the film. This adds an element of what Ernest Jones calls, “true symbolism,” to the bedroom scene that is very telling. Jones differentiated “true symbolism” from normal notions of symbolism as those symbols that reflect repressed desires: “Only what is repressed is symbolized; only what is repressed needs to be symbolized.” In this light, Hamlet’s swinging of his sword and little jabs at Gertrude, show his repressed intent to dominate her or at least take his father’s place in her life. Van Watson further observes that, “Zeffirelli’s camera continually prioritizes the sword as enforcer of ‘the Law of the Father’ [a Lacanian theory concerning a father’s role] throughout the film.” Interestingly, Hamlet keeps his sword close to him the entire scene, even after killing Polonius, until he sees that Gertrude is ready to run away in fear. He slowly puts down the sword, seeming to surrender as he raises both empty hands, before again turning hostile and chasing Gertrude to her bed (1:19:28), essentially surrendering to his repressed desires.

This bedroom scene is filled with symbolism and cognitive dissonance, in Hamlet’s behavior, that audiences are intrigued by, but


9 Jones, Papers, 116.

for those unfamiliar with a psychoanalytic reading of this play, a passionate kiss is the last thing expected. Movie critic Hal Hinson, says of this moment:

he pounces on his mother (Glenn Close) in her bed after he’s stabbed Polonius... there’s such naked sexual aggression in the attack -- and it’s met with such open passion from Close’s Gertrude -- that for an instant the relationship seems laden with heretofore undreamed-of possibilities. It’s a stirring, audacious confrontation.\(^\text{11}\)

I agree that this bedroom scene is “audacious,” but for different reasons than Hinson. For me, this scene is bold because it is unexpected: Hamlet is unhinged and Gertrude is terrified, and up until this point in the movie, the mother and son had not previously expressed hints of romantic affection towards one another. Van Watson says, “This impassioned confrontation culminates in an explicitly sexual mouth-to-mouth kiss between the two, which only the oedipal apparition of the elder Hamlet’s ghost brings to an end.”\(^\text{12}\) Hinson is right, this scene is powerful and shocking. But for me, the most effective aspect is the obvious guilt invoked by the presence of the Ghost.

In the middle of their incestuous and passion-filled kiss, Hamlet’s

11 Hinson, “Hamlet.”

eyes open wide, in horror, noticing his Ghost father witnessing the horrific scene.

In comparison, Olivier’s version hints at the complicated mother-son relationship early on and many scenes seem to be motivated by oedipal desire, but in Zeffirelli’s version, this scene catches the audience off-guard, just as it catches Hamlet off guard. This is not necessarily a problem with a psychoanalytic reading. In fact, in Jone’s original analysis of this play, the fact that Hamlet and Shakespeare were unaware of oedipal intent is addressed. Jones says:

> the hearer himself does not know the inner cause of the conflict in his mind, but experiences only the outer manifestations of it. We thus reach the apparent paradox that the hero [Hamlet], the poet [Shakespeare], and the audience are all profoundly moved by feelings due to a conflict of the source of which they are unaware.\(^\text{13}\)

Interestingly, many of the same lines performed by both casts offer varying interpretations, even though both are approaching Hamlet with the same psychological lens. This, in part, comes from the intent of directors but is influenced by current psychological views and the changing nature of psychoanalysis. Notice how newer productions of *Hamlet* are shifting from obvious physical displays of oedipal desire, or symbols of repressed desire, to more complicated depictions of Hamlet’s psyche. An excellent example is Robert Icke’s recent production of *Hamlet* (2018).

**2018 Hamlet, Directed by Robert Icke**  
**Starring Andrew Scott and Juliet Stevenson**

In contrast to the first two examples of the portrayal of Hamlet, Robert Icke’s Hamlet played by Andrew Scott walks a line between concern, anger, and desire for his mother. Juliet Stevenson’s Gertrude adds complexity to Gertrude that we do not often see; she expresses her pain and confusion about Hamlet’s behavior through her

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tears, hugs, meaningful glances, and even kisses on Hamlet’s cheek, which can be hard to gauge at times. But, when Hamlet crosses the line of appropriate familial affection, Gertrude immediately rejects it. And yet, while doing all of this, Stevenson still manages to display the selfless love of a mother, who is concerned for her son. I particularly appreciate that Icke’s production references oedipal desire in a toned-down, version.

Theatre critic and author, Ian Shuttlerworth, points out that Scott’s Hamlet delivers “every word [as] a separate question,” giving the famous lines new meaning and a sense that Hamlet is questioning himself as well as others, almost constantly. Simply put, Scott understands the mannerisms of a psychologically unwell person. His varied facial expressions, wide and expressive eyes, and ability to cry upon a moment’s notice, and then, suddenly seem fine the next, convince the audience of his real struggle for truth and peace. And in turn, we believe him, as does Gertrude, when he says, “That I am essentially, not in madness, but mad in craft” (2:05:30). Scott delivers these revered lines in a way that stands out from every previous Hamlet—not an easy thing to do. Overall, reviewer Sarah Hemming, encapsulates Scott’s performance well with, “a Hamlet who draws us with him along this painful edge between being and not being.” And I would add who walks the border of romantic and
familial love for his mother. This is what a psychological reading of Hamlet can present to twenty-first century viewers but let us not forget the updated gender roles of Gertrude, from Olivier to Icke.

Each production mentioned in this paper is reflective of society’s perception of women when it was made (Herlie—late 1948, Close—1990, and Stevenson—2018). In both Zeffirelli and Icke’s production, weapons (sword and gun) are needed to intimidate and control Gertrude, whereas Olivier’s Gertrude (Eileen Herlie) needs little more inducement than a scolding to obey.

In contrast, both Juliet Stevenson and Glenn Close portray a strong Gertrude, who does not easily give in to Hamlet’s outbursts and bullying. In Olivier’s production, Gertrude constantly seeks Hamlet’s attention and often initiates inappropriate kisses, for a mother. This is somewhat true for Zeffirelli’s version, but less so. However, Stevenson’s Gertrude never initiates a suggestive kiss with Hamlet. She is the only actress that is really old enough to play Hamlet’s mother (there are twenty years between Stevenson and Scott) and is actually eleven years younger than Olivier. Although actors can play ages different from their own, it does put into question the validity of an oedipal interpretation. Thankfully, modern Shakespearian productions, theatre, and film are all slowly adapting to more re-
alistic expectations for women (and men) actors and roles, including older ages for leading ladies, different body types, racially diverse, and cross-gender casting. The future of Shakespeare is bright, with the rich history it provides and the new opportunities available to modernize plays.

The conclusion then, is that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* will always be a play that addresses psychology (in some form) because, at the end of the day, *Hamlet* is about a boy with a “tortured conscience.” Audiences have viewed countless interpretations of how his “tortured conscience” is manifest, and the history of *Hamlet* and psychoanalysis is just one compelling version that has lasted because of the work of Freud, Jones, and Olivier. Like Wilfred L. Guerin and his colleagues, I believe “psychoanalysis is a valuable tool in understanding not only literature but human nature.” Does that mean modern adaptations should always address the Oedipus Complex? Heavens, no! *Hamlet* is an opportunity for directors to address the imperfections of the human mind, and as long as they do that—in some form or fashion—audiences will continue to be drawn to this play.

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14 Jones, “Œdipus-Complex,” 89.

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Image of the first folio edition of Hamlet
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William Jewell College, Emerita
Re-dress as Redress: Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors*

Jane Foster Woodruff  
William Jewell College, Emerita

**Writing near the end of a century-long ‘explosion’ of Tudor theatre, Shakespeare benefitted from a variety of influences, both sacral and secular. Among his literary influences were the works of classical dramatists (Sophocles, Seneca, Plautus, and the like), who had used their plays to editorialize on contemporary societal issues. To this same end, in his early historical play Richard III Shakespeare chose to address a multiplicity of problematic themes, the most obvious being that, although Richard’s ambition and his lethality had been sufficient to win him a crown, they were insufficient to preserve it: power gained is not power maintained. Shakespeare then reasserted this message to queen and country in his very next play, A Comedy of Errors, modeled closely on Plautus’ *The Menaechmi*. More briefly and pleasurably than in Richard III, here Shakespeare crafted his ‘re-dress’ to warn of specific threats to the stability and security of Tudor power and the commonwealth itself: the expansion of English trade networks, with concomitant surges of plague, piracy, and a power-hungry mercantile class; fanaticism and religious dissension (both Catholic-Protestant and within Protestantism); and his queen’s own gender-based vulnerabilities, while also offering potential means of mitigation.**

**Art critic Philip Kennicott’s review of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s recent exhibition, “The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England,” reminds us that visual and literary artworks—including the plays of William Shakespeare—can offer lessons relevant to the audiences of future times, as well as their own.**


mouth of her murderous uncle, King Creon, the views of Athenians’ elected ruler, Pericles, on ‘best practices’ for governing the masses. Comic playwrights like Aristophanes did the same: recall his devastating parody of sophistic educational methods in *The Clouds* (and the unfortunate and presumably unintended result for his friend Socrates). Shakespeare had precedent, and British history easily lent itself to a similar purpose. And so, in the early 1590s as London faced threats including a new onslaught of plague, riots in London’s ‘stews’ over food shortages and foreign wars, and a ruler approaching the fortieth year of her reign with no direct heir, Shakespeare wrote his historical play *Richard III*.

The tale of King Richard was familiar to Elizabethan audiences. This character brought to the Elizabethan stage a well-established reputation as “smoothly deceptive, endlessly shifting, self-serving, relentlessly ambitious and, despite his unending flow of verbal disguises, ruthlessly and single-mindedly cruel,” very suitable in Kenneth Muir’s estimation for the protagonist of this “most Senecan of Shakespeare’s plays.” Shakespeare further describes Richard as ill-shaped, unathletic, ill-proportioned, deformed, and lame—in character subtle, false, and treacherous. The bard’s depiction of ‘bloodie’ Richard likely crystallized audiences’ view of the man, then and now (in spite of the valiant efforts of the modern Richard III Society and the king’s March, 2023, reburial in Leicester). Nonetheless, Richard’s schemes and his lethality won him a kingdom, briefly, until his defeat on Bosworth Field by Richmond, later crowned as King Henry VII. This new king was Queen Elizabeth’s grandfather, and the reminder of his heroic role in the birth of the Tudor dynasty would surely have caught the queen’s attention. Although Shakespeare’s version of Richard’s story is long and complex, and any of its themes including justice, war, fate vs. free will, family, and so on might have been intended by Shakespeare as a

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commentary on contemporary societal issues, the theme most obviously directed toward his sovereign was power, and the challenges of hanging on to it. Power gained is not power maintained.

Shakespeare’s seriousness about this message is confirmed in the very next play (according to the timeline worked out by the Royal Shakespeare Company) that he chose to write, *A Comedy of Errors*. *Errors* was first performed in 1594 at ‘Gray’s Inn Christmas festivities for the legal profession’, and was modeled closely on *The Menaechmi*, written some 1800 years earlier by the Roman comic playwright Plautus. The comedies of Plautus and his younger contemporary Terence, along with the tragedies of Seneca, were widely known to Englishmen through grammar-school studies, as well as public performances attended by both elites and commoners. *The Menaechmi* itself is the first identifiable classical script known to have been performed in England, by Wolsey’s men, in 1526.\(^5\) In this popular play, seven-year-old identical twins Menaechmus and Sosicles, sons of a Syracusan merchant, are separated when Menaechmus is kidnapped by a wealthy Epidamnian who makes the boy, once grown, his heir. The remaining twin, now renamed Menaechmus to honor the lost boy, has spent six years searching for his brother along Mediterranean Sea trade routes, accompanied by his faithful slave Messenio. The travelers’ arrival in Epidamnum, where they are ‘recognized’ by residents including the local Menaechmus’ wife, mistress, father-in-law, and various business associates, leads not to quick understanding and joy but to confusion and concern over both twins’ behavior and sanity. The Syracusan Menaechmus enjoys feasting and dalliance with his brother’s mistress and terrifies his brother’s wife by pretending to be violently ‘possessed’. The Epidamnian Menaechmus takes money belonging to his brother and suffers the ‘treatments’ of an arrogant but incompetent doctor. Both brothers find themselves alone, rejected by their closest companions, until finally Messenio sees the twins together. He is then able to offer a rational explanation for everyone’s ‘errors’ and a way for-

\(^5\) Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy*, 21, n.5.
ward for the reunited family. *The Menaechmi* and other of Plautus’ plays, in the half-century before *Errors* was written, were performed seventeen times at Oxford and twenty times at Cambridge. These productions were seen not as mere entertainment but as, at least potentially, “morally edifying” and capable of imposing “didactic messages on the text while magnifying the spectacle.” Tudor imitators of classical plays, too, “significantly accommodated classical texts to contemporary concerns.”

Plautus’ appeal to Shakespeare might also be due to the later playwright’s sense of some ‘kinship’. Just as Shakespeare was an actor-poet whose personal experiences and understanding of his time informed his writing, Plautus was believed by the Romans to have been a provincial Italian who found work in a theatre in Rome, first making and then losing a fortune while speculating in foreign commerce. The financial loss reduced him to doing manual labor in a flour mill, during which time he began to write plays. Whatever his early life truly was like, Plautus’ work, like Shakespeare’s, was clearly a product of its own time. Although the precise date of its composition is not settled, *The Menaechmi* fits most comfortably at the very end of the third century BCE and was likely first performed at public ‘Games’ in 201 or 200 BCE, when the Romans were celebrating their utter defeat of Hannibal and African Carthage in the Second Punic War. Yet their joy was already being tempered by new, post-war concerns; they found themselves for the first time with overseas *provinciae* which had to be governed, taxed, and defended, with ships and a Mediterranean trade network which had to be regulated and protected, with a wider exposure to water-borne threats like piracy and disease which had to be minimized, with a large influx of foreigners, slaves and immigrants, which had to be


7 Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy*, 4-8.

8 Riehle, *Shakespeare, Plautus and the Humanist Tradition*, 23; Moseley and Hammond, *T. Macci Plauti Menaechmi*, 11. Even if Plautus’ life story was fictionalized, his name suggests a theatrical background—‘Titus the Flatfooted Clown’ is a highly unlikely birth-name.

9 Woodruff, “The ‘Staff of Rome’” (presentation).
assimilated, and with the introduction of truly alien cultural and religious practices which had to be integrated with established traditions. All would soon prove to be threats to the safety and the stability of *imperium Romanum* (‘Roman power’). But now in *The Menaechmi* they provided Plautus with the plot and character ‘shell’ of his play. So, too, they provided Shakespeare with the opportunity to address, and to suggest redress for, similar threats to his own society: a powerful mercantile class engaged in global trading with insufficient regard for political repercussions, religious dissension and fanaticism, and a vulnerable ruler unable, unwilling, or unsure how to respond to these and other threats.

In the English commonwealth of Shakespeare’s time, much of that wealth came from trade. This is not surprising—the British Isles, situated in the North Atlantic, are unable to provide everything needed or wanted by residents. Long-distance trade and its related businesses—ship-building and the like—had been in Englishmen’s blood for centuries, but only in the sixteenth century, after years of expansion and differentiation, did trade-based capitalism become the first genuine global ‘world-system’. Trade—the family business of Shakespeare’s Antipholi and the Roman Plautus’ Menaechmi—is by its nature *inclusive*, and can bind society together, providing a foundation for rulers’ “claim to authority, legitimacy, and justice” in a way satisfying to their subjects, “in order to survive.”¹⁰ But trade can instead be *exclusive*, even if still satisfying, potentially to the point of death—remember Egeon—when officially championed and enforced by ruler and citizenry alike. Earlier in the sixteenth century, England had experienced disruptive conflicts with the Scots and the Irish over mercantile issues. In the 1560s, Queen Elizabeth herself authorized incursions by English maritime ‘entrepreneurs’ like John Hawkins into the West Indies; these English traders were profiting in spite of the strict embargo imposed by the Spanish crown, and official Spanish protests.¹¹ Compounding this, as Jane Degenhardt

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notes, in the 1590s, just at the time Shakespeare was writing his comedy, England began struggling to join the international trading network based in the Mediterranean, thus further enhancing English merchants’ wealth and power, international sensibilities be damned, through the acquisition of prized goods from Africa and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{12} That some in the English public were ambivalent about the benefits of such global trading is reflected in \textit{Comedy of Errors}: recall the Syracusan Dromio’s description of the kitchen maid Nell who is pursuing him sexually (3.2.116-44): her body, he reports, is like a globe, its ‘topography’ tracing the maritime commercial connections of the period and the desirable goods to be acquired (“rubies, carbuncles, sapphires”—on her nose!), yet Dromio feels compelled to avoid the pleasures her voluptuous body offers, because of its presumably pungent, greasy sweat and grime (3.2.101-8).\textsuperscript{13} Ambivalence.

On the local level too individual merchants, goldsmiths like Angelo in \textit{Comedy of Errors}, for example, developed ‘chains’ of exchange relationships, and disruption of these was problematic as illustrated comically in \textit{Errors} through the confusing events surrounding the mishandling of the gold \textit{catena} commissioned by Antipholus of Ephesus, first promised as a gift for his wife (2.1.105) and then as part of a business transaction with a local courtesan (4.3.48).\textsuperscript{14} But his payment to the goldsmith is given to the wrong Dromio for delivery, leaving everyone involved to proclaim themselves the victim of bad business practices, with threats of arrest and the loss of future creditworthiness following until, at the play’s end, “the mercantile

\textsuperscript{12} Degenhardt and Turner, “Between Worlds,” 163-4.


\textsuperscript{14} That Antipholus called on the courtesan at what appears to be a brothel (Kinney, “Shakespeare’s \textit{Comedy of Errors} and the Nature of Kinds,” 43) suggests that she was owed payment for her ‘services’. However, since Antipholus departed the Porpentine with the courtesan’s diamond ring (4.3.70), their relationship perhaps consisted only, or primarily, of property exchange/trade.
and the salvific converge in the talismanic power of gold to effect . . . redemption.”

The characters and settings of both Comedy of Errors and its Roman model are grounded in trade. Syracuse in Sicily, ‘Epidamnium’ in Albania, and Ephesus in Turkey are all coastal cities, and the families of both plays’ protagonists are firmly ensconced in the business of trade. As well, trading ventures had actually caused the specific familial woes explicated early in both plays: shipwrecks, the families’ separations, the death of father Menaechmus, the apparent loss of mother Antipholus, and so on. Sixteenth-century Englishmen surely wondered whether, with an economy so supported and enriched by trade that even its government was inextricably involved—in Shakespeare’s play, the Duke has been compelled by the actions of Syracusan officials and the insistence of local merchants to proclaim and enforce a ban against foreign ones (1.1.5-22), even the harmless Egeon—it was even possible for that kind of economic system to be inclusive, yet still profitable, and non-threatening to the power of its rulers. Egeon’s perilous situation, described so starkly both here at the play’s beginning and again near its end, ‘surrounds’ the older plot, suggests David Bevington, “to deepen the seriousness in the play, to give the story a context of life and death.”

For Shakespeare, it served to emphasize the threats of global mercantilism to the well-being—physical, financial, and spiritual—of ordinary people.

Among the profitable products traded globally (as both Plautus’ and Shakespeare’s audiences well knew) were slaves. Messenio, the enslaved travel companion of Syracusan Menaechmus, was presumably so-named due to his origin in Messenia in western Sicily,

15 Cartwright, The Arden Shakespeare, 44-5.


17 See the discussion of comic violence in relation to the problems of credit, debt, and usury faced by Shakespeare’s contemporaries in the 1590s in Dodson-Robinson, A Thousand Marks, 33-4 and 38-40. This was personal to Shakespeare, whose own father was both arrested as a debtor and prosecuted as a usurer, although Queen Elizabeth allowed loans at interest rates up to ten per cent.
reminding the Roman audience of the recently completed Second Punic War. Shakespeare introduces the twin Dromios (the ‘gofers’) when Egeon tells of their birth to a poverty-stricken woman in Epidamnium and his purchase of them there as servants, essentially slaves, for his own infant twin sons (1.1.53-7). There is a significant difference in this instance between Errors and the earlier comedy, both in the relationship between slaves and masters, and the status in which the Antipholus slaves and the Menaechmus slave end up—freed in the Roman play, but still Antipholus-family property in Errors. Due to the expansion of English traders, including slave traders, into the Mediterranean at the turn of the seventeenth century, many enslaved Africans and Asians, probably over a million in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries alone, were transported north and west across the Mediterranean. About the same number of Christian Europeans including British citizens were enslaved in the east due to piracy, which is referenced in both plays.18 Shakespeare may or may not have been commenting on this particular trade as a potential threat to his queen’s power but, if so, this could be one reason for his alteration of the outcome for his play’s slaves. At the end of The Menaechmi, Plautus has Messenio freed by the grateful Menaechmus twins, then allowed to establish his own place in their trade association by managing the sale of all the Epidamnian Menaechmus’ property—including his wife, if anyone was in the market for one—and then to return, profit in hand, to his homeland (5.148-60).19 In contrast, at the end of A Comedy of Errors, the twin Dromios are herded into the Abbey along with the rest of the Antipholi; they were part of the household, but only as property; they were free from the evil, ‘damning’ ways of their home city

18 Degenhardt and Turner, “Between Worlds,” 164. Cartwright suggests that Shakespeare’s audience would have recalled “vexatious Turkish acts of kidnapping and piracy and the ransoming of English seamen and travellers” (The Arden Shakespeare, 55). And, piracy had helped cause the dissolution of Egeon’s family (1.1.110-17).

19 It is not clear that Plautus divided his plays into acts, or even scenes, although the Roman poet Horace c. 200 years later advised a five-act division for all dramas (Moseley and Hammond, T. Macci Plauti Menaechmi, 20). Most modern text editions adhere to this practice.
Epidamnium, but in no other sense. Undoubtedly, in time, additional ‘marks’—a punishment for them, although currency for others—would appear on their bodies.

Another ‘product’ brought to English shores via global trade, although unintentionally, was disease, most horrifically bubonic plague. The threat that plague posed to the unity of the commonwealth, and to the security of its rulers, was very fresh in the minds of Shakespeare’s audience. In the two years prior to the Gray’s Inn performance of *Errors*, theatres had been closed due to plague (at times referred to as the ‘Black Death’), which had first appeared in England in 1348 and subsequently returned multiple times even before the ‘Great Plague’ hit London in the seventeenth century, always with significant short- and longer-term effects on English society, including a fear of immigrants, a “stranger-crisis” in Eric Griffin’s words.\(^20\) This is possibly part of the reason that Egeon, searching for his lost family far from home, found no assistance from the locals in Ephesus. Plague’s inexplicable cause(s) and recurrences, with no effective responses available from medical experts or anyone else, produced fear and resentment among the populace. Thus, supernatural forces—sorcery, demonic possession, and the like, which were also believed capable of spreading contagiously—were seen as the most likely causes of plague and other incurable illnesses.\(^21\) These truly threatened the unity and stability of the realm, and thus the queen’s power.

Neither Shakespeare nor Plautus, of course, incorporates actual plague or disease into his comic plays. Deadly diseases are rarely amusing, and even less so for an audience like Shakespeare’s which, in 1594, had so recently suffered through a plague outbreak or which, like Plautus’, had lost so many friends and relatives to the fighting, starvation, and disease of a nearly twenty-years-long war, fought

\(^{20}\) Quoted by Degenhardt and Turner, “Between Worlds,” 166. Also see Carvalho Homem, “Offshore Desires,” 38-40, for a discussion of similarities in the plights of Egeon, other Shakespearean migrants and refugees, and those in our own times.

mostly in Italy. *Metaphorical* disease, however, can be humorous, and this comic method was used at times in both *Menaechmi* and *Errors*. Medical motifs familiar to the audience could also elicit laughter: fallacious diagnostic methods (the self-important *Medicus* questioning Menaechmus as to the type of wine he drank, 5.914), ineffective ‘cure’ regimens (Pinch’s ‘exorcism’ of the ‘demon’ possessing Antipholus, 4.4.55-8), or the presumption or pretense of disease for a humorous purpose (the recurring ‘insanity’ of characters in both plays). Those situations are safely funny, because the audience is ‘in the know’, and because a rational actor—Messenio in *Menaechmi* and the Abbess in *Errors*—will appear just in time to offset the tricksters and offer a true cure.

Words as well as behaviors can threaten societal harmony, even those used in the service of religion, which was close to the queen’s heart. Her father’s violent break with Roman Catholicism, its rituals, its institutions, and so on, was not complete. There was still much Catholic sentiment in the realm and, even among Protestants—Presbyterians, Puritans, and others—there was dissension over the best way to organize and run the new English state church with the monarch at its head. Aspects of their ‘church’ and its pantheon of gods do appear comically in Plautus’ play; his characters commonly reference their gods’ names, “by Pollux,” “by Hercules,” and so on, with little concern as to the gods’ place of origin. The Romans had long been comfortable with an ever-enlarging pantheon of native gods.

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22 For example, the Epidamnian Menaechmus wishes something deadly to befall everyone who keeps dutiful citizens like himself from spending quality time with their mistresses (4.595).

23 Kinney (“Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors*,” 33) says that, unlike the Roman comedies, there is no trickster, no ‘deliberate intriguer’ in *Errors*. But, actually, the popular view was and is that merchants (‘salesmen’) as a group are tricksters, along with unbelievers, certain types of women, and other such ‘diabolic’ creatures.

24 Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism*, 109, quoting John Brende: “In historyes it is appar[a]nt how dau[n]gerous it is to begyn alteracions in a co[m]men wealth, how enuy and hatreds oft rising upo[n] small causes, haue ben the destruction of great kyngdomes.”
and ‘borrowed’ divinities, but cracks in this comfort were starting to show. During those terrible fifteen years when the Carthaginian general Hannibal was ravaging the fields and villages of Italy, and decimating the Romans’ and their allies’ armies sent against him, desperate measures were taken by the Roman Senate. These included the deliberate importation of foreign cults, one being that of the Phrygian goddess Cybele.\footnote{25} The war was concluded successfully, and so Cybele (re-named \textit{Magna Mater}, Great Mother) could not then be evicted. Her cult remained in Rome, even though its raucous and often violent rituals (including the public playing of loud, clanging instruments, and flagellation by the goddess’ self-castrated priests) were disturbing to Roman tradition. Another eastern cult brought to Rome not long after the war had ended, that of Dionysus (also called Bacchus or Bromius), also had violent aspects which the Senate tried to temper. But \textit{The Menaechmi}’s audience must have understood the threat, perceived by his twin brother’s wife and father-in-law, when Syracusan Menaechmus pretended to ‘hear’ Bacchus, and then Apollo, ordering him to set \textit{Matrona}’s eyes ablaze and to beat \textit{Senex} with his own walking stick (5.835-41).\footnote{26} \textit{Matrona} and \textit{Senex} flee in terror at this violent verbiage. Shakespeare also uses the \textit{words} of religion, and of sixteenth-century English authors about religion, for much more than laughs. At times, events in \textit{Comedy of Errors}, along with the characters’ words and actions, appear to support particular ‘best practices’ being advocated for the English church and in church-state politics, such as opposing divisive, absolutist positions on questions of religious conformity, obedience, and faithfulness.\footnote{27}

\footnote{25} Cybele is sometimes identified with Artemis, the patron deity of Ephesus. Among Cybele’s powers was the ability to delude humans into self-harm, which the Romans hoped could be directed against their enemies.

\footnote{26} That the older divinity, Apollo, whose calm and rational nature was normally the opposite of Bacchus’, also ‘demanded’ violent behavior reflects the Romans’ religious uncertainty at this time.

\footnote{27} Hamilton, \textit{Shakespeare and the Politics}, preface.
The setting of *Errors* in Ephesus rather than Epidamnum may be significant here (although ‘Epidamnium’, as mentioned earlier, does appear in the play as the twin Dromios’ place of origin, giving Shakespeare, like Plautus, the opportunity to play on the town’s name—surely a place where evil, damnable things happen). Ephesus was significant in Christianity’s early history; it was closely connected to the preaching and church-planting of the apostle Paul (whom Elizabeth’s father, King Henry VIII, particularly favored, and whose life, according to Walter Travers’ *Book of Discipline*, demonstrated one desirable reform for the English church, since evangelists were clearly more useful than bishops). Ephesus had also been significant in pre-Christian times of course, famous as the site of the statue of the goddess Artemis that was one of the “seven wonders” of the ancient world. So, Ephesus was not a purely Christian city; it was neither devoid of dangerous old ideas and behaviors, nor was it free of dangerous new attractions like those offered by the expanding Ottoman Empire, the source of the luxurious ‘Turkish tapestry’ decorating Antipholus’ house in Ephesus (4.1.103-5) as well as the trading voyage to Persia from which Angelo the goldsmith expected to profit (4.1.31-3). Ephesus was a place where evils abounded, perhaps because ethnic and cultural diversity was the norm there, and diversity may lead to dissension, which can be societally disruptive if not carefully managed.

More directly, in *Errors* Shakespeare uses words/terms paralleled in Plautus’ play to address the threats that religious dissension was bringing to the English world. I earlier mentioned both playwrights’ comical inclusion of ‘insanity’—characters pretending to be mad or accusing others of being so—insanity, like plague, was inexplicable and incurable, after all. But Shakespeare’s characters liberally hurl other frightening charges and accusations at each other, in terms that duplicate those used by sixteenth-century religious factions against others’ views and practices. ‘Devil-possessed’, for example, was an


insult used by church officials to stigmatize those who resisted strict obedience. Other insults are less obvious to a modern reader than to the Elizabethans; references to Pinch as a ‘conjuror’ or a ‘juggler’ (e.g., 4.4.48) are an implicit criticism of Roman Catholic practices like exorcism. Martin Marprelate, castigating what he saw as the foolish desire to retain a hierarchy of bishops in the new Tudor-installed church, charged that bishops “maime, deform, vex, persecute, grieve, and wounde the church, [they are] not only the wounde but the very plague and pestilence of our Church” to protect their own power and prestige. All these potentially terrifying terms of insult are found in *Comedy of Errors*. Matthew Sutcliffe opined that “puritans wrote with fistes” rather than with fingers. Real fisticuffs and other hurtful and divisive responses to disagreements actually happen in *Comedy of Errors*. Recall the sometimes-brighter-than-he-looks-and-sounds Ephesian Dromio in Act III equating the body-blows inflicted on him by his master to the potentially harmful effects of [theologians’] writing: “Say what you will, Sir, but I know what I know; / that you beat me at the mart I have your hand to show. / If the skin were parchment and the blows you gave were ink, / your own hand-writing would tell you what I think” (3.1.11-14). Criticism of officialdom was not only expected but cultivated at the Gray’s Inn revels where *Errors* was performed for an audience of ‘gentility’ and government ministers, all of whom might have the ear of the queen. Shakespeare seems clearly to be warning that words written with ink on parchment can deliver powerful, and possibly incurable, blows.

Similarly, props serve as a visual admonition against divisiveness: the previously mentioned *catena*, produced by the goldsmith Angelo,

31 Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics*, 76.
32 Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics*, 78.
was in dispute throughout the play until it was finally given as a gift, without payment. This likely reminded the audience of the “golden chain of man’s salvation,” a verbal image from William Perkins’ statement on predestination.34 (In Plautus’ play, too, a piece of arm jewelry, a bracelet, was first gifted by the Epidamnian Menaechmus to his wife, then pilfered from her and re-gifted to his mistress, from whom he then needed to retrieve it to re-gain admittance to his own house, and thus be salvus, saved.)

As the queen watched or heard about Shakespeare’s new play, she surely understood the connections and the concerns that he was portraying in it. She also likely intuited his reflections of her, and her actions, in the various female characters of Errors. In The Menaechmi there are only four in total, two of them essential to the plot—the Epidamnian Menaechmus’ wife Matrona, and his mistress the prostitute Erotium (“Lovelet”), who conveniently lives right next door. All four, including Erotium’s unnamed slave-maid and the twins’ widowed mother back home in Syracuse, Teuximarcha, have a clear connection to the market-based setting of Plautus’ play. Matrona was willingly taken by the Epidamnian Menaechmus as his wife, because her large dowry was of benefit to his business interests and to his lifestyle (5.766-7).35 Erotium was in “the business of pleasure,” and apparently very successful at it.36 Her slave-maid had learned means of profiting from her, and apparently applied them in dealings with Erotium’s ‘clients’ (3.541-5). And Teuximarcha’s name (5.1131) may mean “market-acquisition”—presumably this is

34 Hamilton, Shakespeare and the Politics, 84. Perkins’ Golden Chain was printed at least nine times between 1590 and 1594, and so this image was likely familiar to Shakespeare and to his audience.

35 And presumably kept them together, though unhappily, since a divorce would have forced Menaechmus to return Matrona’s dowry to her father Senex, along with her. See Burrow, Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity, Ch. 4, for discussion of this and other social practices in Plautus’ world, and their inexact equivalences in Shakespeare’s.

36 Miola, Shakespeare and Classical Comedy, 26.
not coincidental. These characters are essentially two-dimensional comic stereotypes: greedy, scheming, nagging.

But three of Shakespeare’s female characters, besides the kitchen-maid Nell whose body symbolized both the attractions and potential dangers of global trade and the “businesswoman”/courtesan, are more than comic caricatures. These three, Antipholus’ wife Adriana, her unmarried sister Luciana, and the Abbess Emilia—among their other functions in the play—reflect, at times, the church itself (described in the Bible as female and the bride of Christ) or its head, Queen Elizabeth. Adriana is somewhat similar to The Menaechmi’s Matrona in that she apparently comes from a wealthy and important family; the Duke himself arranged her marriage to Antipholus. That her unmarried sister Luciana lives with her suggests that their parents are no longer alive, thus leaving her with limited emotional support. Now, Adriana is profoundly anxious about the faithfulness and loyalty of her marriage partner, and unsure what actions to take; she seeks advice. Disappointed and angered by Antipholus’ response to her fears, she locks him out of their house—an exclusionary tactic reminiscent of official Elizabethan rhetoric and policies identifying nonconformity as faithlessness. Adriana’s actions were a serious violation of the marital relationship, and they led to emotional pain for many of the play’s personae, physical pain for some (like Dromio) or, even worse, financial pain. Like Adriana, the queen had exacerbated problems within the church-family, by interpreting differing practices among church members, like the Presbyterians’ small-group meetings where they talked of church policies, as signs of unfaithfulness and deviance. Luciana, lighter-spirited and chaste (but confused by the attraction she now feels for the man she thinks is her brother-in-law), sympathizes with her sister, but—lest relationships be irreparably disrupted—she argues for tolerance, mercy, and open communication (in contrast to Queen Elizabeth’s refusal

37 Hamilton, Shakespeare and the Politics, 80-1.

38 Hamilton, Shakespeare and the Politics, 81-2.
to allow Parliament even to speak about ecclesiastical matters).\textsuperscript{39}

Shakespeare’s words here should have had broad appeal to people who were alarmed by the oppressive measures instituted by the government. Luciana’s calming words point to a positive way forward, employing patience, reasonableness, and decorum—suitable attributes for a queen of “fuller humanity.”\textsuperscript{40} And, finally, Emilia the Abbess arrives on stage, offering the final, best, and most hopeful redress: that Queen Elizabeth would come to represent in her own person both the English monarchy and the properly reformed English church.\textsuperscript{41} After remaining aloof for almost the entire play from the divisions and exclusions caused by an assortment of disagreements, misunderstandings and fears, and unsuccessfully leaving their resolution to the common sense of secular officials like the Duke, Emilia finally intervenes, recognizing that all the characters are one family and one community “under God.”\textsuperscript{42} The Abbess, speaking “from levels of knowledge different from [the others’], intuiting the miracles of Christian providence, bespeaking a harmonizing of happenstance that looks very much like the action of grace,” presents a sort of “renewed catechism” for all Errors’ participants.\textsuperscript{43} Adriana admits the error of her words and actions, and reaffirms her partnership with Antipholus. The Duke brushes aside Ephesian law and accepts the superiority of mercy over mere justice.\textsuperscript{44} The Abbess brings an

\textsuperscript{39} Hamilton, Shakespeare and the Politics, 82.

\textsuperscript{40} Heilman, Farce Transformed, 116.

\textsuperscript{41} Hamilton, Shakespeare and the Politics, 68.

\textsuperscript{42} The Duke has now reappeared on stage along with Egeon, whose wandering is about to end, although not in the way he expects; the need or lack perhaps symbolized by his name if it is derived from the Latin verb \v{e}geo (Riehle, Shakespeare, Plautus and the Humanist Tradition, 177) is about to be filled.

\textsuperscript{43} Cartwright, The Arden Shakespeare, 11; Kinney, The Comedy of Errors, 45.

\textsuperscript{44} Riehle, Shakespeare, Plautus and the Humanist Tradition, 176; Leggett, Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors, 17. I once saw a collegiate production of Errors in which the role of Duke was played by a female actor, as a Duchess. The face-to-face meeting and conversation of Duchess and Abbess addressed even more powerfully this tension between clementia and pietas.
end to the vilifications, the accusations, and the exclusions with a ‘natural’ remedy: She takes everyone with her inside the Abbey, though not all at once, for reflection and reconciliation. This is what the church can do, Shakespeare opines through her character, deflecting or compensating for societal threats and dangers, but only if it is a true church, and one with a legitimate, benevolent, necessary queen at its head.

In conclusion, Philip Kennicott’s review of the Metropolitan Museum’s exhibition on the Tudors asks (I paraphrase): Why is power in the past tense (Richard’s and Elizabeth’s, Roman and sixteenth-century English) so interesting and alluring? Why is art, visual and literary, so effective at washing away the gritty, noxious reality of human ambition and human error? It is dangerous, of course, to be moralistic about history, but art can do so usefully when moralistic is taken in its literal sense of behavioral. The Tudors, Kennicott reminds us, came to power after a long period of civil war and brought with them a kind of peace. They also brought Shakespeare, who effectively rewrote English history to make the Tudor monarchs seem inevitable, necessary, and legitimate so long as they could control and consolidate the essence of their power at the cultural and emotional level through the means at hand, a Christian abbess and a virgin queen. Comic plays, like tragic, historical, and blends of these types, have always shown audiences how to behave, and how power can elevate, while leaving everyone happier at the end, as comedy is always intended to do. A comedy “may still have some surprises” for us. Indeed.

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45 Riehle, Shakespeare, Plautus and the Humanist Tradition, 277.
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Title page of the First Folio, by William Shakespeare
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.
In the Classroom

The Imperative of Student Integration in Faculty Research Projects: A Pedagogical Case Study in Digital History

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Tradi tional pedagogical models, at times, are inadequate for equipping students with real-world skills. A shift towards integrating students into faculty-led research is essential, as demonstrated by the Coronado Muster Roll project. In this project, students use virtual reality technologies to create immersive experiences that explore the complex relationships between Spanish and Indigenous communities during Francisco Vázquez de Coronado’s 1540 expedition. A specific assignment within the course tasks students with developing digital narratives. The muster roll itself is revealed to be more than just a list; it serves as a snapshot capturing the depth and complexities often lost in grand narratives. It shows that both Spanish and Indigenous communities had complex alliances and mutual interests. This hands-on, virtual reality-based assignment not only deepens students’ understanding of historical intricacies but also provides invaluable applied research and creative skills. The integration of students into faculty research projects, like the Coronado Muster Roll is not just a pedagogical strategy; it is a necessity in today’s rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, the traditional pedagogical model that positions students as mere recipients of knowledge is increasingly inadequate. This article argues for the necessity of integrating students into faculty-led research projects, drawing from my own experience in teaching the course “Digital History: Virtual Reality Worlds, Digital Narratives, Serious Games,
& the Internet.” The course serves as a compelling case study, demonstrating how such integration can significantly enhance pedagogical outcomes and provide students with invaluable real-world experiences.

As an educator, I have long been interested in the transformative potential of digital humanities in the study of history. My course, “HIST 3100 Digital History: Virtual Reality Worlds, Digital Narratives, Serious Games, & the Internet,” first offered in Spring 2019, aimed to explore digital forms of humanistic and historical research. The course focused on a variety of digital mediums, including virtual worlds, video games, digital storytelling, and Internet-accessible historical data. This paper will discuss the benefits of integrating students into faculty research projects, using the course’s structure, objectives, and assignments as a case study.

The learning objectives of the course were meticulously designed to align with real-world research projects. Students were taught how to identify, categorize, and evaluate different forms of digital explorations. They were also trained to formulate research questions for digital humanistic investigation and conceptualize digital projects. These objectives were not merely academic exercises; they were skill-building activities aimed at making the students more industry-ready. One of the cornerstones of my teaching approach is the emphasis on personal best efforts, improvement, and engagement. When students are actively involved in research projects, they are more likely to be engaged and show improvement over time. This not only enhances their learning experience but also contributes to their personal and professional growth.

Crucial to my approach is a focus on real-world experiences that match and mimic what our undergraduates will experience after leaving the university. The course included a variety of assignments designed to investigate, document, and synthesize digital data for

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1 Special thanks to Ian Torres, Master of Arts in History, for his prior assistance as a graduate teaching assistant with the development of a master script that told the story of the muster roll.
historical events, places, and personages. These assignments ranged from commentaries and VR world tasks to digital storytelling and website development. This hands-on approach provides students with invaluable experience, which is crucial for understanding the complexities and nuances of real-world projects.

The course required students to work on a VR depiction of a Spanish military formation and expedition, digital storytelling videos, and an interactive, data-rich website. This collaborative approach mimics the real-world work environment, teaching students the importance of teamwork, communication, and project management.

**Collaboratively Creating a World: The Coronado Muster Roll of 1540**

In this specific course, we concentrated on the 1540 muster roll and military expedition of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado as he and many Spanish and Indian allies sought to explore present-day Arizona and New Mexico. This historical event served as the backdrop for various student assignments, including a three-act digital narrative script that describes activities in a virtual world.

**Students Directing Creation**

Via the assignment titled “HIST 3100: Digital Narrative (Storytelling) Task” (See Appendix), student teams were directed to generate immersive forms of historical storytelling. The assignment is broken down into three main components: Storyline, Mapping, and Sequencing. In the Storyline section, students are required to lay out a narrative arc that reveals valuable information about a specific culture or time period. They must summarize their story in 150-200 words and list 2-3 knowledge objectives, such as understanding social status relationships. The Mapping component requires students to draw a 2D map of the environment where the story takes place, including both human-made structures and natural features. Students must also describe the weather, time of day, and soundscape in 100-200 words. Lastly, the Sequencing section asks students to create a chronological list of scenes, complete with esti-
mated timestamps and descriptions of actions and sounds. This assignment allows for the incorporation of various research elements, such as social structures, cultural norms, and geographical settings, into a digital narrative format. This not only enhances the students’ understanding but also provides a dynamic way to present academic research. The multi-faceted nature of the task—incorporating text, visuals, and sound—makes it a comprehensive exercise in digital humanities, aligning well with research methodologies used in modern academia. Using one master digital narrative script, we proceeded to tell one version of the 1540 muster roll.

**Act 1: Preparing for Departure with Grandeur, Fanfare, Indigenous Alliances, Boisterous Activity**

In Act 1 of the digital narrative script, the focus is on the morning of February 22nd, 1540, when men gathered in Compostela in Nueva Galicia for the Cibola expedition led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado (See Figure 1.). This act serves as a vivid tableau that sets the stage for the complex relationships between the Spanish and Indigenous peoples involved in the expedition. Before constructing Act 1, students used Legos to reconstruct potential city layouts. They debated and chose the best configuration based on historical sources and real topographical constraints. This physical exercise brought to life the intricate spatial dynamics. As Coronado and Mendoza make their way to Compostela, they are accompanied by a long parade of nobles, wealthy men, royal officials from Mexico City, and their servants, along with a baggage train, horses, and pack animals. (See Figures 2 and 3.) Notably, the parade also includes 1,500 Indigenous allies. The parade is designed to show grandeur and fanfare, “in keeping with knightly showmanship.” This spectacle is not just a display of Spanish might and wealth, but it also serves as a powerful message to the Indigenous peoples about the kind of power and resources the Spanish could mobilize.
Figure 1: Lego City Layout: Three Maps
Figure 2: Men Gathered in Compostela in Nueva Galicia for the Cibola expedition led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado
The inclusion of 1,500 Indigenous allies in the parade is a significant detail that adds complexity to the narrative. Unlike many colonial expeditions that marginalized Indigenous peoples, this parade explicitly includes them as allies. This reflects a more nuanced relationship between the Spanish and Indigenous peoples, one based not just on subjugation but also on alliance and mutual interest. The presence of such a large number of Indigenous allies indicates that the Spanish were not unilateral actors in this historical setting; they had to negotiate complex alliances with various Indigenous groups. (See Figures 4, 5, and 6.)

Upon arrival in Compostela, Coronado and Mendoza find the town transformed into a “tent city,” capable of holding over 500 persons, some 1000 horses and livestock, and notably, accommodations for the 1,500 Indigenous allies. This transformation is not just the work of the Spanish; it also involves the labor and resources of the Indigenous peoples in the area. The script describes the town as having “perhaps a score of houses,” indicating that this was a frontier area where Spanish and Indigenous cultures met and interacted, often in complex and fraught ways.
Figure 4: Spanish “Tent City”

Figure 5: Spanish Compostela
The grand entry into Compostela sets the stage for future interactions between the Spanish and Indigenous peoples, interactions that would be marked by a complex interplay of power dynamics, cultural exchanges, and mutual dependencies. The Spanish were not just conquerors; they were also newcomers in a land with its own histories, cultures, and politics. Their success or failure would depend not just on their military might but also on their ability to understand, negotiate, and sometimes manipulate the complex social and political landscapes they encountered, landscapes in which Indigenous peoples were key players.

**Act 2: The Muster Roll as a Microcosm of Spanish-Indigenous Relations**

Act 2 of the digital narrative script focuses on the muster roll, a ceremonial event where men are lined up in military formation for inspection and documentation. The muster roll serves as a critical moment that reveals the diversity within both the Indigenous and Spanish communities, offering a nuanced understanding of the relationships between these two groups.

One of the most striking details about the muster roll is the significant presence of Indigenous warriors, who vastly outnumber their
Spanish counterparts. This is not a minor detail; it fundamentally changes the narrative from one of Spanish conquest to one of complex alliances and mutual interests. As we modeled the virtual environment, we quickly realized it was impossible to easily integrate all the Indigenous warriors into the scene. We only depicted 80 warriors (highlighted in blue in Figure 7) to demonstrate the clash of actual participants in the expedition --a total of 289 Spaniards versus 1,500 Indigenous warriors. The warriors are not mere subjects of Spanish rule; they are allies participating in the exploration of northern Mexico and New Mexico. Their significant numbers indicate that various Indigenous communities chose to engage with the Spanish in ways that were strategic and, in some cases, cooperative.

The muster roll also reveals that the Spanish were far from a monolithic group. They came from both high and lower-status communities in Spain. Some were nominal Catholics, converts to Christianity, while others were secret Jews evading the Spanish Inquisition. This religious diversity adds another layer of complexity to the Spanish-Indigenous relations, as it implies varying degrees of commitment to the religious motivations often cited for the Spanish expeditions.

Interestingly, some of the lower-status Spanish did not have their own Spanish weapons and instead wore Indigenous cotton armor and used obsidian battle axes. (See Figure 8.) This detail is tell-
ing because it shows a level of integration and adaptation to local conditions and resources. It also suggests that the Spanish were not just imposing their ways on the Indigenous peoples; they were also adopting Indigenous technologies and strategies.

Figure 8: Spanish Conquistadors Armed with Cotton Armor and Battle Axes

The muster roll is not just a list; it’s a snapshot that captures the depth, dimension, and shades of meaning that are often lost in the grand narratives of conquest and colonization. Within these grander currents, individual human beings lived, each contending with the complexities of their time in their own ways. The muster roll shows some of the ways that some persons, both Spanish and Indigenous, went about contending with those currents.

**Act 3: The Oath-Taking Ceremony and Its Implications for Spanish-Indigenous Relations**

Act 3 of the digital narrative script focuses on the oath-taking ceremony, a pivotal moment that serves as the formal commitment of the expedition members to their mission. (See Figures 9 and 10.)
This act, while seemingly centered on the Spanish leadership, offers subtle yet profound insights into the complex dynamics between the Spanish and their Indigenous allies.

Mendoza, dressed in his finery, delivers “a short eloquent speech” to the men, emphasizing the loyalty they owe to their general, Coronado. While the speech is directed at the Spanish, it’s impor-
tant to consider that the 1,500 Indigenous allies are also a part of this audience. Mendoza speaks of the “benefits this expedition might afford, through the conversion of those peoples,” subtly acknowledging the Indigenous presence and their potential conversion to Christianity as a part of the Spanish imperial project.

Coronado takes the oath first, swearing allegiance to the mission and committing to “cherish the service of God and of his Majesty.” Following him, the noblemen, camp-master, standard bearers, captains, and the rest of the men also take a similar oath. The script specifies that this excludes the Indigenous allies and servants, which raises questions about their role and commitment to the expedition. Are they considered inferior because they do not partake in the oath, or does their significant numerical presence imply a different form of commitment, one not bound by Spanish legal and religious formalities? (See Figure 11.)

![Figure 11: Allies? Indigenous Warrior With Spanish Soldiers](image)

The oath-taking ceremony is a moment that crystallizes the complexities of loyalty within the expedition. While the Spanish swear
formal oaths, the Indigenous allies, who vastly outnumber the Spanish, have their own forms of commitment that may not align entirely with Spanish objectives. Their loyalty could be to their own leaders, communities, or strategic goals, adding another layer of complexity to the expedition’s dynamics.

The oath-taking ceremony, like the muster roll, serves as a snapshot within the grander currents of history. It shows how individuals, both Spanish and Indigenous, navigated these currents in their own ways. While the Spanish may have had the legal and religious frameworks of oaths to guide them, the Indigenous allies had their own sets of beliefs, customs, and political structures that influenced their participation in the expedition.

Conclusion

Act 3 of the digital narrative script serves as a compelling conclusion to the series of events leading up to the expedition. While it may appear to focus on the Spanish leadership, a closer look reveals the nuanced ways in which it also reflects the complex relationship between the Spanish and their Indigenous allies. The oath-taking ceremony is not just a Spanish affair; it’s a moment that encapsulates the multifaceted loyalties and commitments that characterize this historical expedition.

The integration of students into faculty research projects, like the Coronado Muster Roll is not just a pedagogical strategy; it is a necessity in today’s rapidly evolving educational landscape. Students are compelled to apply research to tangible outcomes, as presented in our website, https://grants.uccs.edu/augmented-reflections/. The course “Digital History: Virtual Reality Worlds, Digital Narratives, Serious Games, & the Internet” serves as a case study in how such integration can be effectively achieved to enhance learning outcomes and provide students with invaluable real-world experience via HIST 3100: Digital Narrative (Storytelling) Task. I hope colleagues consider adopting similar approaches to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.
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## Appendix

### HIST 3100: Digital Narrative (Storytelling) Task

**Digital storytelling** is the process we use to construct a more immersive history using video and imagery, action and motion, voices and soundscapes, and text. What are its discrete components?

- **Storyline.** Each narrative lays out a story arc that reveals valuable information about a people and culture during a specific time period in history. Your storyline should explain what we learn by experiencing these persons, objects, environment, and cultural-linguistic ideas.

- **Mapping.** We must indicate how our environment (or, “level”) will be laid out with human-built structures and natural geographic features (trees, rocks, grass, etc.). Also consider weather, day/night lighting, and sounds.

- **Sequencing.** We must indicate when, where, who, and how our story elements (people, animals, objects) will be displayed and moved as the story unfolds.

### 1. Tell the Story

**Step 1.1.** Summarize your story using 150 to 200 words.

**Step 1.2.** List 2 to 3 knowledge objectives.

For example, “Understand social status relationships.”

**Step 1.3.** List the primary actors (people) in the story.

### 2. Map the Environment

**Step 2.1.** Draw and label a 2D map of your environment.

- Be sure to try to draw with a scale (i.e. 1 inch = 1 foot)
- Include human-built structures, i.e. houses, barns, buildings, carts, tools, and any object that humans use (create a key of symbols as needed)
- Include natural geographic features, i.e. depict any large clusters of trees, grass, rocks, water, streams (create a key of symbols as needed)

**Step 2.2.** Describe the weather, time of day, and soundscape. Use 100-200 words to describe if it is rainy, misty, sunny, night, dusk, morning, etc. List any natural sounds found in the environment like animal calls and movement, wind passing through trees or spaces, etc.

**Step 2.3.** Create an image and soundscape bank (folder) with visual and references. Use Internet hyperlinks to images and sounds you have located or that are noted in our shared database. Paste low-resolution images in your document.
3. Sequencing the Story Actions

Step 3.1. Create a list of chronological sequences of scenes of action, text, and sound (speaking). Think of each sequence as an act in a play or movie.

➢ Label each sequence with a numeral, i.e. “Sequence 1”.
➢ Attempt to estimate “timestamps” (minutes and seconds), or when the sequence begins and ends during the story. For example, “Timestamp Start: 1:00, Timestamp End: 2:15”. Remember, you will need to use your imagination to estimate how long each sequence will take to play out.

Step 3.2 For each sequence, label and describe the actions of persons, objects, and animals.
➢ Use up to 200 words to describe the actions.
➢ Indicate when individual speaking occurs or sounds are played.
➢ Use Internet hyperlinks to youtube videos or animations as examples.

Step 3.2 For each sequence, describe any text that should appear typed on the screen.
➢ Remember that limited amounts of text can be shown on the screen with an accompanying action.
➢ You may need to create an individual sequence with only text displayed on the screen to tell a portion of your story.

Step 3.3. Draw and label the movement of each sequence through your 2D map of your environment.
➢ Use arrows and lines to indicate how persons, animals, and objects move through the environment at each sequence.