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Misreading and the Parameters of Exemplarity in Early Modern England

by

Joshua Benjamin Fisher

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2002

Program Authorized to Offer Degree: English

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Doctoral Dissertation

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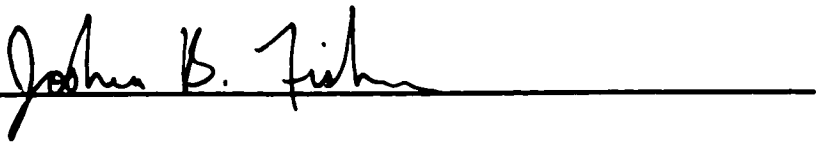
Signature 

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Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Sara van den Berg

Barbara Fuchs

Reading Committee:

Barbara Fuchs

Paul Remley

Fred J. Levy

Date: August 5, 2003

University of Washington

Abstract

Misreading and the Parameters of Exemplarity in Early Modern England

by Joshua B. Fisher

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee

Professor Sara van den Berg
Department of English

This study explores how acts of misreading in the early modern period shape subjectivities. I argue that key socio-cultural developments including the Protestant Reformation, the rise of print, and the expansion of literacy and education played a crucial role in widening the parameters of interpretive practices, thus complicating both the authority of humanist exemplarity and the status of individual subject-definition. In light of the ways in which misreading shapes notions of selfhood in the Renaissance, I center my discussion around a transformation in the status of humanist exemplarity that coalesced at the point of the English Civil War, where critics of the Stuart regime accused the ruling elite of misreading the past in terms of both classical and typological authority. I move from an examination of sixteenth century humanist conduct manuals, pedagogical tracts and commonplace books, in which notions of classical authority are firmly embraced, to jest books, plays, travel narratives, and other late sixteenth and seventeenth century texts that in various ways call into question the exemplary authority upon which notions of proper reading are founded. Finally, I focus on Civil War and Restoration era texts by John Milton, Andrew Marvell, and Lucy Hutchinson not so much to argue that humanist exemplarity had deteriorated but instead to explore how it had been re-shaped to challenge the constraining forces of monarchic absolutism.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help of my mentors and readers for making this project possible. To Sara van den Berg and Barbara Fuchs for guidance, perceptive comments, and a wealth of suggestions. To Fritz Levy and Paul Remley for sticking with me despite long periods of silence.

To Kevin Sharpe for thoughtfully reading and commenting on sections of the project.

To members of the Ficino Listserv, particularly Francois Rigolot and Peter Herman, for insightful suggestions.

To my family for their patience and unwavering support.

To Catherine McClellan for nearly everything.

In memory of my mom, who would have been proud

Introduction

This study seeks to demonstrate that acts of misreading in early modern England shape subjectivities. To misconstrue meaning becomes a powerful generative force in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whether accidentally or willfully, in gestures ranging from misinterpreting established doctrine to literally mistaking a word on the page. As we will see, early modern pedagogy manuals, conduct books, literary works, and other texts expressed direct concern with the idea of proper reading most prominently embodied by the notion of classical exemplarity. While humanism emphasized the dangers of misreading the authority of predecessors as a threat to decorum, factors such as the burgeoning mercantile culture, the growth of the print market, and the expansion of literacy challenged the potential uniformity and integrity of humanist exemplarity.[1] Such factors did not create a sudden proliferation of printed materials, but instead, as Wendy Wall points out, had a significant impact on "the way in which writers began to represent and perceive print's cultural, literary, and political potential."[2] As a result, the notion of proper reading as defined by humanism became increasingly fractured and ambiguous. In making this claim, I am not suggesting that uniformity and integrity ever truly existed among humanists. Certainly, questions of context—how and when to apply texts in addition to what text to apply—always render exemplary traditions potentially unstable and ambiguous. However, I hope to demonstrate that the ideal of humanism became increasingly impossible to realize during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a result of fundamental socio-cultural and intellectual transformations.

The complex and interconnected landscape of textual production, dissemination, and consumption itself problematized the potential for 'right' or official reading of texts in early modern culture. While much has been written about the ways in which humanism contributed to the 'self-fashioning' of the early modern individual, it is my contention that the factors contributing to the destabilizing of humanist authority played a more significant role in shaping early modern notions of subjectivity. In other words, those interpretive acts that register as misreadings when viewed through the lens of humanist exemplarity offer an alternative to the community-defined homogeneity of the humanist subject in favor of more uniquely defined notions of individualism. This is not to suggest that every instance of misreading in early modern England can be recognized as a proper reading within some alternative framework. Rather, I hope to demonstrate that the vast number of early modern texts that voice anxieties about misreading and miswriting indicate the ideological transformations coming into focus in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. It is in the ensuing ideological upheavals that notions of early modern self-hood crystallized and conventional parameters underwriting the authority of representation came under scrutiny, rather than as a direct result of humanism.

Even as humanist pedagogy embraced exemplary strictures of proper interpretation by adhering to classical models of language and ideology, humanism as a whole simultaneously grappled with the inevitable gulf between knowledge and experience that ultimately challenged notions of proper reading. At the same time, literary genres from plays and poems to travel narratives and utopian fictions increasingly problematized authoritative models of representation and interpretation by capitalizing upon the unstable boundaries between theater and life, between self and other, between

mimesis and origin, and between truth and fiction that characterize the distinct literary forms. While conduct books, pedagogical tracts, and commonplace books uphold notions of proper reading as defined by humanist exemplarity, other genres— including jest books, travel narratives, utopian discourses, comedies, and tragedies— illustrate the limitations of exemplary authority. Forms such as drama, travel narratives, and utopian discourses destabilize notions of authority, often blurring boundaries between the real and the imagined as a central feature of their representational livelihood. Yet such forms are inextricably bound up in the particularities of the socio-cultural landscape, so that the diffusing of representational authority is as much a product of the forms as of the environment in which they operate. Thus, an exploration of what it means to misread helps to understand early modern subjectivity and the shaping of representation within the particular socio-cultural context.

Given that the term "misreading" did not appear in the English language until the early nineteenth century, however, the mere assertion of this argument may appear problematic.[3] Yet while the term itself did not exist, the various interpretive acts or misacts that the term signifies were certainly present, as evidenced by a wide range of existing words to designate acts of misprision: mispoint, miswrite, misword, mismeasure, missay, misconstruct, misjoin, misplace, miscopy, mismetre, misapply, misconstrue, misquote, and misunderstand.[4] Attending closely to these specific terms sheds light on the complex interrelationships between production, transmission, and reception that comprise early modern textual and interpretive spaces.

While misreading, though anachronistic as a term, can be fruitful as an umbrella category in which to situate these other terms, it is necessary to recognize the distinct

cultural nuances of the period-specific language. To do so requires attention to the precise nature of the reading act during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Largely as a result of powerful socio-cultural upheavals such as the Protestant Reformation and the rise of print, reading was in the process of transformation from a predominantly oral and community-defined act toward a more private and introspective space. Within this cultural framework, both listening and visualizing become central to acts of reading. The range of terms identified above clearly attests to this intersection.[5] Words such as "missay" and "mishear" highlight largely oral interpretive processes, and mismetering, mispointing, or miswording can occur as much in oral contexts of recitation as in written ones. The mispronunciation of a word, for example, is a kind of misreading, even though the process has less to do with reading than with speaking.[6] And where miswriting assumes a singularly textual and visual significance, other related acts such as misplacing, miscopying, misjoining, or misconstruing remain more ambiguous in terms of designating a particular step in the interpretive process (moving from production to transmission to reception). The writer's mistake of improperly pointing (punctuating) the text, a printer's error of miswording by misplacing type, or the reader's interpretive mistake all constitute misreadings. But the term misreading is only viable in this context if we identify the reading process as inextricably linked to a text's creation, dissemination, and consumption.

Thomas Speght's second edition of the *Works of Chaucer* (1602) provides a useful illustration of how misreading characterizes the process of textual transmission from production to reception. Unlike earlier editions of Chaucer's work, Speght's second edition takes careful steps to elucidate the notion of reading Chaucer properly. In the

opening address, Speght explains Chaucer's own concern regarding the possibility of being misread:

> And if a verse here and there fal out a sillable shorter or longer than another, I rather aret it to the negligence and rape of *Adam Scrivener*, that I may speake as Chaucer doth, than any unconning or oversight in the author: For how fearful he was to have his works miswritten, or his verse mismeasured, may appear in the end of his fift booke of *Troylus and Creseide*, where he writeth thus:
>
> *And for there is so great diversitie*
> *In English and in writing of our tongue,*
> *So pray I God that none miswrite thee*
> *Ne thee Mismetre for Defaut of Tongue*[7]

As we will see, anxiety regarding a work's vulnerability to error and misreading in inattentive hands is a commonplace during the period. Yet Speght's preface also helps us to recognize the complex parameters of misreading by distinguishing the particular sites of vulnerability across the process of textual transmission. Citing Chaucer's own remarks about miswriting in book five of *Troilus and Criseide* and referencing Chaucer's poem, "To his Scribe Adam" (itself concerned with the proper reading of *Troilus*), Speght follows Chaucer in blaming the copyist or scribe for any errors in the present work. Thus, the "negligence and rape of Adam Scrivener," to quote Speght quoting Chaucer, involves miswriting, mismetering, mismeasuring, and other faults arising in the process of transcribing the text.

While both Chaucer and Speght confidently attribute error to the copyist's misreading, Speght's own efforts to ensure that Chaucer is read properly complicate the

parameters of textual authority. Among the new additions to Speght's second edition is the noting of "sentences and proverbs," whereby moral sententiae and other commonplaces are distinguished by the printer's mark of a pointed hand in the margins (Figure One). Given the complex and often contradictory nature of Chaucer's moral disposition in his writings, the insertion of pointing hands may in itself problematize boundaries between proper and misguided readings. The opening words of the Wife of Bath's Prologue make clear the distinction between exemplary authority and experience: "Experience, though noon auctoritee/Were in this world, is right ynough for me/To speke of wo that is in marriage." Inserting pointing hands in the margins of the text would thus seem appropriate, given that the Wife of Bath becomes a kind of exemplary figure and her words serve as commonplaces. Indeed, a pointing hand marks the lines "Then am I Gentle, when I begin/To live virtuously and to leaven Sin" and another appears at "better is to be wedded, than to brinne." Frequent marks appear as well throughout Chaucer's *Tale of Melibeus*, which is quite fitting given the prefatory epistle: "A tale full of moralities, wherein both high and low may learne to gouerne their affections."

Yet, in the case of the Wife of Bath, exemplary models and glossing stand in contradistinction to her own sense of individual authority predicated upon experience. To mark up her text is thus to misread her very words. As she states, "Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun." Yet, as critics such as Carolyn Dinshaw and the Wife herself make evident, "the Wife opposes her tale to the 'lerned men's' lore: it is her 'joly body' against their oppressive teaching and glossing."[8] The fact that the Wife of Bath discloses to her readers and listeners that "myn entente nys but for to pleye" emphasizes her playful tendency to oppose *and* mimetically appropriate patriarchal discourse for her own end.

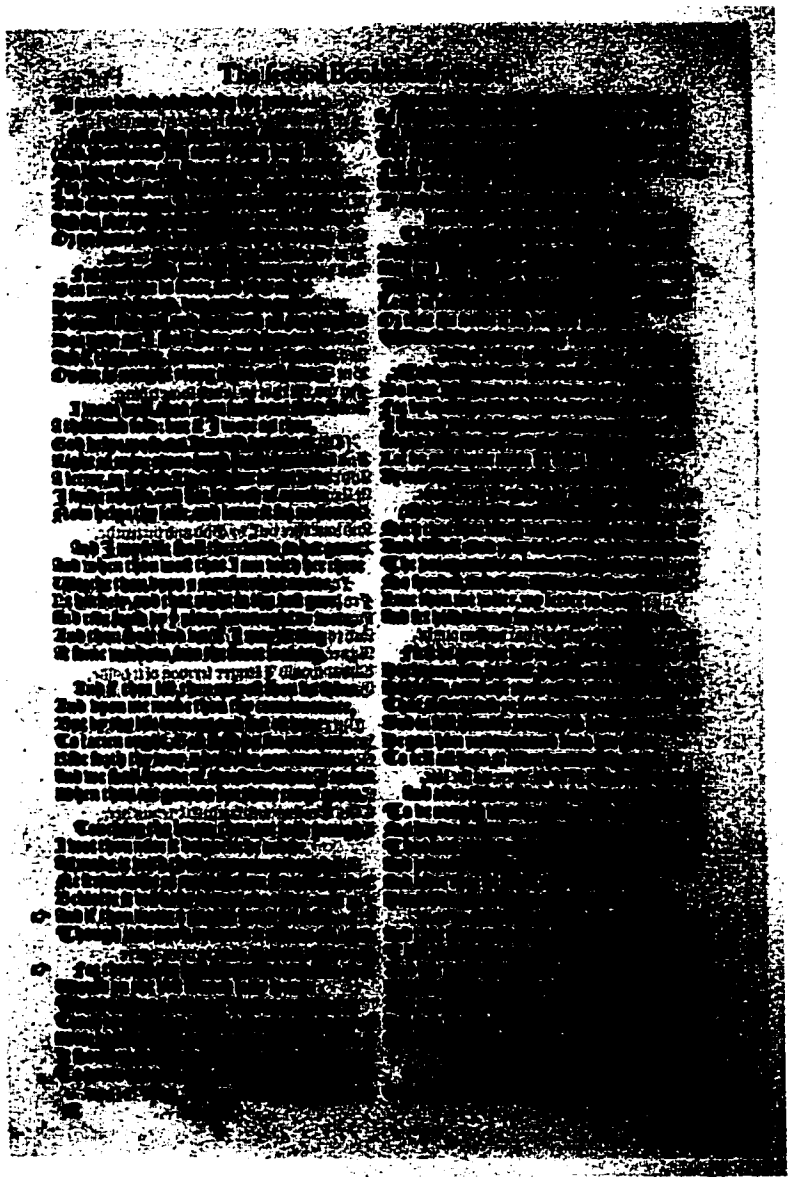

Figure 1: From Thomas Speght's *The Workes of Our Ancient and learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed*, 1602.

The Wife's own response to notions of exemplarity thus complicates while simultaneously validating the treatment of her own text as exemplary.

To transform Chaucer's works into a commonplace book by way of highlighting moral truisms is thus to misinterpret the subtle ironies and complexities of Chaucer's literary imagination. As such, insisting upon reading Chaucer properly may in itself constitute a misreading, thereby broadening the parameters of misreading to include the author (who playfully misuses moral truisms), the editor, and the reader, in addition to the copyist. By encompassing the process of producing, disseminating, and consuming texts, such misreading attests to the wide range of meanings ascribed to the concept of misprision in the early modern period. That Chaucer's work itself potentially challenges received authority compounds the possibilities of productive misreading. To misread Chaucer as a commonplace book is to disregard the interpretive instability of Chaucer's own meaning. Nevertheless, the misreading paradoxically proves generative to the extent that Speght's treatment of Chaucer confirms the interpretive instability of Chaucer's own text. Although Chaucer pre-dates the period under consideration here, subsequent editions continue to shape and re-shape Chaucerian texts. Thus, interpretive authority depends not only upon the author in producing the text, but also upon the printers, editors, and readers entwined in the process of textual transmission and reception.

To further understand how acts of misreading shape subjectivities, we must first identify what is being misread. Is it the author's intentions? The text's relevance to the individual reader? The contexts within which the act of reading can signify? The reader's preconceptions about what the text is capable of communicating? If, as Wolfgang Iser suggests, "the act of reading is . . . a process of seeking to pin down the oscillating

structure of the text [whereby authority shifts between the text and the reading] to some specific meaning,"[9] then what can be said about readings that involve misreading and other acts of misprision? Do these stand as failures in the attempt to "pin down" meaning, or do they underscore the constructedness of "schematized views" (to use Roman Ingarden's term[10]) that confirm the "substance" of a text by attempting to impose meaning? And if the latter is the case, how do such "schematized views," against which misreading can take place, come into being? Are such "views" determined by socio-cultural context, by the author, by the idea of the text within its generic or other literary framework (including the "meaning-projection" often imposed by the reader)?

To begin to explore these questions (for which the obvious answer is 'all of the above'), it is necessary to distinguish the present study from other critical discussions of misreading. Perhaps most notable among these is Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), where the six "revisionary ratios" that Bloom identifies in order to understand poetic influence include *clinamen* or creative misprision. As Bloom reminds his readers throughout *The Anxiety of Influence* as well as in the follow-up study, *A Map of Misreading* (1975), misreading as he defines it has little to do with the misconstrual of images and ideas passed down from earlier to later poets. Rather, misreading or misprision constitutes a critical act that one poet performs upon another, a "swerving away from the precursor" that establishes a "clear imaginative space" for the *ephebe* or successor poet. According to Bloom, strong poetic readings are always misreadings, and "every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem. A poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but is that anxiety."[11] Such language firmly situates Bloom's discussion in a psychoanalytical context, whereby the relationship between predecessor and *ephebe*

shadows the Sophoclean dilemma of Freud's "Family Romance" and its predominant tension between father and son. Through acts of misreading and revision, the strong poetic *ephebe* not only etches out a creative space, but also shapes the identity of the precursor, thus simultaneously making and unmaking the predecessor/father-figure.

The livelihood of Bloom's revisionary ratios, including *clinamen* or poetic misprision, depends upon categories of exclusivity that paradoxically invigorate and undermine the model's effectiveness. By strong poets, Bloom means post-Cartesian male British and American poets from Milton to Stevens. But his model of misreading involves a broader sense of exclusivity, given that he excludes acts of poetic creation and misprision from the socio-cultural matrix, attributing the process solely to psychological forces of influence, anxiety, and revision. Such forces are exemplified in the following statement: "Poetry (Romance) is Family Romance. Poetry is the enchantment of incest, disciplined by resistance to that enchantment."[12] This kind of statement, while useful in understanding the complex dynamic between literary predecessor and successor, pays little heed to the broader set of socio-cultural influences that shape literary relationships and representations.

Norman Holland similarly embraces psychology in his discussion of the reading act, but where Bloom argues that all (strong) readings are misreadings, Holland suggests that there is no such thing as a misreading at all. According to Holland, recent post-structuralist and deconstructionist criticism (whose proponents Holland deems "New Cryptics") privileges the authority of language to determine meaning independent of the "I" of the reader. Holland explains that this faith in the authority of the text to determine meaning stems from the Saussurian signifier/signified paradigm, a model that Holland

argues is wholly defunct within Saussure's own field of linguistics and which has little bearing upon the understanding of literary interpretation. Despite this factor, such "text-active" models of interpretation have endured within the space of literary criticism, exemplified perhaps most clearly by the Barthian formulation of the "death of the author" and its requisite collapsing of all subject-positions outside of the text itself.[13]

Arguing that individual subjects rather than signifying texts are responsible for interpretive meaning, Holland insists upon a criticism that acknowledges the centrality of the individual reader or spectator in the interpretive act. To substantiate this claim, Holland turns to cognitive psychology and suggests that one's subjective identity itself governs the "feedback loops"[14] responsible for individual cognition and interpretation. In other words, the codes and canons that give rise to an individual's interpretive response are themselves intricately bound to that individual's unique perception and experience. Thus, according to Holland, every reading is valid since the codes and canons of the individual response rather than the text itself become responsible for meaning. Different readings become a function of different identities and criticism becomes as much a process of tracing these "identity themes" as of understanding a text.

In the context of this "reader-active" model, any so-called misreading becomes just another instance of reading as uniquely pronounced by the individual reader. In *The Critical I* (1990), Holland reflects on this assertion:

> Is there, then, any such thing as a misreading? Only in the sense of a 'wrong' free association (and of course, there is no such thing). You could say, as some modern critics do, following Harold Bloom, that *all* readings are misreadings. That is, all readings mis-take the original in one way or

another. I see no reason, however, to call that a *mis*reading, any more than I would call free associations mis-associations. That prefix 'mis-' marks the assumption that there is a not-misreading, a reading that is not a mis-, and we have seen that is not so. There are only readings and different rules by which the reading game is played. Bloom is simply saying all readings (or all 'strong' readings) answer some reader's needs, not the writer's.[15]

Cast in these terms, Holland's assessment sounds remarkably similar to Bloom's. In both cases, psychological determinates provide the impetus for originary interpretive acts. By privileging psychological factors (for Bloom, the Freudian "Family Romance" paradigm and for Holland, cognitive feedback looping), both critics place a premium on the reader's conscious or unconscious agency as an interpreting subject. Whether misreading as Bloom's "strong poet" always does or actively reading (and never misreading) as does Holland's "I -critic," the reader becomes an autonomous agent in the process of shaping interpretive meaning.

While this emphasis on psychology is indeed helpful, neither Holland nor Bloom adequately attends to the complex range of socio-cultural factors that circumscribe and define the interpretive process. Holland's critique of the post-structuralist insistence upon the text as the locus of authoritative meaning is certainly useful, but the notion that any reader can have any response to any text and call this a valid reading is nevertheless problematic. If, as Holland suggests, reading is a process by which we come to know ourselves (a process of embracing the "critical I") and if the text itself cannot signify meaning, then just as there can be no misreading, neither can there be determinate meaning outside of an individual's own unique and potentially arbitrary interpretive

response. Thus, an alternative set of interrelations is required, whereby the psychological response of the individual is validated, but not necessarily privileged as a sole constituent above and beyond other factors.

Stanley Fish clearly articulates such an alternate position in introducing his own "community of readers" model: ". . . [T]he act of recognizing literature is not constrained to something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it."[16] My own position is largely informed by this notion of collective community, and Fish's delineation of a "community of readers" helps to understand the concept of misreading as I use it in this study. Central here is the notion that all readings are context-bound, and that an interpretive act recognized as a misreading in one context may count as a "right reading" in another. In other words, unlike Holland, who would say that no reading is amiss (because he over-determines these contexts) or Bloom, who claims that all readings are misreadings (because he is too firmly invested in one exclusive context), I argue for a more dynamic definition of misreading in which the transformative potential of misprision is intrinsically linked to the cultural contexts of interpretive communities. Fish's assertion that "the reader's response is *not* to the meaning; it *is* the meaning"[17] is crucial here, suggesting that the reader's interpretive agency plays a central role in shaping textual authority. In a given context, readers can misread, but the fact that they produce a misreading in the first place assumes that there is a proper or right reading against which the misreading occurs.

Within the highly unstable socio-political landscape of early modern England, context played a crucial role in defining interpretive interactions. As the interpretive authority of readers broadened, the line between proper and improper reading became less clearly defined and misreading in turn became a powerful shaping force for readers and texts. Tracing the sixteenth and seventeenth century transformation of reading from a mimetic to a generative act, Terence Cave explains how texts in the early modern period increasingly functioned as a "heuristic exercise, proffering *topoi* that the reader may appropriate and reorganize in relation to an unforeseen mental horizon."[18] Within this context, where the "unforeseen mental horizon" turns out to be the subjectivity of the reader, interpretive agency is predicated not upon any synthesis of meaning within the text, but instead upon the act of reading as an appropriation and a displacement of the text's authorizing *topoi*. No longer simply an act of mimetic repetition, reading in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries increasingly prioritizes deviation as potentially productive. Citing Montaigne as a seminal instance of such practices, Cave describes how the *Essais* prioritize the generative potential of the reader as active agent: "Montaigne misquotes, disguises his quotations, quotes without identifying the text, provides a radically new context for his quotations, and in addition makes all these operations explicit." Such challenges to the mimetic integrity of the reading act in turn underscore the responsibility of readers as active agents in textual meaning:

> the subject is a blank space, always ready to be filled with displaced *topoi*; at the same time it is the only guarantee for Montaigne of the authentic production of meaning. In order to be properly read, the *Essais* must be

> misread, contested, dismantled, deformed and reformed in the name of a new subject.[19]

Montaigne's text is thus indicative of a transformation of reading and the role of the reader in the early modern period. No longer necessarily bound to the interpretive constraints of mimesis, early modern texts increasingly depend upon the active agency of the reader as central to interpretive meaning.[20]

To elucidate the interrelation between interpretive agency and the subject-development of the reader, I propose the term *generative misreading* to speak to the particular processes that I trace throughout this study. I want to emphasize how misreading increasingly becomes a productive act during the early modern period. While the more conventional view of misinterpretation as a danger fraught with damaging consequences has certainly endured well beyond the Renaissance, acts of misprision in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries increasingly offered constructive possibilities for broadening and complicating the landscape of interpretive meaning. In the opening of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), Stephen Greenblatt identifies "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process"[21] during the sixteenth century. I want to build on Greenblatt's observations by suggesting that generative misreading in the early modern period is both a component and an outcome of this process.

Yet the notion of generative misreading as I have been discussing it paradoxically works also to complicate Greenblatt's own formulation. Greenblatt's insistence that literature functions within cultural systems as "a manifestation of the concrete behavior of the particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped,

and as a reflection upon those codes"[22] is clearly central to the present discussion. However, the assertion that interpretive acts (including literary production itself) are always the product of "an encounter between an authority and an alien"[23] is problematic. Within the space of generative misreading, the binary opposition between official power and subversive responses to that power literally collapses. As a potent shaping force, misreading complicates the dynamic interplay between subversive forms of expression and their containment within official sites of power. While Greenblatt and other New Historicist critics have attended to the containment/subversion binary, such interplay between authority and subversion can be recognized as just one of many relationships that shape interpretive acts.

Moreover, by examining the ways in which acts of misprision prove generative, the New Historicist tendency to simplify the Foucauldian "Power-Knowledge Grid" as a polarization of subversion and containment comes to seem largely irrelevant. That is, if the official system of power that opposes and regulates subversive actions is itself seen as a pliable construct, then the crucial binaries central to Foucault's construct of institutional power essentially collapse. While Greenblatt's claim that "representations are not only products but producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being" is indeed highly relevant to the present study, less useful is the New Historicist insistence that all representation is necessarily negotiated within a framework of institutionalized power and official authority. In my discussion, generative misreadings are not necessarily subversive acts, since (as we will see) even officially sanctioned power can be shaped by misreadings. Furthermore, the increasingly prominent role of

readers as active agents in the shaping of textual meaning complicates the stability of interpretive authority.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the notion of the misreader as active agent began to crystallize, coalescing at the point of the civil war as a culmination of widening interpretive practices. Wendy Wall, Arthur Marotti, Jane Tylus, and others have argued convincingly for the ways in which publishers and writers negotiated versions of authorship in the early modern period. I hope to build on these assertions by including the reader in this process of negotiation. In this light, the interpretive authority that determines textual meaning is as much the responsibility of readers in the reception of the text as it is the responsibility of authors and publishers in the production and transmission of texts. In the literary space of the late sixteenth century (and indeed throughout the period), such agency destabilized the ideals of exemplary representation. The broadening spectrum of interpretive responses, including misreadings, stood as a challenge to the integrity of classical authority.

Nevertheless, it is important to realize that this burgeoning sense of agency does not mean an interpretive free-for-all for early modern readers. Notions about proper reading and efforts to enforce such readings were clearly in place throughout the period.[24] These efforts can perhaps most clearly be identified in the dedicatory addresses to readers found in countless early modern texts ranging from conduct manuals to poetry collections and from pamphlets and playbooks to sermons. Even when not authored by the writer him or herself, as is sometimes the case, the dedicatory address to the reader provides a clear set of guidelines and concerns for reading the author's work. Thus, it stands as a central moderating presence within the process of textual transaction, negotiating the

determinacy of meaning from production and transmission to reception. Jonson's "understanding readers," the unthrifty and nonjudgmental "wide variety of readers" to whom Condell and Heminge appeal in the 1623 Shakespeare Folio, the "Understanders" addressed by the printer of John Donne's *Poems* (1635): such dedications identify ideal readers and proper ways of reading, as exemplified by the frequent designation "gentle reader" and all of the social and aesthetic meanings that the term embodies. To this end, addresses to the reader frequently voice anxieties about the consequences of misreading and being misread, referencing the stigma associated with appearing in print to illustrate just how vulnerable writing can be within the expanding and increasingly indiscriminating print market. In the address "To the Gentle Reader" that opens his *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres* (1574), George Gascoigne distinguishes judicious readers from those who are less discerning: "Even so the discrete reader may take a happie example by the most lascivious histories, although the captious and harebrain'd heads can neither be encouraged by the good, nor forewarned by the bad."

Such anxieties regarding undiscerning readers endure well into the seventeenth century. The opening section of Robert Herrick's *Hesperides* (1648), for example, includes a direct explanation regarding the cause of literal errors in the collection:

> For these Transgressions which thou here dost see,
>
> Condemne the Printer, Reader, and not me;
>
> Who gave him forth good Grain, though he Mistook
>
> The Seed; so sow'd these Tares throughout my Book.

Such susceptibility to undiscriminating misreaders is reiterated within Herrick's opening poems. Verses such as "To the soure Reader" and the multiple poems entitled "To his

Booke" voice unease regarding the promiscuous potential of Herrick's writing in print ("wantonly to roame/From house to house, and never stay at home") as well as its vulnerability in the hands of "soure" readers.

The emphasis on proper and improper reading typifies most addresses to readers; however, this emphasis is not always straightforwardly didactic and prescriptive in terms of outlining proper and improper reading. In the opening address to his pamphlet *The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603), for instance, Thomas Dekker playfully addresses his readers:

> To mainteine the scurvy fashion, and to keepe Custome in reparations, [the writer] must be honyed, and come-over with Gentle Reader, Courteous Reader, and Learned Reader, though he have no more Gentilitie in him than Adam had (that was but a gardner) and no more Civility than a Tartar . . . For he that dares hazard a pressing to death (that is to say, To be a man in Print) must make account that he shall stand . . . to be beaten with all stormes.[25]

In the process of underscoring how authors use opening addresses to flatter undiscerning readers, Dekker exposes some of the key anxieties about appearing in print voiced by writers of the period. The threat of the undiscerning reader here hyperbolically registers as a specific danger to cultural integrity, particularly damaging to distinctions of race ("no more Civility than a Tartar") and class ("no more Gentilitie in him than Adam had"). Appearing in print also poses a very real danger to writers themselves, as the pun inherent in the term "pressing to death" suggests. While such statements echo the perceived worries associated with appearing in print, Dekker's tongue-in-cheek playfulness here simultaneously suggests that anxieties about the vulnerability of texts in undiscerning

hands might be unfounded. In fact, voicing such concerns about appearing in print within the context of a popular pamphlet, as Dekker does in *The Wonderfull Yeare*, fractures any stable notion of proper reading and "gentle" readers. Thus, while Dekker's opening address seemingly warns readers about the susceptibility of print, the statement playfully highlights the limitations of such anxieties as a fad ("the scurvy fashion") as well as a threat to the possibilities of artistic expression.

While many addresses to readers are in fact more sincere than Dekker's in voicing concern about being properly read, very few addresses provide prescriptive models in terms of how specifically to read or not read the text. While addressing readers may seem a didactic enterprise, most addresses in fact remain openly ambiguous, either to test readers by mapping out their own responsibilities (to judge, to censor, to read, and even to misread) or else to toy with the possibility that more than one interpretation may be possible. Alternatively, as the following examples make clear, the authority of the opening address as a didactic enterprise is undermined by the interpretive ambiguity of the ensuing text.

Although in many ways pre-dating the interpretive instabilities evident in later literary works, the opening dedications of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) stand as a kind of forerunner to the addresses that we will explore below. Both Ralph Robinson's address entitled "The Translator to the Gentle Reader" and More's own letter to Peter Giles express anxieties about the work's vulnerable status in print and appeal to a specific body of 'understanding' readers to read the work judiciously and properly. Yet the two addresses taken together also shed light on the instability of textual meaning, thus calling attention to the reader's own interpretive role in the text.

Opening his address with the imperative "Thou shalt understand, gentle reader," More's English translator Ralph Robinson explains the role of proper reading in determining the livelihood of More's text. According to Robinson, the first edition of the translation had been published erroneously, intended initially for a friend (George Tadlowe) "for his own private use, upon hope that he would have kept it secret to himself alone." As a private text intended for a friend whose own "knowledge of the Latin tongue . . . was not so well seen as to be able to judge the fineness or coarseness of my translation," Robinson's first edition stands vulnerable to undiscerning readers (and as an undiscerning text) in the public realm. In response to the shortcomings of the first edition, he reassures readers that his revised translation is not so susceptible to the scrutinizing gaze of censoring readers:

> I trust I have now in this second edition taken about it such pains that very few great faults or notable errors are in it to be found. Now, therefore, most gentle reader, the meanness of this simple translation, and the faults that be therein (as I fear much there be some), I doubt not but thou wilt, in just consideration of the premises, gently and favourably wink at them.[26]

Even as Robinson laments "the meanness of this simple translation" and acknowledges the possibility of faults in his second edition, he implores readers to excuse such textual limitations by "favourably wink[ing]" at them. While Robinson reassures readers that this second edition is superior to the first as a proper reading of More's text, More's own letter to his friend Peter Giles as well as his Utopian fiction itself complicate the stable interpretive relationship between text and readers.

Specifically, More's letter to Giles complicates any singular and stable notion of proper reading, since the author blurs distinctions between history, imagination, and memory in his opening address. More's concern over the fallibility of his memory and his tendency to "mistrust myself" seriously compromises his own textual authority. Further threatening this authority is More's insistence that Giles talk with Hythloday, the central figure of More's Utopian world. By speaking directly with Hythloday, Giles would paradoxically confirm the truth of More's account by embracing a fictitious authority: "For if I have missed or failed in any point, or if any fault have escaped me, no man can so well correct and amend it as he [Hytholoday] can; and yet that can he not do unless he peruse and read over my book written."[27] Hythloday thus becomes a model of the judicious reader, yet not only is he fictional; his actions are also subjected to the authority of More's text. Such a reader thus seems a contrivance rather than a reality. As the letter to Giles makes clear, proper reading as emblematized by Giles and Hythloday is key to the authoritative meaning of More's text. Yet proper reading itself includes an awareness of the playfulness and duplicity of the text. Even in this early example, the interpretive ambiguities of the *Utopia* (wavering between the space of fiction and truth) obscure any singular notion of proper reading, thereby undermining the confidence inherent in Robinson's address to readers.

By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, opening addresses to readers accompanied most printed works. Their burgeoning numbers attest to the growing anxiety surrounding the reader's interpretive authority. Many opening addresses denounce any kind of misreading as a threat to textual and readerly decorum. While John Taylor's dedicatory poem "Errata, or Faults to the Reader" (1630) seems emblematic in

prescribing proper reading strategies for readers, the subsequent writings that comprise Taylor's *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-Poet* defuse this prescriptive potential. Taylor begins by condemning errors and the possibility of misreading in the sequence of production, dissemination, and reception: "Faults, but not faults escap'd, I would they were,/If they were faults escap'd, they were not here." Given the inevitable presence of faults in his text however, Taylor concedes: "And since my faults are here in prison fast,/And on record (in print) are like to last,/Since the Correcters let them passe the presse,/And my occasions mix'd with sicknesses,/And that foure Printers dwelling farre asunder./Did print this booke, pray make the faults no wonder." In this assessment, Taylor suggests that the potential for error and misreading exists at every step of the process of textual transmission from creation to digestion. Obliging the reader to "make the faults no wonder" thus attests to the inevitability of error, but not to wonder here suggests both 'not to be amazed at' and 'not to notice' the faults.

Such double meaning allows Taylor to reassure readers that "I will confesse my faults, are escap'd indeed,/If they escape mens Censure when they read." Although the gesture of imploring readers to ignore errors is common among early modern opening addresses, less conventional is Taylor's suggestion that errors can be a central defining feature of the text. This is clearly articulated as Taylor elaborates on the unavoidability of errata in texts: "No Garden is so cleare, but weedes are in't,/All is not Gold that's coined in the Mint;/The Rose hath prickles, and the spots of sinne . . . Below the Moone no full perfection is,/And always some of us are all amisse."[28] The notion that "some of us are all amisse" is particularly provocative here, suggesting both the commonplace about postlapsarian humans as imperfect beings and the idea that Taylor himself defines his

idiosyncratic identity by way of being "amisse." I will return to this idea in Chapter Four; for now, it is useful to examine this notion of being "amisse" to recognize how the inevitability of faults shapes the text. Although the poem ends by imploring readers to either correct or ignore mistakes ("Then in your reading mend each mis-plac'd letter,/And by your judgement make bad words found better"), the subsequent works that comprise Taylor's *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-Poet* complicate the notion of proper reading. From nonsense verse to travel writings in which Taylor willfully misreads himself and his surroundings, duplicitous meaning becomes a central factor in defining the text, its author, and even its readers (as I will argue in Chapter Four). The kinds of ambiguous reading strategies that Taylor highlights in his writings are indicative of a shifting attitude toward reading and readers, whereby the reader's own interpretive authority becomes increasingly central to meaning in the text. In light of these priorities, the prescriptive authority of Taylor's opening address and its concern with the faults of the text essentially dissolves.

In another telling example, the frontispiece to Thomas Coryat's *Coryat's Crudities* (1611) similarly privileges the reader's agency, including the possibility of misreading, as central to textual meaning. As an early prototype of the modern travel guide, Coryat's text details his five-month journey on foot throughout Europe and the frontispiece provides a visual mapping of that journey. The cartouche surrounding the title contains thirteen small distiches, each of which is accompanied by an alphabetical letter (Figure Two). Following the frontispiece, a section entitled "Certaine opening and drawing distiches to be applied" provides the reader with expository guidance for "the Readers better understanding."

Figure 2: Frontispiece to *Coryat's Crudities* (1611)

Yet in the subsequent exposition, provided by Lawrence Whitaker and Ben Jonson, any potential for proper interpretive reading is confounded rather than confirmed.[29] For not only are there two sets of verses each purporting to "unlocke the mystery of the Crudities," but certain illustrations receive multiple interpretive glosses, thus underscoring the multiplicity of interpretive meaning. Take for example illustration G, which depicts Coryat running from a knife-wielding Rabbi. Whitaker provides the following poetic glosses, separated from one another by the ambiguous "or": "In vaine here doth Coryat pipe and dispute,/His wench was, Jewes will not be caught with his flute. *Or*, Thy Cortizan clipt thee, ware Tom, I advise thee,/ And flie from the Jewes, lest they circumcise thee." Jonson in turn provides one gloss, as follows: "And there, while he gives the zealous Bravado,/A Rabbin confutes him with the Bastinado."[30] While all three glosses reflect anxieties about Judaic circumcision as a threat to masculinity, the fact that three versions accompany the illustration underscores the multiplicity of interpretive meanings available to the reader.

This multiplicity becomes even more pronounced in Whitaker's explanation of emblems K and I, each accompanied by four variant glosses. Once again, each version playfully articulates an alternate reading of the images and thus resists any interpretive finality. Jonson's poem explicating K, a portrait of Coryat's visage, similarly highlights interpretive ambiguity: "Here, finer then coming from his Punke you him see,/F shows what he was, K what he will be." Jonson's own explanatory note purports to clarify the meaning, but by calling attention to how the images (and Jonson's poem) can be misread, the meaning becomes all the more fractured:

> Not meaning by F. and K. as the vulgar may peevishly and wittingly mistake, but that he was then coming from his Courtesan a Freshman, and now having seen their fashions, and written a description of them, he will shortly be reputed a knowing, proper, and well traveld scholer, as by his startch'd beard and printed ruffe may be as properly insinuated.

Jonson's note and the multiple poetic glosses that purport to explicate the frontispiece thus pose rather than resolve interpretive challenges for the reader. But instead of stifling the creative capacity of the work, these mutable readings of Coryat and his journey actually prove central to the text's very livelihood by underscoring the diverse and wide-ranging interpretive parameters surrounding Coryat's journeys.

As in the case of other opening addresses that we have examined, concerns over properly reading the text are often overshadowed by a subtle acknowledgement of the reader's own interpretive agency. The address thus acts as a guide, but only to the extent that the reader's own interpretive capacity is identified. Rather than insist upon a right reading in a prescriptive sense, such addresses highlight the interpretive possibilities of textual engagement. In the examples above, such possibilities include misreading as a defining feature of the text.

In light of the ways in which misreading works as a shaping force in the early modern period, I center my discussion around a transformation in the status of humanist exemplarity that coalesced at the point of the English Civil War, where critics of the Stuart regime accused the ruling elite of misreading the past in terms of both classical and typological authority. I move from an examination of humanist conduct manuals, pedagogical tracts, and commonplace books (in which notions of classical exemplarity

are firmly embraced) to jest books, plays, travel narratives, and other texts that in various ways call into question the exemplary authority upon which notions of 'right' reading are founded. Finally, I focus on Civil War and Restoration era texts by John Milton, Andrew Marvell, and Lucy Hutchinson not so much to argue that humanist exemplarity had deteriorated but instead to explore how it had been re-shaped to challenge the constraining forces of monarchic absolutism. Through this process, however, the confident relationship between exemplary model and authoritative meaning comes under scrutiny. Once again, it is this response to humanism rather than humanism itself that is central to the shaping of the early modern individual.

In Chapter One, I explore notions of proper reading, most notably the priorities of humanist exemplarity elucidated in the pedagogical discourses of Erasmus, Elyot, Budé, Ascham, and others. Central here is the notion of *topoi*, whereby proper interpretive and social decorum are confirmed by one's capacity to embrace exemplary models from the classical and biblical past. According to conventional humanist pedagogy, commonplace books, apophthegms, adages, sententaie, and other authoritative exemplars play key roles in shaping early modern intellectual and subjective identities.

Chapter Two focuses on challenges to the integrity of classical exemplarity, particularly the gulf between knowledge and experience exacerbated by the divide between pagan classical past and Christian present. In examples ranging from Shakespeare's critical portrayal of Holofernes in *Love's Labor's Lost* to early modern jest books—a form that embraces misreading as key to its interpretive livelihood—I examine the limitations of mimetic authority to intellectual decorum and creative expression.

Chapter Three illustrates the limitations of exemplarity within the space of popular drama. While anti-theatrical discourse was largely fueled by expectations about the inextricable connection between theatrical display and real life, plays from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries increasingly undermined this relationship in subtle and not so subtle ways. By underscoring how dramatic representation itself challenges and potentially misreads the mimetic forces of Renaissance exemplarity, plays and playwrights reveal anti-theatrical criticism as a misinterpretation of performative space. From the misreading of actual written texts in plays such as *Ralph Roister Doister* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to misreadings of the representational authority of the theater in *A Roman Actor* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, early modern drama problematizes the exemplary and mimetic relevance of theatrical performance.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the idiosyncratic and genre-blurring writings of John Taylor and Margaret Cavendish to argue that disputes over the exemplary authority of language are inextricably linked to the larger challenge of defining identity with regard to literary and geographic place. By addressing unconventional efforts to define topographic boundaries of nation as well as authorial identities, the texts that I examine in this chapter reveal the contested as well as imprecise parameters of boundary drawing with regard to geographic place. It is the indeterminacy of this identity (wavering between insularity and expansion, between mutable categories of self and other, native and stranger, domestic and foreign) that proves central to the very definition of Englishness.

Finally, Chapter Five explores Civil War and Restoration era poetry and prose tracts by Milton, Marvell, and Hutchinson in order to demonstrate how ideological tensions that fueled the Civil War stood as a culmination of the anxieties about

misreading and the parameters of proper reading that I trace throughout this project. In this light, social and political reformation is less about radical restructuring than about reclaiming a particular reading of history in the face of a corrupt body of readers, namely the Stuart regime. As works such as Milton's *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Lost* make clear, however, the capacity to misread becomes a crucial indicator of one's allegiance to truth in the political and religious sense.

In tracing the ways in which generative misreading becomes a powerful shaping force in the early modern period, I acknowledge several limitations. First, the time period within which the study is situated (from the Protestant Reformation in the 1530s to the restoration of the monarchy in the 1660s) is an expansive one, filled with political, social, religious, and other ideological transformations too complex and numerous to deal with adequately here. While I do not pretend to provide a thorough historical account of the period and its changes, by shedding light on the widening parameters of interpretive authority, I hope to articulate the complex interrelationships between literary representation and the cultural contexts in which such representations take place. Secondly, any discussion of misreading (and of ambiguity more generally) runs the risk of imbuing interpretive acts with a sense of indeterminacy. If misreading can be recognized as a generative and productive process, does this imply that all readings are equally authorized and legitimate, no matter how erroneous or deviant they might be? Rather than attempt to answer such a question, I wish to suggest an alternative way of thinking about systems of representation, whereby questions of right and wrong interpretation have less to do with a notion of authentic origins than with the prolonged and myriad processes through which interpretive meaning takes shape. In these

processes, sites of literary production (the author, the printer, the translator) are not necessarily more authoritative than those of transmission and reception (the seller, the speaker, the reader). Wolfgang Iser and other proponents of reception theory claim that the reader is the "addressee" of the text and interpretive meaning is subsequently shaped by the reader's response to the text. I want to build on these traditional theories of reception by suggesting that the shaping of interpretive significance is a more complex process, engaging the reader not only as the recipient of meaning but also as an agent in the very production of textual livelihood. As such, attending to misreading as a shaping force exposes the complexities and inconsistencies of interpretive meaning and reveals that ambiguity is less a threat to textual meaning than a central element in its very production.[31]

Chapter 1 "Well-Woven Garlands": The Legacy of Humanist Exemplarity

From treatises to didactic plays to commonplace books, humanist pedagogy insists upon the authority of the past in shaping the intellectual and social decorum of the early modern subject. Humanist exemplarity prioritizes the notion that classical models of authority must be mimicked, absorbed, and reproduced in the actions of Renaissance individuals. Such an emphasis on mimetic authority is clearly evident in G. F. Cipper's "The Village Schoolmaster" (1715), a late, nostalgic illustration of humanist pedagogy in the classroom (Figure Three). Resonating with earlier exemplary images such as *Grammatica* instructing her students (Figure Four), the painting depicts two anxious-looking young students, one seated at his desk and the other standing at the schoolmaster's podium. Some scholars have suggested that the schoolmaster drapes his arm "affectionately" over the shoulder of the young student,[1] but the arm seems to play a more directive and less endearing role. Along with the switch that rises ominously behind the student's head, the draped arm acts as a pointer.

In fact, every appendage portrayed in the painting shares in the responsibility of pointing. While the schoolmaster's draped arm serves to guide the student's own pointing fingers within the page of his text, the teacher's other hand hovers over his own text, thereby mirroring the student's finger. The seated student points with both stylus and hand, again reiterating the mirroring effect evidenced by the teacher and classmate. The switch, itself suggestive of the teacher's authority, also serves as a pointer. Gesturing toward the hourglass in the upper left-hand corner of the page,

Figure 3: G. F. Cipper (Todeschini) "The Village Schoolmaster," 1715.

Figure 4: Franz Cleyn, *Grammatica.* From *Septem liberales Artes.* London, 1645.

the pointing switch reminds the viewer as well as subjects within the painting of the over-arching authority of time.

A close inspection of the students and their young age reveals that the subject scrutinized by pointing implements is simply the copying of the alphabet. As Jonathan Goldberg has suggested, the pointing hand (along with a stylus or other writing tool) is a central visual component in Renaissance writing manuals: "In the manuals and the pedagogic texts, to write means to copy the exemplary texts and alphabets provided to make the hand the instrument of script, to conform hands to a multiplicity of scripts."[2] The pointing hands and other objects in Cipper's painting similarly conform, not only to one another but also as instruments that confirm the centrality of authority in a chain-like circuit incorporating the text, the schoolmaster, and the students' own mimicking appendages. To copy the alphabet is a gesture of conforming to the social and cultural mechanisms that circumscribe and shape the individual subject. To step out of line (to miscopy, to mispoint, to mis-mimick) is to face the physical authority of the schoolmaster's rod and to disregard the strictures of time, precedent, and tradition that circumscribe the individual. Through its careful placement of pointing elements, Cipper's "The Village Schoolmaster" visually articulates a rigorous system of pedagogic decorum well established by the early eighteenth century.

Yet this is also a nostalgic view of humanist pedagogy, given that the idea of exemplary authority that the painting illuminates through its visual insistence on the central importance of mimesis had itself faced significant challenges by the time of Cipper's work. As we will see, faith in the singular authority of exemplary models stems at least as far back as biblical and classical antiquity and was certainly a salient feature of

early modern intellectual culture. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, the relevance and constancy of exemplary models came under increasing scrutiny. In England, changing attitudes toward the authority of exemplarity resulted at least in part from a number of significant social and cultural transformations, including the Protestant Reformation, the rise of print, and an explosive growth in literacy rates.[3] The re-thinking of religious and political orthodoxies provided a catalyst for questioning relationships between past and present, between knowledge and experience, and between history and the imagination. In this chapter, I examine commonplace books, pedagogical treatises, and didactic plays that insist upon the integrity of humanist exemplarity in the early modern period. Despite the confident faith that these texts place in the authority of exemplary representation, the integrity of exemplarity increasingly came under scrutiny within literary and cultural contexts. Forms such as jest books, popular drama, travel narratives, utopian discourses, poetry, and political tracts frequently embraced the notion of misreading as a powerful shaping force, thereby complicating the authority of mimetic representation.

Many pedagogues and other writers feared that misreading, misinterpreting, or neglecting classical models and other forms of exemplary authority would undermine a reader's relationship to proper intellectual and physical decorum.[4] But for a growing number of writers during the period, another fear was just as prominent: namely, that engaging too closely with static models and figures from the past would stifle creativity, originality, and the defining of an autonomous identity. By examining early modern texts that set forth models of proper reading as well as those that assert instances of misreading against those models, the limitations of exemplary authority come into focus. In the

course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I suggest, misreading becomes more than a dangerous and devious practice that must be avoided; instead, misreading contra exemplarity stands as a powerful shaping force in the early modern period, enabling writers and thinkers to make their mark as they reshape and rethink the conventional parameters of authority, knowledge, and power relationships.

* *

The notion of exemplarity that dictates the mirrored placement of the student's pointing fingers in the Cipper painting reflects a powerful cultural institution of representation firmly rooted in the Greco-Roman classical period. At its center lies the concept of 'places' (*topoi* in Greek or *loci* in Latin), which takes shape in Aristotle's discussion of both dialectical logic and rhetoric. *Topoi* provide the individual with the ability to reason by utilizing generally accepted 'truths.' Thus, the capacity for rational argument hinges upon one's access to and synthesis of commonplaces and other ideas widely held as authoritative. In a self-reflexive paragraph about imitation (itself the product of a long history of imitation), Seneca likens the task of the individual reader to that of bees collecting honey:

> We should imitate bees and we should keep in separate compartments whatever we have collected from our diverse reading, for things conserved separately keep better. Then, diligently applying all the resources of our native talent, we should mingle all the various nectars we have tasted, and turn them into a single sweet substance, in such a way that, even if it is apparent where it originated, it appears quite different from what is was in its original state.[5]

The gesture of "mingl[ing] all the various nectars" is crucial in this apian model of imitation, since it is only then that the reader's own individual mark can be made.

In the process of "tasting" and subsequently digesting these "diverse reading[s]," it is important to utilize imitation as a way to produce something with its own autonomous identity. Seneca makes this emphasis on 'transformative imitation'[6] clear:

> Our mind should carefully conceal all that has helped it, and only put on show the finished product. Even if there is a clear resemblance between yourself and some writer whom you so admire that he is deeply engraved in you, I would that you resemble him as a son, not as a portrait: a portrait is a dead thing, not a living likeness. 'What do you mean? That it should be impossible to detect whose style you are imitating, whose arguments, whose ideas?' I do believe that it is possible for them not to be detected if the writer has great talent and has put his own stamp on all the things he has taken from his various models, with the result that the end product is a coherent whole.[7]

By invigorating imitation with life, Seneca's ideal reader is able to remain true to the heritage of the exemplar without losing his (or her) own autonomous identity. While Seneca's version of the bee metaphor proved highly influential, the version of the metaphor set forth by Macrobius in about 400 CE (and following in the Ciceronian tradition) is more relevant to early modern notions of exemplary reading. Rather than emphasizing the synthesis of various "nectars" into a distinct "substance" as Seneca had, Macrobius focuses on the ordering and subsequent arrangement of the materials gathered. Instead of invigorating the various collected materials with one's own creative talent to

create a 'new' product, Macrobius stresses the re-ordering, re-arranging, and paraphrasing of collected parts to constitute a new text (and he in fact does just this in his appropriation of Seneca's own words and phrases).

This *florilegia* or "flower-gathering" stands as a predecessor to the early modern commonplace book on both the continent and in England. Commonplaces serve as a map of right readings, a universalized template through which one's own individual responses and experiences must be located. The writer or student circumscribes his or her writing within the parameters of proper language by gathering fragments from classical texts, thereby solidifying the intellectual's place in society. Adages and other exemplary fragments become "basic, enduring components in a structure of consensus. The adages are building blocks of common knowledge and thus basic elements of social cohesion."[8] For English humanists, Rodolphus Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* (c.1479) served as one of the most influential models for this system of working with classical texts. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, and others, Agricola embraces the notion of "places" in order to ensure both a clean style of Latin speaking and proper dialectical engagement through the use of exemplary texts. Agricola emphasizes both of these priorities as he describes the process of gathering ideas through the identification of 'places':

> They seem to have done something extremely useful, who have discovered certain 'seats' of arguments (which are called places). By the warning of these places, as by certain signs that they give, we can take our mind through the very things themselves, and we can see whatever is probable and whatever is suited to our speech. [9]

Systematically collecting and arranging accepted ideas is indeed a powerful tool. The process provides models for the proper use of language, but even more importantly enables the humanist individual to locate ideas within a framework that defines his or her intellect. This function is emphasized throughout the early modern humanist pedagogical curriculum from its elementary stages and beyond. For humanist scholars, courtiers, and other individuals, the capacity to circumscribe the self within the confines of classical example is central to the process of fashioning social and intellectual identity.[10]

* *

The idea that classical commonplaces carry an important cultural and social weight is most famously declared in Bacon's description of apophthegms:

> They serve not for pleasure only and ornament, but also for action and business; being as one called them, *mucrones verborum*, --speeches with a point or edge, whereby knots in business are pierced and severed. And as former occasions are continually recurring, that which served once will often serve again, either produced as a man's own or cited as of ancient authority.[11]

The proximity of words to action is an important humanist trope, but more striking here is the description of exemplary texts as "points," since classical models indeed function as pointers (in addition to the sword imagery) to underscore and articulate the authority of proper reading. Highlighting the pragmatic importance of sententiae, Bacon's statement exemplifies humanism's faith in the inextricable bond between words and actions.

In turn, the demonstration of 'right' reading inherent in the recognition of *exempla* works as a catalyst to determine proper physical conduct. This relationship

between the corpus of exemplary texts and the physical corpus is evident in Erasmus's description of Thomas More's daughters at their study:

> Seeing them playing skillfully on various kinds of musical instruments, considering them as they flit like so many little bees between Greek and Latin authors of every species, here noting down something to imitate, here culling some notable saying *to put into practice in their behaviour*, there getting by heart some witty anecdote to relate among their friends, you would swear you were watching the Muses at graceful play in the lovely pastures of Mount Helicon, gathering flowers and marjoram to make well-woven garlands.[12] (my italics)

Mimesis is central to such study, both in terms of imitating authors and subsequently mimicking "the muses at graceful play." As such, proper reading proves central to subject-definition (in this case definition by another reader), since the daughters come to resemble the muses through their scholarly acts. Nevertheless, Erasmus's description clearly reflects the gender biases within the learning establishment. As mythologized "muses," More's daughters may inspire others rather than contributing directly to academic pursuits. And even though the image of flower-gathering is a humanist commonplace as we have seen, the portrayal of the daughters "at graceful play" making "well-woven garlands" reinforces myths about carefree femininity that may undermine the significance of the commonplace. Despite these biases, however, More's assessment reflects pedagogical writings by Erasmus, Vives, Budé and other influential humanists in terms of emphasizing the intersection of proper reading and proper bodily decorum.

At the same time, the appropriation of classical examples as models for proper conduct is not without contradiction. For early modern humanists, the distinction between passively embracing a static notion of the past and actively interpreting and shaping that past in order to conform it to present-day concerns was never clear-cut. While humanists shared with their medieval scholastic predecessors a certain amount of faith in the authority of the past, medieval writers seemed largely unaware of the anachronistic nature of history and the instability that accompanies historical flux. From its Aristotelian origins to Aquinas, Dante, Boethius, and others, medieval scholasticism distanced linguistic authority from its socio-cultural context in order to confirm a "faith in authoritative continuity, both verbal and doctrinal, [which] clearly rested on the belief in God as the ground and goal, alpha and omega, of human language."[13]

In their efforts to return language to its socio-cultural context, early modern humanists (beginning with Petrarch) challenged the authority of divine continuity by acknowledging and embracing the mutability of history.[14] Even as Petrarch's letters to the ancients look to the classical past for its perceived wisdom and authority, the letters (particularly "The Letter to Cicero") question the applicability of history to the present. Bidding "Farewell, forever, my Cicero," Petrarch concludes his letter by emphasizing the gap between an idealized and immutable model and the pliability of a timeworn individual as viewed through the lens of contemporary experience. This privileging of disjunction over continuity leads Erasmus in the early part of the sixteenth century to question the relevance of the past: "What effrontry . . . would he have who should insist that we speak, on all occasions, as Cicero did? . . . Since on every hand the entire scene of things is changed, who can today speak fittingly unless he is unlike Cicero?"[15] Much of

the anxiety surrounding the use and appropriation of the past was fueled by the religious gulf between the pagan classical period and the Christian priorities of early modern Europe. This distinction is made even more problematic within post-Reformation England, where the authority of Italy as the historical center of virtue and decorum (both classical Rome and the not-too-distant past of Castiglione) is undercut by the contemporary English disdain for the Papacy. Even within secular society, the need to conform the present to past concerns often challenged the very authority of the exemplary model of proper reading.[16]

* *

Given their anxieties regarding the use and appropriation of the past, many authors took careful steps to neutralize potential contradictions and shortcomings in their writing. Thus, classical exemplarity is more often confirmed than challenged in humanist pedagogical writing. Take, for example, the attitude toward classical authority exhibited in Guillaume Budé's *Livre de l'institution du Prince* (1517), an important humanist conduct book that was widely read throughout northern Europe. According to Budé, princes should read and collect examples from ancient history in order to provide models for their own illustrious conduct and the effective rule of their subjects. In this light, Budé's own role as pedagogue appears unambiguous, since he serves as a guide in the gathering of "correct" learning, as opposed to one concerned with the interpretation and subsequent re-thinking of ancient wisdom. As Timothy Hampton suggests, "the assumption is that the lessons of classical history are everywhere and always the same, that the interpreter's arrangement of material will remain essentially transparent, allowing the water of the cistern to be tasted without mediation."[17] This description seems to

question the very necessity of the humanist pedagogue's mediation. Yet Budé's emphasis on the unmediated nature of exemplary authority is contradicted by his own act of interpreting and organizing the past, since it is the humanist compiler who is ultimately responsible for distinguishing proper exemplars from other historical figures.

Furthermore, Budé's gesture of educating Francois 1er as a means of preferment suggests self-serving motives for appropriating history. He teaches the prince that exemplarity plays a central role in the definition of kings and princes. At the same time, he secures his own position as courtier by portraying the prince as an exemplary model whose authority must be embraced. The collected adages and other figures that Budé provides as advice thus function as cultural capital for the humanist pedagogue in terms of favor from his prince. In this sense, the humanist pedagogue partakes in the commodification of preferment; his appropriation of exemplary materials furthers rather than undercuts this process. Nevertheless, Budé neutralizes this tension between the static nature of classical examples and the pedagogue's own interpretive (read self-interested) strategies, which in themselves underscore the alterity of history. By highlighting the nationalistic commitment of his project, he subsumes historical revisionism and personal ambition into the larger project of celebrating Gallic tradition by encouraging and shaping Francois' princely actions.

The figure of Hercules emblematizes the dual priorities of Budé's appropriation. He depicts Hercules as a mythical figure and as an exemplary political authority:

> Ils faisoient Hercules ung vieil homme chenu et chaulue, et portoit en facon de manteau la peau d'ung lyon sur les épaules, tenant en sa dextre une massue, en main senestre ung arc bendé et la trousse à son costé. Et y

avoit grant multitude de gens de toutes sortes *qui le suyvoient comme par force*, car il les tenoit attachez tous par les oreilles à chesnes menues d'or et d'argent, et *si se laissoient mener tout voluntiers*, et tenoit Hercules les boutz de ces chesnettes en sa bouche. (89)

[They made Hercules an old, hoary man, who wore as a coat on his shoulders the skin of a lion, carrying in his right hand a club and in the left a bow, with his quiver at his side. And there was a great multitude of people of all kinds *who followed him as if by force*, for he held them by the ears with slender chains of gold and silver, and *they let themselves be led voluntarily*, and Hercules held the ends of the chains in his mouth.][18]

(my emphasis)

At once highlighting the constructed nature of the exemplar as myth ("*They made* Hercules an old, hoary man") and celebrating Hercules' authority as an ideal ruler (one whose force is voluntarily embraced by his subjects), Budé appropriates the exemplary past to speak to the political present. By writing to a singular and privileged audience (Francois I[er]), Budé avoids the contradictions inherent in appropriating a select set of exemplary models from the past to serve the present. The space of the Valois court enables Budé to promote ancient exemplary models in the interest of present-day nationalistic concerns, thereby authorizing his own interpretive choices despite the potential for such choices to undercut the static authority of history.

The centrality of the exemplar is even more concretely evidenced in Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Gouernour* (1531). As an aristocratic knight, Elyot was clearly concerned with the idea that a stratified social hierarchy is key to the well-being

of the "public weal" and that the proper shaping of the elite classes would validate the integrity of such social divisions. At the heart of this shaping process is the concept of exemplarity. On every level, Elyot's text embraces the authority of exemplary models, from frequent citations of classical figures to the title of the book itself. By naming his book "the Gouernour," Elyot confirms its didactic purposes; his book will ostensibly govern the actions of its readers by shaping them. Although Elyot opens his lengthy discourse with his own definition of the "public weal," he proceeds to rely heavily on examples from classical culture as well as from Christian doctrine to describe the proper shaping of the individual body. For Elyot, the figure of Christ and the order of nature stand as the over-arching models of hierarchical authority. By framing his discussion of human understanding within the context of these models, Elyot legitimates the notion of social division:

> And like as the angels whiche be most feruent in contemplation be highest exalted in glorie, (after the opinion of holy doctours), and also the fire whiche is the most pure of elementes, is deputed to the highest sphere or place; so in this worlde, they whiche excelle other in this influence of understandynge, and do imploye it to the detayning of other within the boundes of reason, and shewe them howe to provyde for theyr necessarye lykying; suche oughte to be set in a more highe place than the residue where they may se and also be sene; that by the beames of theyr excellent witte, shewed throughe the glasse of auctoritie, other of inferiour understandynge may be directed to the way of vertue and commodious liuynge.[19]

Within this chain-like order, divine as well as natural authority provides a model for human authority, itself predicated upon the notion that those of superior understanding will stand as exemplars for the rest of society. On the one hand, the notion of the aristocracy standing as an exemplary model for the lower classes is potentially flawed, since such modeling challenges rather than confirms social divisions. Nevertheless, Elyot's text parallels Budé's as a self-interested gesture informed by the expectation that one's capacity to identify exemplars confirms one's own cultural authority.

More importantly, by establishing Christian doctrine as the quintessence of exemplary authority, Elyot neutralizes the potential dangers of embracing pagan classical authority within the Christian context of early modern England. In turn, this universalized framework enables Elyot to avoid the inherent contradictions involved in applying ancient authority to the unstable social and political landscape of his own time. From this position, he can safely explore a myriad of classical models without losing sight of Christian doctrine. Indeed, throughout the initial chapters of the discourse, Elyot identifies a comprehensive reading list of classical texts indispensable to the education of the young nobleman.

At the same time, this concern with proper understanding underscores Elyot's attitude toward the authority of language. While Elyot clearly recognizes the insufficiency of the vernacular English tongue, his primary undertaking involves clearly articulating the meaning of borrowed words so as to avoid the potential for misreading. In describing the reception of writings by Henry VIII, Elyot emphasizes the priority of rendering borrowed words familiar so as to evade potential misinterpretations:

> His grace also perceyued that through out the boke there was no terme new made by me of a latine or frenche worde, but it is there declared so playnly by one mene or other to a diligent reader that no sentence is therby made derke or harde to vnderstande.[20]

Even within the context of vernacular language, meanings must be clear (or else properly defined) in order to avoid the potential for misinterpretation that would undercut the exemplary potential of Elyot's text itself. While this emphasis on the appropriation of language to ensure proper reading is central to Elyot's reliance upon exemplarity, it is not until the seventh and eighth chapters of the first volume that the full parameters of this exemplarity are explored. Elyot's discussion of the arts in those chapters enables him to reconcile the seeming opposition between the mutable realm of experience and the static integrity of exemplary models.

As Elyot describes the virtues of painting, carving, and the musical arts, he is careful to distinguish the beneficial and provisional use of these arts from those longer-term employments that would debase the nobleman to the level of "mason or peynter." Citing the precedent of "Claudius, Titus, the sonne of Vaspasian" and other classical figures, Elyot explains that the pursuits of painting and carving provide the young gentleman with several important virtues.

Pointing to Vitruvius, Elyot suggests that an emphasis on creative talents during childhood provides "afterwarde for deuysynge of engynes for the warre."
In particular, painting skills offer strategic advantages in battle, as Elyot describes: "by the feate of portraiture or payntyng, a capitaine may discriue the countray of his aduersary, whereby he shall eschue the daungerous passages with his hoste or naiue: also

perceyue the placis of aduautage . . ."[21] Most importantly, however, the expression of "portraiture" by way of painting and carving enables the developing gentleman to embrace exemplary authority within the space of the image. In so doing, the narrative of historical precedent is crystallized within the moment of the image, thereby articulating the idea of exemplarity within a coherent, immutable space:

> And he that is perfectly instructed in portrayture, and hapneth to rede any noble and excellent historie, whereby his courage is inflamed to the imitation of vertue, he forth with taketh his penne or pensill, and with a graue and substanciall studie, gatheryinge to him all the partes of imagination, endeuoureth him selfe to expresse liuely, and (as I mought say) actually, in portrayture, nat only the faict or affaire, but also the sondry affections of euery personage in history recited, which mought in any wise appiere or be perceiued in their visage, countenance, or gesture . . .[22]

Acknowledging painting and carving as a narrative (a "lively" account to be "recited") that confirms the static authority of virtue thus neatly exemplifies the fixed and indisputable authority of history as a model for contemporary social and ideological decorum. As such, the creative processes that Elyot describes become circumscribed within the fixed space of faithful imitation.

However, in addition to capturing the essence of the exemplary, the arts also provide Elyot with an opportunity to explore the converse of exemplary authority. In the case of painting and carving, this involves the aforementioned risk of leading young noblemen toward less than noble artisan identities. In particular, as Elyot explores the

potential virtues that the study of music offers, a more coherent notion of anti-exemplarity is voiced.

Much like painting and carving, music is prescribed as central to the proper shaping of the nobleman, but only within carefully qualified terms. Citing Homer, Elyot tells the story of Achilles, whose harp playing after failing to slay Agamemnon serves a restorative purpose. By singing of "the gestes and actis martial of the auncient princis of Grece, as Hercules, Perseus, Perithous, Theseus . . . and of diuers other of semblable value and prowesse" who are themselves exemplars, Achilles' intemperate rage and fury is replaced by a state of reason that confirms his princely and virtuous countenance. The fact that music provides Achilles with a vehicle to rehearse the authority of his own heroic predecessors simultaneously reaffirms his own heroic position and solidifies the value of Elyot's advice as itself exemplary.

In contrast, Elyot points to the emperor Nero, whose excessive indulgence in musical pursuits threatens his potential as a princely model. Nero is described as playing ceaselessly on his harp, but Elyot's real criticism of the tyrant's actions comes when Nero's response to his disinterested audience is described:

> And if any man hapned, by lone sittynge, to slepe, or by any other countenance, to shew him selfe to be weary, he was sodaynly bobbed on the face by the seruents of Nero, for that purpose attendyng: or if any persone were perceiued to be absent, or were sene to laughe at the foyle of the emperour, he was forthe with accused, as it were of missprision: whereby the emperour founde occasion to committe him to prison or to put hym to tortures."[23]

By accusing his audience of "missprision," Nero himself misinterprets the proper role of music in shaping princely authority.[24] His own violent actions (hitting, torturing, and imprisoning his subjects) are intrinsically linked to his misuse of music. Excessive playing is thus indicative of an intemperate and potentially unruly countenance, and as such, Nero provides an "anti-example" for Elyot's discourse. At the same time, the Nero example can be seen as an instance of exemplarity run amok, since Nero himself unsuccessfully attempts to impose himself upon his subjects as an example of proper dedication.

By drawing a clear and unassailable distinction between exemplar and anti-exemplar within the discussion of music and the other arts, Elyot appropriates a notion of historical authority unhindered by the flux of historical change (which in itself threatens the relevance of exemplary models). Arts such as music and especially painting and carving crystallize the potentially mutable landscape of historical narrative within a static image of the past. While the arts certainly offer catalysts for action (demonstrated in the uses of painting and music for martial pursuits), they simultaneously exhibit an immutable presence that preserves the integrity of the exemplary in the face of history.

Along with these other arts, Elyot's book itself stands as a social exemplar through which the words and deeds of its readers can be negotiated by way of mimesis. On one level, the book's content provides thorough insight into the qualities and traits that mark a successful governor or other leader within the social and political space. However, the book's title takes this emphasis on governing a step further. As *The Boke Named the Governor*, Elyot's text takes on authority as a governing entity, personified and capable of governing readers. In turn, by imitating the ideals and standards outlined

throughout the book, readers will ensure their own proximity to the strictures of proper decorum that likewise confirm their own exemplary status as potential governors. Julie Solomon describes this process succinctly: "deliberative literature [which serves as a guide for weighing choices and making decisions] becomes a self-reflexive meta-discourse, being nothing less than the counsel about counselors that self-appointed counselors write and offer to monarchs who, in royal self-deliberation, are the counselors of all counselors."[25] Seen in this light, Elyot's book preserves the timeliness and authority of exemplary models on multiple levels, extending from figures within the book to the book's relationship with its own readers.

* *

Published in 1570, Ascham's *The Scholemaster* shares with Elyot's earlier work a concern with the proper shaping of the gentry and privileged classes so that its members will be capable of performing virtuous social and political functions. Much like Elyot, Ascham embraces classical models (in particular Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero) to substantiate his pedagogical reasoning. References to classical ideas and actions appear throughout *The Scholemaster*, and Ascham's allegiance to these authoritative models is never so clearly articulated as in his defense of Greek authors as models for English culture.

Within this classical context, the pedagogue lives surrounded by the intellectual and cultural richness of ancient Athens, or at least by those fragments that survive:

> in that one Citie, in memorie of one aige, were mo learned men, and that in a maner altogether, than all tyme doth remember, than all

> place doth affourde, than all other tonges do conteine. And I do not meene of those Authors, which, by iniurie of tyme, by negligence of men, by crueltie of fier and sworde, be lost, but euen of those, which by Goddes grace, are left yet vnto us: of which I thank God, euen my poore studie lacketh not one. As, in Philosophie, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Euclide and Theophrast: In eloquens and Ciuill lawe, Demosthenes, Æschines, Lycurgus, Dinarchus, Demades, Isocrates, Isæus, Lysias, Antisthenes, Andocides: In histories, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon: and which we lacke, to our great losse, Theopompus and Eph[orus]: In Poetrie Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and somwhat of Menander, Demosthenes sister sonne.[26]

Like Elyot, Ascham frequently integrates commonplaces and other excerpts from these authorities into his discussion of proper English education. And, also like Elyot, Ascham faces the problem of conforming a relatively static conception of the historical past to present-day society, a process fraught with potential contradictions. The resultant vulnerability of ancient authority is made evident as attention shifts to the dangerous influences of contemporary Italy upon the proper shaping of the English nobleman. For young English noblemen to travel to Italy, Ascham warns, is to lose sight of the elements of social and intellectual decorum that would potentially define them as proper members of society.

While decadence, idleness, and a general disregard for social decorum all stand as threats posed by Italian culture, it is the religious influence (or lack thereof) that is the real danger: "And thus yow see, how will intised to wantonnes, doth easelie allure the

mynde to false opinions: and how corrupt maners in liuinge, breede false iudgement in doctrine: how sinne and fleshlines, bring forth sectes and heresies . . ."[27] Though never addressed directly within Ascham's text, the parallel between the Papism of contemporary Italy and the paganism of the ancient world does raise potential problems, since both influences stand in contrast to post-Reformation English doctrine.

Nevertheless, Ascham defuses this potential threat in two ways. First, he is careful to contrast the potential dangers of Italy with the secular ideals of classical society by employing the voyages of Ulysses as his model text. Just as Ulysses faces and ultimately resists the temptations of Circe and other dangerous influences, so too should the proper Englishman ward off the threat of becoming "Italianate" and thus losing sight of virtue.[28] Secondly, Ascham clearly circumscribes the authority of the classical past within the framework of Christian virtue by distinguishing Queen Elizabeth as an ideal exemplar. After declaring that "present examples of this present time I list not to touch," Ascham makes one exception in the person of Queen Elizabeth:

> And that which is most praise worthie of all, within the walles of her priuie chamber, she hath obteyned that excellencie of learnyng, to vnderstand, speake, & write, both wittely with head, and faire with hand, as scarse one or two rare wittes in both the Vniuersities haue in many yeares reached vnto. Amongest all the benefites y^{t} God hath blessed me with all, next the knowledge of Christes true Religion, I counte this the greatest, that it pleased God to call me, to be one poore minister in settyng forward these excellent giftes of learnyng in this most

> excellent Prince. Whose onely example, if the rest of our nobilitie would folow, than might England be, for learnyng and wisedome in nobilitie, a spectacle to all the world beside.[29]

As the single "present" example that Ascham cites, Elizabeth stands as a bridge between contemporary and ancient society. Just as the critique of Papist Italy enables Ascham to solidify his allegiance to his country by voicing current national concerns, so the celebration of Elizabeth as the ideal exemplar aligns the values of a non-Christian past with a distinctively Protestant, English present. The fact that she is circumscribed within the over-arching authority of "Christ's true religion" neutralizes the possible dangers of looking to the classical pagan past.

This link between Christianity and proper classical models is made even more coherent in the second book, where Ascham recounts the story of a Cambridge student who is led astray from "Christ and all true religion" after shunning Aristotle in favor of "stud[ying] diligentlie Origene, Basileus, and S. Hierome [St. Jerome] . . ."

> For he, that can neither like *Aristotle* in Logicke and Philosophie, nor *Tullie* in Rhetoricke and Eloquence, will, from these steppes, likelie enough presume, by like pride, to mount hier, to the misliking of greater matters: that is either in Religion, to haue a dissentious head, or in the common wealth, to have a factious hart: as I knew one a student in Cambridge, who, for a singularitie, began first to dissent, in the scholes, from *Aristotle*, and sone after became a peruerse *Arian*, against Christ and all true Religion: and studied diligentlie *Origene*, *Basileus*, and *S. Hierome*, onelie to gleane out of their workes, the pernicious heresies of

Celsus, *Eunomius*, and *Heluidius*, whereby the Church of Christ, was so poysoned withall.[30]

That the student's fall from grace is initiated by neglecting Aristotle suggests how firmly Greco-Roman culture has become circumscribed within early modern Christian doctrine. Although the student has embraced models, he has embraced the wrong ones according to Ascham. On the other hand, to follow the example of the classical past is to embrace the virtues and values of Christian thought, regardless of the fact that this past is pagan.

* *

While writers such as Elyot and Ascham managed to reconcile the potentially contradictory relationship between the exemplary past and contemporary society, other pedagogues were becoming increasingly skeptical about the relevance of history to the present social and political landscape. In contrast to Budé, Erasmus, Elyot, and other early sixteenth century humanists, who crowded their works with quotations from Greek and Roman authorities, Richard Mulcaster and other humanists of the Elizabethan era used exemplary models much more sparingly. In fact, as Mulcaster explains in the opening of his pedagogical work *Positions* (1581), the presence of ancient common-places and other classical examples within the realm of pedagogical discourse may be of negligible value: "In this kind of argument wherein I presently deal, it is no proof because *Plato* praiseth it, because *Aristotle* alloweth it, because *Cicero* commends it, because *Quintillian* is acquainted with it, or any other else, in any argument else; that therefore it is for us to use."[31]

At the heart of Mulcaster's critique of this kind of authority lies the notion that circumstance (including the potential conflicts between contemporary socio-political

values and those of classical societies) may challenge the integrity of the exemplary model:

> What if our country honor it in them, and yet for all that may not use it herself, because circumstance is her check? Nay what if the writer's authority be alleged without consideration of their own circumstance? Who then offereth his country the greatest wrong? Is it not he which wringeth the writer and wresteth his meaning. . . Wherefore he that will deal with writers so, as to derive their conclusions to the use of his country, must be very well advised and diligently mark, that their meaning and his applying be both of one ground . . .[32]

This anxiety regarding the applicability of ancient models becomes more and more prevalent toward the latter half of the sixteenth century, and it is this growing crisis of reading the past that leads to significant transformations in the culture of humanism. As Timothy Hampton explains:

> The moral heterogeneity of ancient history catches humanism in a kind of double bind. On the one hand, humanism's defense of letters rests on a recognition of the authority of antiquity, and the exemplar appears in the Renaissance poem or treatise as the mark of an entire historical discourse that sanctions the idea of history as repetition; on the other hand, that very mark, by virtue of its alterity, of the semantic residue which it drags forward from the pagan past, resists easy integration into a Christian or humanist system of values. Humanist culture is marked both by its nascent

historical consciousness and by its commitment to the words, deeds, and texts of antiquity as sources of value for all men at all times.[33]

Humanist pedagogues throughout the sixteenth century faced the potential "double bind" of appropriating the past. But whereas writers such as Budé, Elyot, and even Ascham took careful steps to neutralize the contradictory forces of utilizing history, Mulcaster and others grew increasingly dubious about the relevance of ancient authority. Outside the realm of pedagogic writing, tensions between a static conception of the past and the social, political, and intellectual priorities of the present became even more pronounced.

In part, this anxiety stemmed from changing notions about the value and place of classical languages. For humanists and other academically minded individuals, Latin and Greek emblematized a degree of authority threatened by translation as well as by vernacular languages in general. After all, the central motivating force behind the humanist movement involved the attempt to return to a clean style of Latin and Greek in writing and especially in speaking. This clean style had been lost during the medieval period, at the hands of scholastics who were less concerned with the social implications of language than with the metaphysical and dialogical connotations.[34] To favor the vernacular over Latin and Greek threatened to sever the bond between the past and the present. Humanist pedagogues such as Ascham, Mulcaster, and Erasmus highlighted the proper teaching of Latin (and to some extent Greek) in part by embracing classical examples, but primarily by outlining guidelines for a language-based curriculum. In Ascham's *The Scholemaster*, Mulcaster's *Positions*, and other English pedagogical texts, there is some anxiety regarding the fact that the instructional content is written in English rather than Latin. This is evidenced clearly in the following passage from Ascham:

> the prouidence of God hath left vnto vs in no other tong, saue onelie in the Greke and Latin tong, the trew preceptes, and perfite examples of eloquence, therefore must we seeke in the Authors onelie of those two tonges, the trewe Paterne of Eloquence, if in any other mother tongue we looke to attaine, either to perfit vtterance of it our selues, or skilfull iudgement of it in others. [35]

Ascham's description of the gathering process (seeking "trew preceptes and perfite examples" from classical texts) neatly highlights the authority of the commonplace tradition. While Ascham's statement suggests a progression from Greek and Latin to "the mother tong," the progression demonstrates a breech from the "trew paterne of eloquence" and an inevitable distancing from the authority of Greek and Latin models.

The perceived vulgarity of English further undermined the authority of the vernacular.[36] That the inferiority of English over classical and even continental languages was increasingly challenged during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as Richard Foster Jones has demonstrated, is evidenced in the following letter from Richard Eden to Sir William Cecil (1562):

> . . . the Latin toonge be accompted ryche, and the Englysshe idigent and barbarous, as it hathe byn in tyme past, much more then it nowe is, before it was enriched and amplified by sundry bookes in manner of all artes translated out of Latine and other toonges into Englysshe.[37]

Yet the notion of English as barbarous and uncivil endured, particularly within the realm of pedagogy. This perception is clearly articulated by Alexander Neville in the dedication of his English translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* (1563), where he describes English as "our

own corrupt and base, or as al men affyrme it: most barbarous Language."[38] In light of such attitudes, the fact that Ascham writes his guide to proper Latin speaking in English seems to undermine the authority of the "trewe tong."

Anxieties about how the English vernacular poses threats to the humanist individual are voiced in texts ranging from major humanist writers to the late sixteenth-century university play *The Return from Parnassus I* (c. 1600). The character Gullio serves as a send-up of the vain Braggadochio figure, a braggart soldier whose self-professed courtiership stands as the antithesis of gentlemanly decorum. The introduction of Gullio by Ingenioso provides an initial critique: "Nowe gentlemen youe may laughe if you will, for here comes a gull." Although Ingenioso's words mock and challenge Gullio's worth, it is his own attempts to define himself by way of exemplary texts that most significantly underscore Gullio's distance from a courtier identity. After boasting of his proximity to Sir Philip Sidney and others who typify the courtier, Gullio proceeds to quote "our English poetts" with the explanation that "I vouchsafe to take some of there words and applie them to mine own matters by a scholasticall imitation" (III.i. 1006-08). Among the noteworthy texts that Gullio imitates are those of Chaucer, Gower, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Gullio's aspiration to courtiership is potentially undercut by the fact that his textual authorities are vernacular and relatively contemporary rather than classical. Privileging the "mother tongue" affronts humanist ideals. In place of the stability of classical models, Gullio's vernacular hybrid demonstrates the unstable relationship between static notions of knowledge, exemplified by commonplaces and apophthegms, and the more mutable space of experience, where the particular priorities of a domestic and contemporary literary exemplarity must sort themselves out.

Ingenioso highlights this tension between knowledge and experience as he responds to Gullio's "O sweet Shakspeare, Ile haue his picture in my study at the courte" with the following aside: "Take heede my maisters, hele kill you with tediousness ere I can ridd him of the stage" (III.i.1032-34). By tediously embracing contemporary and vernacular models, Gullio threatens to undermine the integrity of classical exemplarity. Ascham's denunciation of the vernacular in Book Two of his *Scholemaster* is directed to misguided readers such as Gullio:

> And you, that be able to vnderstand no more, then . . . *Chaucer* at home though you haue pleasure to wander blindlie still in your foule wrong way, enuie not others, that seeke, as wise men haue done before them, the fairest and rightest way: or els, beside the iust reproach of malice, wisemen shall trewlie iudge, that you do so, as I haue sayd and say yet agayne vnto you, because, either, for idlenes ye will not, or for ignorance ye can not, cum by no better by your selfe.[39]

Gullio's inability to distinguish between literary texts that are purely decorative and those that are 'for use' registers his distance from the corpus of humanist learning and thus from the courtier identity confirmed by allegiance to this corpus.

In such instances, Gullio separates himself from a learned identity both by embracing the wrong kinds of examples and by embracing them wrongly. Even as he cites more conventional models such as Homer and "Tullie," Gullio lumps these with vernacular writers such as "Ronzarde" as he attempts to confirm his position as a gentleman: "As I am a gentleman and a scholler. . . It is my custome in my comon talke to make vse of my readinge in the Greeks, Latin, French, Italian, Spanishe poets, and to

adorne my oratorye with some prettie choise extraordinarie sayinges" (IV.i.1133-1137). As Gullio bestows upon proximate vernacular exemplars an authority that threatens to displace conventional classical models of exemplarity, he once again undermines any effort to distinguish himself as a courtier.

Failure to distinguish between classical and vernacular languages is only one of Gullio's errors. In addition, he misinterprets Chaucerisms for seriousness, and assumes that his erroneous readings of Spenser and Chaucer are in fact corrective. Such actions sever Gullio from a courtier identity, even as the emphasis on "prettie choise extraordinarie sayinges" underscores the importance of exemplarity within early modern culture and particularly within the academic setting of the Parnassus plays. Given that the courtier style itself came under attack by the end of the sixteenth century (evidenced in satires such as John Marston's mocking of "Castilio"), the Parnassus plays simultaneously work to protect the courtier ideal from those who debase it and to reveal just how tainted the courtier identity had become.

* *

In contrast to the detrimental consequences of embracing the vernacular as dramatized in the Parnassus plays, Mulcaster provides a clear rationale for choosing English over Latin in *Positions*:

> I do write in my natural English tongue, because though I make the learned my judges, which understand Latin, yet I mean good to the unlearned, which understand but English. And better it is for the learned to forbear Latin, which they need not, than for the unlearned to have it, which they know not. By the English both shall see what I say: by Latin,

> but the one, which were some wrong, where both have great interest, and the unlearned the greater, because the unlearned have not any but only such English helps; the learned can fetch theirs from the same fountain, whence I fetch mine.[40]

In one sense, Mulcaster's statement poses a sharp division across class lines between the learned reader acquainted with Latin and the more limited understanding of the unlearned reader restricted to English. Yet Mulcaster's rationale for embracing English is fraught with tensions. He establishes a restorative position by embracing models from the past while simultaneously asserting progress by incorporating the unlearned within his readership. While these tensions are never entirely resolved, Mulcaster does temper the distinction between learned and unlearned by acknowledging vernacular English as "my natural . . . tongue" and thus displaces the question of learning to at least some extent. Ascham's rationale is similar; after all, one cannot effectively teach in Latin to an audience unfamiliar with the language. Instead, English provided a catalyst to solidify the authority of both Greek and Latin in terms of proper conduct and learning. Furthermore, by embracing commonplaces, adages, and other fragments that retain their meaning and their connection to classical authority even when translated, humanists were able to reinforce the priority of ancient languages within the context of the vernacular. As we will see in the following chapters, however, the authority of the exemplary past was increasingly seen as a hindrance to rather than a catalyst for artistic creativity and intellectual expression.

Chapter 2 Playing the Jest: The Limits of Proper Reading

While humanist authors played an important role in resuscitating the social and cultural authority of classical languages (particularly Latin) in early modern society, other writers were more reluctant to disregard the authority of the vernacular and its own historical heritage in shaping present values. For these authors, the imitative constraints of the exemplary potentially stifled the generative powers of language, including the creative possibilities of the vernacular. In the following pages, I explore the limitations of classical exemplarity in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and in early modern jest books, a tradition that at once echoes and subverts conventions of classical exemplarity.

The growing skepticism toward classical exemplarity and the simultaneous embracing of the vernacular was informed in part by rapid expansion and exploration beyond the traditional geographic boundaries of England, which gave rise to new notions of Englishness and nation that reinforced the significance of the country's own historical place.[1] At the same time, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed a profusion of original poetry in English as well as English translations that bolstered the quality and value of the mother tongue. Efforts to upgrade the status of the English language as part of the project of defining nation were most adamantly embraced by writers such as Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson. Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* (1595), for example, makes clear that the mother tongue is far from inferior to other languages by identifying a clear progression in poetic traditions from the classical past to the present day:

> So among the Romans were Livius, Andronicus, and Ennius; so in the Italian language, the first that made it aspire to be a treasurehouse of science were the poets Dante, Bocace, and Petrarch; so in our English were Gower and Chaucer; after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother tongue, as well in the same kind as other arts.[2]

Instead of corrupting the poetic tradition as many earlier humanists had held (and pedagogues such as Ascham continued to insist), vernacular languages including English invigorate the creative legacy of poetic forms.

At the same time, the growth of print and the increase in literacy during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries challenged conventional boundaries between learned and unlearned and thus raised doubts about the efficacy and accessibility of Latin as a national language. This process of re-thinking the authority of Latin is evident in many early modern texts, from Spenser's use of archaic English (and the embracing of the language's historical legacy) in *The Faerie Queene* (1590) to Renaissance publications of Chaucer that celebrate him as an exemplar equal to classical writers and thus worthy of similar emulation.

In the case of Chaucer, nowhere is this attitude more evident than in Speght's second edition to Chaucer's *Works* and the marginal notations that are included in that volume. As we have seen, Speght presents Chaucer's texts as exemplary, thereby blurring boundaries between classical and contemporary works as authoritative models. Speght's second edition contains various devices to ensure the proper reading of Chaucer, including a glossary to clarify "the signification of the old and obscure words" and the

opening letter explaining that any errors should be recognized as the fault of the printer. Among these measures to ensure proper reading, most significant is the device of the pointing hand that appears in the margins throughout Speght's edition. Pointing to truisms, commonplaces, and adages as well as to noteworthy ideas and phrases original with Chaucer, Speght's marginal hands align Chaucer's work with the authority of classical exemplars and thus further challenge distinctions between classical and vernacular models.

Increasing efforts to elevate the value and authority of English vernacular are also evident in more 'popular' works as a direct response to the increasing numbers of literate people across the social spectrum. John Taylor's poem "A few lines, to small purpose" is indicative of this effort to elevate the position of English in response to humanism and other practices that held Latin and Greek as widely authoritative. In part, Taylor accomplishes this by attacking the idea of poetic imitation, criticizing it as nothing more than uninspired mimicry. While his more learned contemporaries may have regarded imitation more positively, as adornment or *copia*, Taylor likens such poets to thieves, pilfering from the storehouse of tradition and sacrificing creativity and invention as a result:

> And how no new things from them now do spring,
> But all hath ref'rence from some other thing;
> And that their daily doings do reveal
> How they from one another filch and steal,
> As if amongst them 'twere a statute made
> That they may freely use the thieving trade.[3]

The poem goes on to explain that this practice is at least partially the result of learning. The greatest thieves are those "who have the Hebrew, Latin, Greek at will,/And in th'Italian and the French have skill. . ."

Because translation ensures that the source of the poetic material will not necessarily be detected, Taylor explains that this kind of imitation is most detrimental to the notion of poetry as inspired creation:

> And to those whom those tongues are rightly known,
> Translating them, make others' verse their own,
> As one that steals a cloak, and presently,
> Makes it his own by alt'ring of the dye.
> So whole books and whole sentences have been
> Stol'n, and the stealers great applause did win,
> And by their filching thought great men of fame,
> By those that knew not the right author's name.[4]

Education seems to give these poets the advantage, since through learning (and knowledge of diverse languages) they are able to trick less learned readers into thinking that their poetic works are original. At the same time, by identifying these authors as thieves, Taylor uses his relatively limited education to his advantage, since his praise of his own poetry rests on the fact that he does not understand other languages and thus cannot resort to the kind of stealing through translation that he describes.

Knowledge of other languages thus becomes a hindrance to the poetic process rather than an aid, and the authority of English lies in its use as an original rather than a translated language:

Unto such robbery I could never reach
Because I understand no foreign speech.
To prove that I am from such filching free
Latin and French are heathen Greek to me . . .
Should I from English authors but purloin,
It would be soon found counterfeited coin.[5]

This clever reworking of the traditional learned/unlearned binary results in part from Taylor's own attempt to establish himself as a literary figure in spite of his common position as a Thames water-man. But the poem is not unique in terms of its attitude toward Latin and other learned languages, especially as expanding literacy rates rendered the boundaries between learned and unlearned more and more tenuous. It is within this climate that the authority and stability of exemplary language was increasingly challenged within poetry, drama, and other early modern discourses. As we will see here and in subsequent chapters, the cultural contexts in which these discourses are embedded work to undercut the fixity and stability of exemplary models.

* *

Appearing at the close of the sixteenth century, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) illustrates the ways in which notions of proper reading founded upon engagements with the classical past were becoming more and more problematic in early modern culture. On every level, the characters in the play are concerned with the "play" of language, whether this involves transforming words through puns and jests or reiterating language through commonplaces, synonyms, and other mimetic devices.[6] While the act of engaging with authorities from the past is not written off entirely, the

play explores the downfalls of prioritizing mimetic over creative faculties, as can be seen clearly in the 'low' figures of Nathaniel and Holofernes.

As versions of the parasite and the pedant respectively, the curate Nathaniel and the schoolmaster Holofernes stem from the Italian *Commedia* tradition that has its roots in the Roman comedic drama of Terence and Plautus. Perhaps more than any other characters in the play, the parasite and the pedant reflect the imitative side of intellectual and linguistic expression. Nathaniel, for example, consistently prefaces his words with authoritative precedent: "As a certain father saith . . ." (IV.ii.147), " . . . saith the text" (IV.ii.159), and " . . .say I, being of an old father's mind" (IV.ii.32). His praise of Holofernes' manners at the dinner table similarly embraces authority, hollowly echoing Castiglione, della Casa, and the tradition of moral conduct books by commending Holofernes' ability to "so justly delineate the rules." As William Carroll has pointed out, where other characters are dedicated to the primacy of words, Nathaniel is "devoted to the primacy of *the Word*."[7] Nathaniel's tendency to repeat Latinisms evinces the process of naming as mimetic rather than creative, leading the character Dull to recognize Nathaniel and Holofernes as "bookmen."

Holofernes, while not so straightforwardly mimetic, similarly displays the shortcomings of placing too much weight on the authority of example. As a figure of the schoolmaster, Holofernes embodies many of the pedagogical priorities exhibited by Ascham, Erasmus, and others, but his pathetic attempts at linguistic expression throughout the play underscore the limitations of humanist ideals. Like Nathaniel, Holofernes clearly confirms his faith in the classical past by invoking the usual models; "Lily's latin grammar," "good old Mantuan," "Priscian," "Horace," and "Ovidius Naso"

represent a few of the authorities he eagerly embraces. As a schoolmaster, he privileges rhetoric as central to linguistic expression, as evidenced by his corrective response to Nathaniel's reading of Berowne's letter: "You find not the apostrophus, and so miss the accent. Let me supervise the cazonet. [*He takes the letter*]. Here are only numbers rarified, but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy—*caret*." (IV.ii.118-21). Despite the subsequent attempt to demonstrate the virtues of language identified by humanist rhetoricians, however, Holofernes is only capable of demonstrating the vices.

While hollow repetition of classical names and ideas arrests Nathaniel's language, Holofernes is trapped in synonymy. His speeches are composed of endless qualifications, repetitions, and refinements, thereby reiterating the fixed and static (as opposed to the creative and generative) nature of language. Take, for example, Holofernes' contributions to the conversation concerning 'the auld grey doe' which opens IV.ii: "The deer was, as you know, in blood, *sanguis*, ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelum*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth" (IV.ii.3-6). Holofernes' attention to synonymy in his quest to translate Latin words stands as an attempt to assert his intellectual prowess. However, his obsessive attention to translation has the opposite effect, underscoring instead his spurious and pedantic allegiance to fixed meanings. As such, translation becomes a prison-house of language, stifling rather than furthering Holofernes' creative authority.

Although Holofernes and Nathaniel consign both language and people to rigorously held traditions in an attempt to define notions of identity (including their own

identities), the gesture ironically turns out to be destructive rather than creative. In a brief but telling example, Holofernes refers to Jaquenetta as "a soul feminine" (IV.ii.79). In his effort to uphold the authority of grammar, Holofernes transforms Jaquenetta into mere words (a subject position). And while Holofernes seemingly rejects the authority of classical models by stating that "*imitari* is nothing" (IV.ii.126), irony works to undercut this rejection. First, Holofernes comes to this statement by way of Ovid, using the poet as an authoritative model. Secondly, he misconstrues the notion of "flower-gathering" by describing it as a product of pure "fancy" and "invention" rather than as a process of collecting and 'distilling' commonplaces and other figures from the past. Even if Holofernes does manage to reject imitation, as he claims, this only comes about through his misquoting of Latin sources, as evidenced by his blunder of *facile* for *Fauste* in his attempt to quote Mantuan.[8] Seen in this light, Holofernes does indeed remain true to his word about imitation, but ironically it is only through his own faults that imitation does not succeed.[9]

The culmination of Holofernes' linguistic deficiencies comes toward the end of the play, where his attempt to produce the Pageant of the Nine Worthies ends in a pitiful failure. Once again, the schoolmaster's reliance on mimetic authority defines his endeavor as he attempts to impose the identities of great heroes (Hercules, Pompey, and others) upon the 'low' figures of the play. As in the case of the Rude Mechanicals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the failure here stems from the inability of the characters to distinguish self from role within the performance. Holofernes' concern over miscasting the diminutive Moth as the massive Hercules neatly illustrates this failure: "Great Hercules is presented by this imp,/Whose club killed Cerebus, that three-headed

canus./And when he was a babe, a child, a shrimp,/Thus did he strangle serpents in his *manus*./*Quoniam* he seemeth in minority,/*Ergo* I come with this apology . . ." (V.ii.584-89). Holofernes' humorous attempt to conform Moth to his role reiterates the concern with the authority of examples as well as the inability to distinguish role from self.

An even more pronounced version of this inability follows, as Holofernes is "put out of countenance" through the mockery of Berowne, Boyet, and the other lords. While Holofernes expresses concern about being distracted from his role as Judas by the off-putting gibes from the audience, "countenance" here refers as well to the larger notion of identity. As such, Holofernes' intellectual and scholarly livelihood (and thus his very identity) is shattered at the hands of his audience. Berowne's dismissive comment that "thou hast no face" refers both to Holofernes' inability to play Judas effectively and to the subsequent loss of his identity *as Holofernes* resulting from this inability. Berowne, Dumaine, and Boyet playfully deride Holofernes by toying with the pun on Judas/Jude-ass:

> BOYET: Therefore, as he is an ass, let him go.
> And so adieu, sweet Jude! Nay why dost thou stay?
>
> DUMAINE: For the latter end of his name.
>
> BEROWNE: For the ass to the Jude? Give it him. Jud-as, away!
>
> HOLOFERNES: This is not generous, not gentle, not humble. (V.ii.622-26)

Linguistically transforming Judas into an ass provides a critique of Holofernes' performance, but more importantly, the gesture ridicules Holofernes' own tendency to manipulate language though wordplay and erudite associations. In the process, Holofernes is debased, as his offended response makes clear.

Within the "feast of words" of *Love's Labour's Lost*, models of exemplarity prove inadequate when notions of inventiveness and the ability to define one's own subjectivity are overshadowed by rigorous imitation. Even Holofernes voices this conviction, though it is only through error that he is able to uphold it. Berowne makes clear the limitations of imitation toward the beginning of the play in his response to the limited definition of 'study' prescribed within Navarre's academy:

> Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
> That will not be deep-searched with saucy looks;
> Small have continual plodders ever won,
> *Save base authority from others' books.*
> These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
> That give a name to every fixèd star,
> Have no more profit of their shining nights
> Than those that walk and wot not what they are. (I.i.84-91, my emphasis)

The lack of profit gained by studying "base authority" reflects the critique of exemplarity throughout the play.[10] Thus, intellectual achievement in the play depends more upon the faculties of the creative imagination than on seeking and embracing models from the past. The superlative model of this notion is the dialogue between Winter and Spring that closes the play. As many critics have argued, these complementary poems balance art and nature, imaginative invention and allegiance to tradition, in a way not seen elsewhere in the play.

However, there are other signs of inventiveness within the play. For Berowne, his fellow lords, and their female counterparts, invention surfaces in the witty puns, turns of phrase, and other linguistic devices employed throughout. One need only select any of the clever exchanges between Berowne and Rosaline that transpire throughout the play to appreciate the artistry of language within the dramatic dialogue. And while the sophisticated linguistic exchanges among Berowne, his cohorts, and especially the princess and her companions come closest to approximating the artistry of the Winter/Spring dialogue at the end of the play, creative invention emerges from other sources as well.

One of the unlikely sources of this linguistic creativity is the so-called 'low' characters in the play, thereby confounding any clear-cut distinction between those of inferior intellectual ability and their superiors. In contrast to Nathaniel, Holofernes, and others who place an unwavering faith in the authority of exemplary models, Costard and (to a lesser extent) Dull unwittingly capitalize on the transformative potential of language, thereby furthering inventiveness within the play. In this light, mishearing becomes an act of linguistic creativity. Take, for example, Costard mistaking"One Francis" for "Enfranchise." Unlike Holofernes, who transforms people into words in his attempt to conform rigorously to authority, Costard makes generative mistakes, creating people from words. In contrast to the redundant nature of Holofernes' language, Costard's numerous malapropisms, aphorisms, and other abuses of speech are both insightful and creative. This notion is clearly evidenced in Act Three, scene one, where Costard's misinterpretation of Armado's "Some enigma, some riddle" provides both comic relief and insight into the transformative capacity of language: "No egma, no

riddle, no *l'envoi*, no salve in the mail, sir! O, sir, plantain, a plain plantain" (III.i.69). Mishearing enigma as "egma," Costard goes on to assume that Armado is offering him remedies for his injured shin. As William Carroll describes it, "a confusion of sounds has led to confusion in meaning and words, suddenly liberated, begin to take on a wholly different life of their own."[11]

A few lines later, Costard's engagement with oral language takes on additional significance. Armado's promise of "remuneration" for delivering a letter to Jaquenetta is met with Costard's by now familiar tendency to emphasize the relationship between sound and thing through naming:

> My sweet ounce of man's flesh, my incony Jew!
> Now will I look to his remuneration. 'Remuneration'!
> O, that's the latin word for three farthings. Three
> farthings—remuneration. 'What's the price of this
> inkle?' 'One penny.' 'No, I'll give you a remuneration.'
> Why, it carries it! 'Remuneration'! Why, it is a fairer
> name than French crown. I will never buy and sell out
> of this word. (III.i.131-138)

For Costard, the value of the remuneration (and the "guerdon" that Berowne gives him shortly after) rests upon the value of language as a commodified transaction. The assertion that "I will never buy and sell out of this word" is particularly instructive here, since it is the word (and the sound that it makes as Costard voices it repeatedly) that underscores the value of the payment. Costard responds similarly to Berowne's "there's thy guerdon" in exchange for delivering another letter. Once again, it is the sound of the

words rolling off of his tongue that Costard values and it is the promise that "I will do it, sir, in print" which crystallizes the relationship between sound, word, and thing. In both of these instances, Costard emphasizes how words rather than money serve as the payment. By elevating the value of language, Costard at once mocks Berowne and demonstrates the generative potential of words.

Costard's verbal inventiveness (whether unwitting or not) is a creative force that contrasts with the spurious word play exhibited by Holofernes, Nathaniel, and even Armado. In a play concerned with the artistry of language, it is quite telling that the conventional authorities on linguistic expression (particularly the scholarly Holofernes) are portrayed as a hindrance to rather than a catalyst for creative invention. Even the 'noble' characters in the play demonstrate short-comings with regard to their uses of language, since an over-reliance on rhetoric and the formal aspects of language leads to the rejection of Berowne, Navarre, and the other lords at the hands of Rosaline, the princess, and the other would-be lovers. On the other hand, characters usually denied the capacity for artistic expression such as Costard the rustic imbue the play not only with insight but also with a creative impulse that contrasts with the mimetic rigours (and a reliance on the authority of the past) of Holofernes, Nathaniel, and Armado.

Throughout *Love's Labour's Lost*, the notion of proper reading within the framework of exemplarity is undercut by a powerful mechanism of creative expression that counters the imitative and static appropriation of the past as an authority for the present. As characters such as Costard demonstrate, a significant component of the creative imagination hinges upon misinterpretation, whether this involves mishearing, misunderstanding, or other forms of error-driven inventiveness. In *Love's Labour's Lost*

(as in much comedic drama toward the end of the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth centuries), puns and other word play underscore the mutable and generative potential of language.[12] This potential stands as a threat to characters such as Holofernes, whose manipulation of language is restricted to reiterating syntactical constructs and layering synonyms onto fixed forms. In contrast, puns and other word play reject the authority of etymologies, the stability of meanings, and the fixity of the mimetic. In order for a pun to 'work' effectively, the ambiguous and subversive potential of language must be embraced. In effect, ulterior meanings cannot be deduced without misreading, at least to the extent that the static and finite nature of language is misinterpreted in the process of being disregarded. Thus, Shakespeare's play asserts a binary opposition between the static authority of exemplary models and the creative and productive potential of language as a generative process. While exemplarity is not entirely rejected in the play, *Love's Labour's Lost* does dramatize how imitating authoritative models from the past potentially stifles creativity, originality, and the defining of an autonomous identity.

* *

This conflict between the authority of the past and the inventiveness of the present is illustrated provocatively in the early modern jest book tradition. Here, as in the case of *Love's Labour's Lost*, scholarly priorities collide with humorous diversion, thereby revealing the limitations of intellectual rigor within the space of language. Critically reflecting upon two centuries of the jest book tradition in the preface of his own collection entitled *The Wise and Ingenious Companion* (1700), Abel Boyer highlights this intersection of priorities:

> The only question is how to make a good Choice and not confound true Wit and Sense with abundance of low Thoughts and dull and vulgar jests which are imposed upon the World; and this I have proposed to do in the following Collection. The Ancients under the names of Apophthegms comprehended what we call wise Sayings, generous and noble Sentiments, Jests and witty Repartees. However, according to our Notions, the Apophthegm thus differs from a Jest or Repartee that the first is generally Grave and Instructive, whereas Jests and Repartees instruct us and make us merry at once. Nay sometimes these are merely diverting, and sometimes sharp and Satirical.[13]

Boyer's distinction reveals a great deal about the early modern jest book tradition. First, the attempt to distinguish ancient apophthegms from "jests and repartees" demonstrates that there is a tendency for the traditions to overlap. Much like the commonplace tradition examined in the previous chapter, jest books collect and catalogue truisms, platitudes, and memorable sayings as a way to govern proper conduct and right reading. And like commonplace books, jest books proved highly influential among Renaissance humanists.

Particularly significant was the publication of Poggio Bracciolini's *Facetiae* (1477). In contrast to a medieval jest tradition that capitalized upon diffuse and discursive narrative elements in order to emphasize deeds rather than words, the classical tradition rejuvenated by Poggio renewed Cicero's emphasis on the economy of the epigram. Thus, the classical jest, like the classical commonplace, is usually concise, subtle, and emphasizes the introspective qualities of language as opposed to language as a catalyst for action (although it must be pointed out that action is still the over-arching concern,

since the proper reading of the jests would ultimately shape proper action). In keeping with this tradition, humanists such as Erasmus and More embraced classical jests and appropriated the form for pedagogical training by "turning classical epigrams into prose jests and prose jests [back] into classical epigrams as a way to practice a clean Latin style."[14]

However, as Boyer's attempt to distinguish jest books makes clear, there are some important distinctions between the traditions of jests and commonplaces. Central here is the fact that jest books problematize the exemplary nature of 'places' by emphasizing topical humor and word play. Jest books depend upon misreading and the recognition of ulterior meanings for their very livelihood. In other words, to establish the proper meaning of the jest, one must acknowledge the duplicity and instability of words. To take the phrase at face value is to misread the significance of the jest. And given that many of the ulterior meanings have been lost or are otherwise unavailable to modern audiences, the jest book tradition—and perhaps topical humor more generally—is frequently neglected by modern scholars.[15]

Take, for example, the following jest, entitled "Mistakes in reading" from *Gratiae Ludente*, a jest book that we will examine in greater detail below: "One reading the history of Elisha, in the old Testament, and how the children mocked him, read, and there came three shee Boares out of the forrest and devoured them." To recognize the humor, one must be familiar with the following passage from 2 Kings 2:24: "And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare [bore off] forty and two children of them." The joke revolves around the confusion of the verb "tare" (meaning bore off) with the noun "bear,"

thus attributing the kidnapping to "boars" rather than "bears." Such obscure and esoteric word play hinges upon the opacity of the text—only through misreading can the significance of the jest become clear. Thus, while jest books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries fit into the tradition of commonplaces, they simultaneously problematize the parameters of exemplarity by embracing mutability, 'play,' and creative invention over static and mimetic repetition. It is this dilemma that Boyer responds to in his preface, and it is this anxiety over the place of jest books that gains momentum during the early modern period as the form increasingly complicates the relationship between the static nature of the past and the creative inventiveness of the present.

Before elaborating on how the jest book tradition undercuts and problematizes the stability of mimetic exemplarity, it is useful to examine the qualities of jest books that solidify the relationship to the commonplace tradition. Like commonplaces and *sententiae*, jests frequently reappear and are recycled in subsequent collections, often re-surfacing in more concise but otherwise unchanged forms. Take, for example, the following jest from Anthony Copley's *Wits, Fits, and Fancies* (1614):

> A scholar presented a gratulatory New Year unto Sir Thomas More in prose, and he reading it and seeing how barren and senseless it was, asked him whether he could turn it into verse. He answered, yes. With that Sir Thomas More delivered it him again so to alter, who within a two days after, came and brought it him all in verse—which Sir Thomas More reading and noting the rhyme said "Aye, marry, now is here rhyme, I see whereas before was neither rhyme nor reason."[16]

In a subsequent version of this familiar jest, the play on "rhyme" is kept intact, but gone are the details concerning Sir Thomas More and the gratulatory: "A Schollar having brought his Tutor an exercise in prose, he dislikt it, and bad him turn it into verse. The next day the Schollar brought it, so saith hee now there is rime in it, before neither rime nor reason."[17] While attention to economy of language and the removal of narrative embellishments distinguishes the subsequent version, both versions make the identical point using the identical word play.

In fact, so often did old jests reappear among collections that authors frequently felt compelled to apologize for their familiarity. In his 1657 edition of *A Banquet of Jests*, "Archee" addresses his readers with the following explanation:

> Now if some out of their curiosity shall despise them for their commonness, I must then retire myself to the refuge of that old Adage, *Bona quo communia eo meliora*: If they prove good, they cannot be too common. Again, if any shall object and say, "I know that" and "This I have heard related," those I thus answer: If many have heard some of them, yet few or none (I dare presume) all. Besides, I do not challenge them for my own, but gathered from the mouths of others, and what is stale to me, may be to thee new. Accept them then as courteously as they are offered to thy perusal willingly, to make familiar unto such to whom they are merely foreign, and to recollect the memories of those to whom they have been known but since forgotten.[18]

It is quite telling that "Archee" offers a commonplace adage as an explanation for the potentially familiar nature of his jests. The notion that he has compiled his jests by

"gather[ing] from the mouths of others" recalls the tradition of *florilegia* so vital to humanists and classical thinkers alike. Furthermore, the expressed purpose of "recollect[ing] the memories" of those who have since forgotten the jests parallels the purpose of commonplaces, apophthegms, and other choice sentences. In each case, the compiled collection of phrases provides a linguistic prompt for the speaker's memory, thereby providing a catalyst for proper action and conduct through speech.

Given their proximity to commonplace books, it should come as no surprise that many jests included in collections were specifically recycled from the classical past. Thus, witty adages from Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and others frequently shared the page with more contemporary early modern jests. Particularly prevalent within early modern collections were jests recounting the exploits and adventures of Diogenes the Cynic from Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*. These jests serve as a reminder of the enduring legacy of classical models within the context of the jest book tradition, further complicating clear-cut distinctions between jest books and commonplace books.

Furthermore, both the jest book and the commonplace book played complex roles in humanist pedagogy. We have already seen how commonplaces and other exemplary figures from the classical past play a crucial role in defining early modern notions of proper decorum within the realm of conduct and pedagogy books. The jest book is similarly instructive, but in a more ambiguous and less straightforwardly didactic way. *Gratiae Ludenies* or *Jestes from the University* (1638), for example, articulates the 'double-bind' of humanist exemplarity—at once dictating proper reading and capitalizing upon the mutable and inventive potential of language as the very life-force propelling the jest. Within the context of the university (Oxford in particular), this exploration of the

limitations of humanism is especially instructive, since the text works as both a confirmation and a critique of humanist practices.

Although many of the jests mock fools and members of the lower classes for their intellectual short-comings and other jests involve typical student pranks and jokes, still others deal directly with the question of misinterpretation and the tenuous boundary between proper and improper notions of reading. On the surface, Jest 43 "A Construction" appears to typify the relationship between misreading and the threat of physical violence explored in Chapter One:

> A Schoole Boy being to construe that in Terence, *venum erat ad vestae*, rendred it in this manner, ventum, the winde, erat, was, vestae in the West, at which the Schoole Master laughing said, it was then time to hoyst up sayle, and withall untrust the boy and trimmed his pinnace.[19]

Like the Cipher painting discussed in the previous chapter, the jest articulates the close proximity between textual misreading and physical violence, where an apparent inability to govern one's intellectual faculties is met with the physical authority of the schoolmaster's switch. As such, the jest can be seen as a kind of conduct book in miniature, sketching out the consequences of misreading as a way to govern and regulate proper reading. However, it is equally important to notice that the very livelihood of the jest hinges on the punning response of the schoolmaster. By building on imagery initiated by the student's error, the schoolmaster embraces (rather than rejects) the mutability of words.

In keeping with the imagery of winds that results from the mistranslation *ventum*, the schoolmaster plays with "hoyst[ing] up sayles," and "trimm[ing] his pinnace" as a

punning reminder of the playfulness of language. Seen in this light, the punishment simultaneously works to police proper reading and to further the misreading. Thus, the didactic message of the jest is potentially undercut by the fact that it is error that gives creative life and humor to the jest. While the jest outlines the dangers of misreading, misreading is paradoxically central to its very identity. For if readers fail to recognize the ulterior meanings of the language by reading literally rather than figuratively, the humor of the jest will essentially deflate. As such, the reader must embrace the mutability of language and misread literal meanings in order to confirm the effectiveness of the jest.

While *Gratiae Ludentes* interrogates the relationship between proper reading and the instability of language, numerous jests in the collection deal directly with the challenge to exemplary models of understanding posed by misreading. Like many other jest books from the period, a large number of the jests in *Gratiae Ludentes* revolve around puns. Jest 50, entitled "Of a Dry Preacher" for example, plays with the multiple meanings of 'moving': "A Gentleman being at Sermon, where a dull fellow preacht almost all his Auditory out of the church, said that he made a very mooving Sermon." Another (Jest 48, Of a Skull) capitalizes on the double meaning of 'skull' as both the cranium and a scullion or kitchen worker: "An Oxford Skull being asked how he got so much wit, being but a skull, hee answered where should the wit be but in the skull." Such punning once again relies on duplicitous meaning and the possibility of being misread as a key catalyst for the jest's humor.

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Given the ambiguity of the jest book's didactic priorities, it should come as no surprise that many compilers of jest books made efforts to distinguish more learned jest

traditions from popular categories. It is this anxiety about the seriousness of the jest that leads Boyer to make the following distinctions:

> Now the first and most certain Rule to know a true Jest from a false Thought is that it may be translated into another Language without losing anything of its Sense and Pleasantness, for then it is certain that it runs upon the Thing expressed in it and not upon a Pun or Quibble.[20]

On one hand, defining a "true" jest as one that can be translated into another language ensures the close proximity of the jest tradition to classical learning. By translating the jests of Cicero and other classical authors, early modern compilers announced their allegiance to the intellectual authority of the past.

However, the emphasis on translation also serves another purpose, as Boyer goes on to explain:

> Puns and Quibbles are what we call playing upon Words, or Equivocations. They are known by this, that being turned into another Language, they lose that resemblance of Sound wherein their subtlety consists. And as they affect the Ear more than the Mind, we must take care not to mistake them for true Jests. The pretended Beauty of Equivocations is only owing to Chance, which makes one and the same Word to signify several Things, and therefore their double Application is generally forced. But suppose it were true, a Jest is still imperfect when it runs upon the Expression and not upon the Thought. I confess an Equivocation may be allowed of when it offers two different Ideas to our Mind,

one of which is in a proper and the other in a Figurative Sense. But as for those miserable Puns and Quibbles, which are nothing but an empty jingle of Words, the French have branded them with the infamous Name of Turlupinades, and they ought to be banished the [sic] Conversation of polite and well-bred Persons, as only fit to entertain the vulgar sort.[21]

Boyer suggests that jests dependent upon a likeness of sound to derive their meaning should be seen as inferior to those that play on the intersection of seemingly disparate ideas. While Boyer does point out that the notion of "equivocation" sometimes blurs the distinction between "true" and "vulgar" jests, his criticism of jests "which are nothing but an empty jingle of Words" reveals apprehension surrounding the limitations of spoken (as opposed to written) language. In other words, jests driven merely by manipulating the sound of a word are potentially inferior to those that derive their significance from the mutable meanings of words.

As we have already seen, the notion of exemplarity in early modern culture revolves around the idea that classical texts serve as a catalyst for proper conduct through speech. Commonplace books and other depositories of classical *topoi* thus work as mnemonic devices to aid in the deployment of proper speech (and thus proper action). However, when speech is severed from writing, as in the case of "vulgar" jests that rely on the chance equivocation of speech sounds, the authority and usefulness of the jest is challenged. The fifth jest from "T. D. [Thomas Dekker?] and George Wilkins" *Jests to Make you Marry* (1607) illustrates this emphasis on the equivocation of speech over the equivocation of ideas.

> A mad country Parson inviting certain of his friends to the eating of a tithe pig and some other good cheer, one of the guests brought along with him a Precisian [i.e. Puritan], which sect the Parson never could abide. And, having carved once or twice from the rest, at length he called aloud in Latin to the Precisian (for he took him to be a scholar because he went all in black), "*Heus domine, vis tu comedere Turdum, vis tu comedere Fartum, vis tu comedere pistum Fartum.*" At which the other, blessing himself to think that a Churchman should utter such filthy words (as he construed them), rose from the board and departed, reproving the Parson for a beastly and unmannerly Christian, whereas by *Turdum* he meant a black bird that stood on the board, by *Fartum* a pudding, and by *pistum fartum* a pan-pudding that's baked.[22]

The rather juvenile play on the sounds of Latin words overshadows any emphasis on ideas in the jest, although the mistaking of the Precisian for a scholar does offer a conventional critique of Puritan values. Nevertheless, the close proximity of the sound of the Latin words to fart, turd, and piss clearly drives the humor of the jest, requiring neither knowledge of Latin nor an understanding of the Puritan critique. Thus, this kind of jest clearly fits into the category of "vulgar" that Boyer distinguishes.

Despite Boyer's attempt to segregate vulgar, sound-driven jests from more learned thought-driven ones, the categories frequently collapse.[23] Most often, this occurs when the vehicle for the jest revolves around the misreading and mistranslating of Latin. Take the following example from the university jest book *Gratiae Ludentes*: "Another being read that of Saint Paul, in the Acts, *Hebraei sunt, sum et ego* read *Ebrei sunt sum et*

ego, whereas hee was drunke indeed." At first glance, this jest seems to fall squarely within the category of vulgar jests that Boyer distinguishes. The humor derives from the similar sound of *Hebraei* (Hebrews) and *ebrei* (drunk), suggesting the chance equivocation of the two words. It is important to notice that the humor only really surfaces on the written page, since the spoken versions of *Hebraei* and *ebrei* are identical enough to risk missing the joke. One has to see the words written on the page to realize the humor.

Furthermore, knowledge of Latin is required for the jest's meaning to materialize, thereby limiting the readership to an elite and fairly restricted population. The "empty jingle of words" is certainly a factor here, but the prevalence of writing and learning in this and many similar jests problematizes the clear-cut distinction between "true" and "vulgar" jests. While this is most typically the case in university jest books produced for a relatively privileged readership, many jest books intended for a broader spectrum of readers similarly undermine the kinds of distinctions that Boyer attempts to impose.

* *

The centrality of interpretive ambiguity as a defining feature of the jest book tradition is clearly evident in John Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* (1630). On the one hand, Taylor's witty jests derive from popular origins, as the sub-title of the volume makes clear: "chargeably collected out of Taverns, Ordinaries, Innes, Bowling-Greenes and Allyes, Alehouses, Tobacco-shops, Highwayes, and Water-passages." And yet, these "clinches, bulls, quirkes, yerkes, quips, and jerkes" are described by the author as being "apothegmatically bundled up,"[24] thereby announcing their close proximity to the commonplace and apothegm traditions. Despite this label, Taylor goes on to distinguish

his work from serious affairs by describing the jests as "my poore and beggarly wardrobe of witty jests." He then proceeds to remind his audience that "I dare not call [the jests] Apothegms." Yet by invoking the "high" genre, Taylor characteristically problematizes the boundary between the serious and the spurious. Furthermore, in the subsequent paragraph, Taylor paradoxically confirms the identity of the jests *as* apothegms: "And because I had many of them by relation and here-say, I am in doubt that some of them may be in print in some other authors, which I doe assure you is more then I doe know; which if it be so, I pray you but continue to tollerate, and let the authors make twice as bold with me at any time."[25]

The compiling of jests, much like the compiling of commonplaces, involves the recycling and frequent resuscitation of old sayings. Taylor's declaration that many of his jests are not original confirms the proximity of the work to the larger apothegm tradition while expressing anxiety over this same proximity. Such anxiety is particularly evident as Taylor concludes his dedication to his patron by "wishing every one to mend one, whereby the rent and torne garments of Thred-bare Time may be well and merrily patched and repaired, crauing your pardon . . ."[26] These lines remind readers that the book is part of the apothegm tradition, since the "mending" of sayings is part of the tradition by which they pass from author to author.

At the same time, the notion of mending asserts the generative power of creativity as a response to the timeworn products of imitation. Taylor himself exerts this power in many of his jests, whereby an assertion of authorial invention is interlaced among conventional jest themes and stories. The opening poem entitled "John Garret's Ghost" explores how invention and tradition overlap in the jests. While Garret's ghost implores

Taylor to "collect some merry jests" (which includes borrowing or reproducing many from the communal jest book tradition), Taylor concludes the poem by hinting that the compiling of a jest book is an act of inspired invention: "And presently betooke me to my pen:/Cleere was the morne, and Phoebus lent me light,/And (as it followeth) I began to write."[27]

Indeed, the first jest begins with an assertion of authorial invention. The tale, supposedly drawn from Taylor's own experience as a water-man, begins "My selfe caried an old fellow by water . . ." However, even in this opening jest, Taylor borrows from a well-known jest that plays on the idea that a drowned man can live to tell about his experience. Here is a version printed in *Gratiae Ludente*: "One reporting that it is a dangerous Sea, betweene England and Holland: hee neere knew one drowned there in his life, no replies hee, I say, A. M. came over from Holland into England, and was drowned by the way." Taylor's jest revolves around a similar joke, concluding with the passenger's warning that "if I did drowne him, hee would spend a hundred pound, but hee would see me hanged for it."[28]

Despite the fact that many of Taylor's jests include recycled material from previous jest books, the author attempts to counter the potentially stagnant nature of his collection. In addition to assertions of authorial invention that revolve around his position as a water-man, Taylor concludes many of his jests with short epigrammatic verses that purport to elucidate and clarify the significance of the jests. Jest 70 is one of many jests derived from other collections: "A judge upon the Bench did aske an old man how old he was: My Lord, saith he, I am eight and fourescore: And why not fourescore and eight, said the Judge; the other repli'd, because I was eight before I was fourescore." While this

joke was well-worn by the time of Taylor's collection, the concluding explanatory verse provides original material and also emphasizes the notion of proper speech: "Eight's before eighty, all men may descry,/Yet wee name eighty first, contrarily./Pull off my Boots and Spures, I you beseech,/When Spures and Boots I rather proper speech."[29]

Occasionally, the explanatory verses hinder rather than clarify meaning, but this further attests to the interpretive ambiguity of the jest book form. Jest 56 involves a country-man who inquires as to the age of a ship, only to respond: "is shee so big growne in one yeere, what a greatnesse will shee bee by that time shee comes to my age." Following the jest, Taylor provides this verse: "This mans blind ignorance I may compare/To Aquavitae given to a Mare:/Let each man his owne calling then apply./*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, say I."[30] While both the statement about a man's calling and the proverb from Pliny ("let the cobbler stick to his last") seem in keeping with the critique of rustic intellect (or lack thereof) within the jest, the use of Latin does limit the audience to some extent. Furthermore, the use of stock sayings and recycled jests once again blurs the distinction between invention and imitation in the collection.

Even the final jest within Taylor's collection works to complicate rather than clarify the ambiguous position of the jest book. In contrast to the rest of the collection, Jest 138 is distinctly autobiographical and considerably longer than the other jests. It includes a petition to King James as well as a concluding section entitled *A Ribble-rabble of Gossips*. The jest revolves around Taylor's feud with Thomas Coryat, who had recently insulted Taylor by distinguishing between "master Coriat the *Scholler*, and John Taylor the *Sculler*." Taylor's attempt to address the issue within the jest underscores the conflicting identities of the jest book tradition, including polar opposition between vulgar

and valid, learned and popular, and didactic and enigmatic. The petition to the king reveals Taylor's anxiety about being viewed as having an inferior intellect. But the decision to voice this appeal within the context of the jest book calls into question Taylor's intellect (and the seriousness of his petition) from the start.

Furthermore, the *Ribble-rabble of Gossips* that Taylor presents to James as an attempt to defend his own person confirms rather than challenges Taylor's distance from the "scholar" identity. The jest tediously recounts the conversations of numerous gossips, following the most banal of topics from one gossip to the next (from the question of going maying in the cool of the evening to a request to borrow a dozen left handed spoons). This focus on the mundane confirms Taylor's identity as a sculler rather than a scholar. By playfully embracing this identity, Taylor closes his jest book with the ultimate gesture of authorial invention: he successfully circumscribes himself within a familiar pun. The same kind of punning humor that drives the jests thus becomes responsible for Taylor's own authorial identity. In a sense, this final jest enables Taylor to undermine the imitative strictures of the jest book tradition in order to define himself within an originary act of inventiveness. Indiscriminately recounting the trivial details of various gossips, Taylor offers the final jest in his collection as a pure anomaly. Neither does it follow logically from the more traditional jests that precede it nor does it challenge Taylor's own inferior position as a sculler. Despite this idiosyncratic gesture, however, the sculler/scholar pun is a familiar one, reiterating rather than challenging the imitative forces around which the jest book tradition is defined.

Finally, readers must recognize the mutability of language inherent in the scholar/sculler pun and in Taylor's playful gesture of circumscribing himself within it. As

in the case of other jests, it is not only the author's relationship to the text that underscores the tension between imitation and invention, but also the reader's relationship in recognizing ulterior meanings and other unstable qualities of language that invigorate the jest. These texts stand as exemplars of ambiguity, dependent upon textual uncertainty rather than upon the stability of textual relationships. And as we will see, jest books are not the only form that exemplifies ambiguity in terms of the relationship between the author and the text, between the text and the reader, and between the text and its cultural and historical contexts. Increasingly throughout the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, plays, travel narratives, and many poetic works embrace the possibility of misreading on a wide range of levels as central to the interpretive livelihood of the text or performance, thus further challenging the integrity and stability of exemplary representation.

Chapter 3 Anti-theatricality and the Dramatizing of Misreading

I turn now to a closer examination of early modern plays, since dramatic representation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century provides an ideal context in which to explore how exemplary authority and the exemplary powers of language were increasingly being challenged in favor of more ambiguous and less straightforwardly didactic forms of representation. Highlighting the ambiguities inherent in dramatic representation, early modern plays reveal anti-theatrical critics as misreaders by underscoring how dramatic representation itself challenges and potentially misreads the mimetic forces of Renaissance exemplarity. From the misreading of actual written texts in plays such as *Ralph Roister Doister*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to misreadings of the representational authority of the theater in *A Roman Actor* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, early modern drama problematizes the mimetic relevance of theatrical performance.

More than any form of literary representation, drama offers a malleable and potentially boundless space to explore the limitations of any singular and unified notion of authority. In the space of early modern England, key factors complicate the exemplary potential of the dramatic medium. The location of the theaters within the liberties of London[1] (or outside of other officially sanctioned spaces in the case of itinerant theater groups); the invitation to audiences to stand as authorities in their critical as well as material reception of plays; the instability of the dramatic medium itself with regard to its position at the intersection of oral, textual and performative traditions; the challenges that plays consciously pose in terms of the ambiguity of their mimetic potential—each of

these factors contributes to the fracturing of representational authority within the space of the drama.

As we will see, early modern plays increasingly capitalized on the unfixed potential of dramatic representation, highlighting meta-theatrical elements—the scripted nature of the play, the presence of writing on stage, and the blurring of boundaries between theater and real life—to underscore just how unstable the authority of representation can be in drama. To trace the ways in which plays undermine their potential as exemplars in sixteenth and seventeenth century England is to recognize the limitations of exemplary authority. More importantly, this focus illustrates how anti-theatrical polemics function as a misguided attempt to impose upon plays a confidence in the stable relationship between theater and life, a confidence that early modern drama itself increasingly calls into question.

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In *"A Sermon preached at Paul's Cross . . . in the time of the plague"* (November 3, 1577), Thomas White condemns the newly emerging institution of popular theater using a syllogism that clearly articulates his confidence in the relationship between plays and real life:

> Look but upon the common plays in London, and see the multitude that flocketh to them and followeth them: behold the sumptuous theater houses, a continual monument of London's prodigality and folly. But I understand they are now forbidden because of the plague. I like the policy well, if it hold still, for a disease is but botched or patched up that is not

> cured in the cause, and the cause of plague is sin, if you look to it well; and the cause of sin are plays: therefore the cause of plagues are plays.[2]

The term "followeth" assumes multiple meanings here, suggesting the literal following of the "multitude" as patrons of the plays and more importantly, as followers imitating the actions set forth by the plays. As such, plays stand as exemplars of sinful action, in turn implying that plays effectively *cause* plagues as a kind of contagious entity. By asserting that "the cause of sin are plays," White expresses the conventional view that the space of the playhouse itself breeds physical and moral corruption, but the particular wording also suggests the possibility that the plays enacted on-stage are themselves directly responsible.[3] The expectation that prohibiting plays will in turn cure London of the plague further underscores the assumption that plays bear a direct responsibility for experience within the real world, including the suffering and sickness of the plague.

While White's syllogism may reflect the hyperbolic emphasis of the sermon genre during the period, the argument that plays function as exemplars to dictate the actions and decorum of viewers was becoming widespread among anti-theatrical critics by the latter part of the sixteenth century. Working with this assumption about theater as exemplar, Philip Stubbes provided one of the most pointed critiques of plays in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583):

> But mark the flocking and running to theaters and curtains, daily and hourly, night and day, time and tide, to see plays and interludes; where such wanton gestures, such bawdy speeches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such clipping and culling, such winking and

> glancing of wanton eyes, and the like, is used, as is wonderful to behold. Then, these goodly pageants being done, every mate sorts to his mate, every one brings another homeward of their way very friendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly) they play the sodomites, or worse. And these be the fruits of plays and interludes for the most part.[4]

According to Stubbes, the immoral actions played out on the stage directly govern the actions of the audience. While all theatrical expressions of desire are deemed morally reprehensible, most scurrilous of all for Stubbes is the possibility that the cross-dressed male actor playing a woman on-stage will directly govern the subsequent desire of the viewer. Within this context, the "winking and glancing of wanton eyes" extends beyond the gaze exchanged by actors to include both the exchange of gazes between actor and audience and, most importantly, the subsequent desiring gaze shared between audience members. The assumption that watching plays will directly lead viewers to "*play* the sodomite" articulates this concern both in terms of the homoerotic desire aroused in the viewer by watching the play, and the capacity of the viewer to turn into a performer himself in his *role* as sodomite. Thus, theater is depicted as a powerful shaping force in its capacity as an exemplar for action, essentially scripting the role that the viewer will subsequently "play."

Such anti-theatrical critiques as Stubbes' and White's share in the assumption that theater stands as an exemplar for action and that the relationship between theater and life is unproblematic and transparent. Of course, the threat that theater poses as a mimetic force is only one of the criticisms leveled by anti-theatrical voices during the period. The

notion of dramatic representation as a lie, as a mutable and ostentatious distortion of real life, is equally central to the condemnation of the theater. While this factor would seem to emphasize the distinction between theater and life by highlighting the stage as mutable, protean, and untruthful, Anthony Munday underscores the connection between the ostentatious and the exemplary in his comparison of an actor to a chameleon:

> As for those stagers . . . are they not commonlie such kind of men in their conversation, as they are in profession? Are they not variable in hart, as they are in their parte . . . Plaiers cannot better be compared than to the Camelion.[5]

For Munday, the assumption is that an actor's role (and thus the play itself) models and shapes that individual's identity off-stage as well as on, thereby rendering the actor "variable in hart, as they are in their parte." While mutability defines both the actor and the chameleon, what is important here is the underlying assumption that a player's part directly defines his action off stage. Thus, a player's changeability in playing a variety of roles confirms his variable nature in the real world as well. According to critics such as Stubbes, this in turn can be extended to the effects of variability on the viewer, leading those in the audience to embrace the kinds of behaviors and ideas that foes of the theater deemed scurrilous and reprehensible. Once again, the underlying expectation that there is a direct, exemplary relationship between theater and real life is central to the critique.

However, as the institution of popular theater gained momentum toward the end of the sixteenth century, such confidence in the exemplary authority of plays increasingly reflected the priorities of earlier dramatic representation and misread the contemporary

drama itself. To assume in the latter part of the sixteenth century that a play correlates directly to real life (as a model, a commentary, or a mirror) is to embrace largely out-dated expectations about the allegorical and didactic authority of dramatic representation, notions that plays, players, and playwrights worked consciously and unconsciously to challenge. Central here is the changing conception of authority within the space of the theater, particularly in terms of the theatrical and thematic complication of the mimetic relationship between theater and life.[6]

By the last three decades of the sixteenth century, when anti-theatrical voices such as Stubbes were gaining precedence (but before the widespread appearance of Puritan opposition that would lead to the closing of the theaters fifty years later), dramatic representation proved particularly responsive to (and to some extent responsible for) a "crisis of authority"[7] ushered in by factors such as the Protestant Reformation, the rise of print, and the growth of literacy. As Robert Weimann describes this "crisis,"

> . . . the Reformation did bring to the fore vast and previously unknown contradictions between enforceable authority of an ecclesiastical (and state) institution and such different types of authority as accrued to faith, conviction, knowledge, and the competent uses of interpretation, discourse, and scripture. These contradictions involved unprecedented gaps (as well as new links) between church and belief, institution and text, political rule and discursive practice.[8]

By exploring early modern plays that challenge the interpretive stability of representation in a number of ways, I want to build on Weimann's assertion to

demonstrate how plays are both shaped by and help to shape this "crisis of authority." As such, early modern drama contributes in significant ways to the destabilizing of exemplary authority that I have been tracing throughout this project.

* *

The interpretive ambiguity of early modern plays contrasts in significant ways with the preceding dramatic traditions of morality plays, interludes, and cycle dramas. Plays such as *Everyman* and *Mankind* offer an unequivocal view of theatrical representation in which the drama stands as a model (but not necessarily a mirror) for real life. Within the conventional medieval scheme of existence, where humans are merely an extension of the larger divine order, the characters in these plays work as allegorical representations of human traits and values. And with names such as "Death," "Knowledge," "Strength," "Discretion," "Mercy," and "Everyman," the representational significance of these figures could not be more clear-cut. Even the Vice figures, frequently depicted as duplicitous and potentially deceiving, are always clearly distinguished within the course of the dramatic action. As Robert Knapp argues in his discussion of medieval dramaturgy,

> [i]nterpretation cannot occur where there is no puzzle as to the meaning and application, yet these plays seem so insistent about their disclosure and its use as to deprive an audience not only of enigma but even of the freedom to misread, thus nearly forestalling reading (as opposed to mere decoding) altogether.[9]

Even when the slightest possibility for interpretive ambiguity arises, these plays contain expository figures to aid the viewer or reader in the interpretive process, clearly identifying the relationships between characters on stage and those in the audience.

The role of the Messenger in *Everyman*, for example, illustrates the medieval theater's mimetic didacticism. From the opening of the play, the Messenger clarifies the play's purpose, taking pains to specify how it is to be interpreted and digested.

> The *Somonynge of Everyman* called it,
> That of our lyves and endynge shewes
> How transytory we be all daye.
> This mater is wonder[ou]s precyous;
> But the entent of it is more gracyous,
> And swete to bere awaye.
> The story sayth: Man, in the begynnynge
> Loke well, and take good heed to the endynge . . .
> Ye thynke synne in the begynnynge full swete,
> Whiche in the ende causeth the soule to wepe,
> Whan the body lyeth in claye. (4-11, 13-15)

The transparency of the moral message is quite striking here, and as the action of the play begins, there is very little room for alternative interpretations (including misreadings). The only opportunity to misread the play's significance in fact stems from failing to recognize the direct relationship between the dramatic representations and one's own experience in the real world. But the plays take careful steps to remind viewers of this

relationship, addressing the audience directly (such as Mankind's "I pomytt [promise] yow [i.e. the audience] thes felouse wyll no more cum here") as well as providing the kind of aforementioned expository guidance that articulates the moral and allegorical significance of the dramatic performance.

One of the most compelling examples of this last point is Mercy's final epilogue to the audience in *Mankind*:

> Now for hys love that for us receyvyd hys humanité,
> Serge your condicicyons wyth dew examinacion.
> Thynke and remembyr the world ys but a wanité,
> As yt ys provyd daly by diverse transmutacyon.
>
> Mankend ys wrechyd, he hath sufficyent prove.
> Therefore God grant yow all *per suam misericordiam*
> That ye may be playferys wyth the angellys abowe
> And have to your porcyon *vitam eternam*. Amen! (907-14)

The notion of being "playferys wyth the angellys abowe" (i.e. playfellows with the angels above) is especially provocative, since "playfellows" suggests both "companions" and "players" in the dramatic performance.[10] Seen in this light, the gesture of addressing the audience as playfellows reminds viewers of how unmistakably the stage stands in as an authoritative representation for the theater of life, where human beings are mere players in the divine cosmic order. In the space of the morality play, the boundary between

viewer and actor breaks down, thereby solidifying the play's didactic message within the hearts and minds of the audience members.

Similarly, mystery cycles make efforts to highlight the direct relationship between dramatic performance and human experience. In this case, the representation of episodes and events from the Christian bible serve as didactic tools to impart moral messages, and once again, there is very little room for alternative interpretations and misreadings within the space of these plays. While the cycle plays differ from morality plays in that the former do not frequently reference meta-theatrical elements to remind viewers of the close proximity of theater to life, cycle and mystery plays do dramatize a narrative familiar to audiences and viewers as part of their everyday life, namely the books of the bible. Furthermore, the fact that theatrical productions of the mystery plays involved the participation of professional guilds underscores the connection between theater and real life. In some cases, the topic of the play directly relates to the particular guild putting on the performance. For example, the "Waterleaders and Drawers of the Dee" performed the Chester Mystery cycle's play of Noah's Flood. Given that the town's water suppliers sponsored the representation of the flood, such depictions suggest a mimetic (albeit playful) relationship between theatrical topicality and real life. The play of the Crucifixion was performed by "The Ironmongers" guild, and in addition to acting in the performance, its members presumably made the nails used as props. Like the morality plays that work to remind viewers of the connection between dramatic representation and their own lives, mystery plays provide an unproblematic parallel between art and life by

dramatizing authoritative biblical texts without posing the kinds of hermeneutical challenges that later Tudor and Stuart dramas set forth.

By drawing this distinction, however, I do not propose the kind of conventional binary that condemns medieval drama as 'simple' in contrast to the more 'complex' theater of Shakespeare's age. To do so is to impose inaccurate and misleading assumptions about the 'evolution' of dramatic representation.[11] As Robert Knapp and others have convincingly argued, medieval drama is inherently complex, particularly as a result of the doctrinal and penitential challenges that the plays pose to readers and viewers. Seen in this light, the plays become

> a reading of the world: we are the dark ; [the plays are] the gloss, the allegorical interpretation drawn from our literalness, literalness thereby to be purged through, in effect, an act of literary criticism. Insofar as there is anything in need of exegesis and illumination, then, it stands on our side of the stage, for we are the world, gross and fashionable, to which Mankind's vices always lead, and we are the doubles of doubting Thomas, believing only in the convictions of our eyes and hands.[12]

As such, the plays do not so much mirror real life as provide exemplary and authoritative representations for how life should be. And it is this confidence in the authority of dramatic representation that distinguishes the medieval plays from the popular theater of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that this confidence did not deteriorate completely with the rise of the popular theater. Reformation era Tudor interludes such as

Nice Wanton, *Mary Magdalene*, *Jacob and Esau*, and *Lusty Juventus* relied on the kinds of allegorical certainties that were the backbone of earlier moralities and cycle plays. In *Nice Wanton* (c. 1550) for example, Dalilia expresses her inward disposition by way of her facial representation:

> Where I was fair and amiable of face,
>
> Now am I foul and horrible to see;
>
> All this I have deserved for lack of grace;
>
> Justly for my sins God doth plague me.

This straightforward dichotomy between good and evil (where inward disposition directly correlates with outward appearance) echoes earlier representations in which stock characters such as Vice announce their disposition by way of clearly articulated outward signs. Similarly, Juventus is torn between Protestant figures of virtue and Catholic Vice figures in the course of his spiritual education in *Lusty Juventus*. And stable notions of allegorical authority persisted well into the seventeenth century within the realm of court masques and pageants, where dramatic representation served politicized agendas as both an exemplar for proper rule and as a model for an unambiguously delineated social hierarchy.[13] Yet by the mid-sixteenth century significant changes in attitudes toward the exemplary authority of dramatic representation were already taking place.

* *

We can trace these changes (again, not an evolution but a transformation) to the Protestant Reformation, the rise of print, the influence of humanism, and other significant socio-cultural forces—the "crisis of authority" that Robert Weimann, John Guillory, and others have traced. By encouraging an individualized and internalized relationship with

God that hinged upon the priority of direct encounters with the scriptural word, the Reformation, coupled with the proliferation of printed materials and the growth of literacy, destabilized the singular authority imposed upon doctrine by the carefully constructed hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Humanism, for its part, challenged stable notions of authority by complicating the relationship between knowledge and experience. As Arthur Kinney describes, "[w]hat became increasingly clear . . . as the sixteenth century proceeded through expansion, war, religious persecution and reformation, and expansion once again, was that human value preached from a classical past when aligned with Christianity could not always account for subsequent observation and experience."[14] This unstable relationship between knowing and experiencing is indeed central to the de-stabilizing of exemplarity within dramatic representation of the Tudor-Stuart period.

In tracing the development of an early modern dramaturgy that prioritizes multivalence and uncertainty over singular and definitive interpretation, Kent Cartwright argues that it capitalizes upon the theatricality of dramatic representation, so that "the claims of theatrical experience [begin] to rival those of authority. Doubleness, duplicity, depth of space: theatricality at its extreme tends to undercut narrative certainty."[15] Nowhere is this notion of mutable theatricality more prominent than in the dramatization of reading and writing on stage. As we will see, the presence of the written word on stage highlights the play's concern with the potential instability of textual authority. And this concern extends to the script of the play itself, problematizing the ways in which subsequent actions follow from words. Writing on stage was by no means absent from earlier medieval drama (and particularly present in the form of Biblical texts). Yet the

increasingly central presence of both material objects of writing—books, letters, warrants, and even play-scripts themselves—and metaphorical books—the human visage and subjectivity as books to be read—in plays from the mid-1600s onward underscores the instability of the dramatic medium by calling attention to the mutable relationship between text and performance.

Among metaphorical representations of reading on the stage, one of the most common in the early modern period is the likening of the face to a book capable of being read.[16] In Shakespeare's *King John* (1597), Philip of France provides John with the following advice:

> Look here upon thy brother Geffrey's face:
> These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his;
> This little abstract doth contain that large
> Which died in Geffrey; and the hand of time
> Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume. (II.i.99-103)

While Philip's statement reveals confidence in the ability to 'read' the face, Duncan's assertion in *Macbeth* that "there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face" (I.iv. 14-15) suggests that such 'reading' is more problematic.[17] In *Twelfth Night*, Orsino makes this connection between reading the face and reading one's inward identity clear as he confesses to Cesario, "Thou know'st no less but all. I have unclasp'd/To thee the book even of my secret soul" (I.iv. 12-14). But like Duncan's, Orsino's words suggest that this interior position is not transparent, that it must be revealed rather than simply read in one's outward visage. This notion is certainly evident in the lines spoken by Medina to the king in Thomas Dekker's *The Noble Spanish Soldier* (1620).

Mine eyes have lost th'acquaintance of your face

So long, and I so (little) late read o're

That Index of the royall booke your mind,

That scarce (without your Comment) can I tell

When in those leaves you turne o're smiles or frownes. (V.iv. 4-8)

Indeed, the notion of reading a person is complicated by a potential rift between outward appearance and inward disposition, a disparity perhaps dramatized most effectively in the early modern period in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600-01). This rift is made more pronounced by the conventions of courtier culture,[18] as well as the conventions of theater itself (where a character's 'true' identity is always undercut by the fact that an actor is playing the role). Dramatizing reading on-stage thus highlights the enigmatic and potentially duplicitous force of theatrical representation.

Within the context of dramatizing writing and the written word on-stage, the capacity to misread registers as an increasingly dangerous threat for readers both onstage and in the audience. At the same time, misreading stands as a confirmation of the powerful and complex shaping forces within the performative realm of theatrical ontology. In part resulting from the legacy of humanism with its expanding awareness of the gulf between knowledge and experience, the dual and somewhat contradictory role of misreading as both a hindrance and a vehicle increasingly informs the drama of the Tudor-Stuart period, further complicating the notion of theatrical representation as authoritative exemplar. The close proximity between speech, action, and the written word within the space of the scripted performance showcases humanist notions about the social relevance and determination of language, while at the same time unmasking the

relationship as an unfulfilled ideal. Challenging the relationship between writing, speaking, and action within the performance and within the space of the playhouse enables a direct critique of the exemplary potential of dramatic representation. While theater embraces this potential by dramatizing socio-political concerns directly relevant to the real world, plays from the period call attention to the gap between knowing and experiencing, between language and action, and between representation on stage and subsequent (or simultaneous) meaning in the real world.[19]

While numerous plays dramatize reading in a figurative sense (most notably the reading of faces, minds, and hearts), it is the presence of literal printed documents on the stage that is most relevant to the argument about misreading that we have been tracing. In *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592), Hieronimo doubts the veracity of the letter written by Bel-imperia to expose Horatio's murder. By wrongly assuming that the letter dropped in his path is an attempt to betray him, Hieronimo misreads Bel-imperia's letter and expedites the tragic action of the play. Hieronimo's response to the letter resonates with the larger significance of the play, itself concerned with the unreliability of the written word and perhaps of language more generally (culminating in Hieronimo's severing of his own tongue as a gesture of inexpressibility). Another such example of textual instability is the duplicitous letter that Mortimer uses to order the king's murder in Marlowe's *Edward II* (1593):

> This letter, written by a friend of ours,
> Contains his death, yet bids them save his life.
> '*Edwardum occidere nolite timere, bonum est.*'

'Fear not to kill the king, tis good he die.'

But read it thus, and that's another sense:

'*Edwardum occidere nolite, timere bonum est.*'

'Kill not the king, 'tis good to fear the worst.' Unpointed as it is, thus shall it go . . . (V.iv.6-12).

By leaving out the punctuation and by including the ambiguous "bonum est" which follows from and problematizes the letter's purpose, Mortimer distances himself from the responsibility of committing regicide. According to Mortimer's plan, whether or not Matrevis and Gurney read the letter as an order to kill the king, they would be guilty of misreading the ambiguous command. While Matrevis recognizes that the letter "was left unpointed for the nonce" and thus undercuts the duplicity of the ambiguously pointed text, Mortimer's letter itself stands as a distinctive example of the duplicitous letter on stage. In *King Lear* (1605), Gloucester misreads Edmund's 'hand' for Edgar's, assuming that Edgar in fact authored the treacherous letter 'discovered' by Edmund. The duplicitous letter is the catalyst for the tragic action of the subplot, culminating in Gloucester's literal blindness—a result of his figurative inability to see by placing faith in bastard Edmund and the misread letter.

Of course, in many instances, figurative notions of writing overlap with literal ones. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, Malvolio's misreading of a written text determines the way that he is figuratively read by the other characters. But it is the presence of actual printed or written documents in plays ranging from *Ralph Roister Doister* to *Twelfth Night* to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that articulates how (mis)reading within the space

of dramatic representation challenges the very authority of that representation.[20] Even within the context of school drama of the post-Reformation period— arguably one of the more edifying forms of drama—the destabilization of representational authority undermines the didactic priorities of drama as exemplar. And it is through the dramatizing of reading and writing on-stage that this destabilization becomes most apparent.

* *

As a school drama articulating humanist priorities about proper reading, Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1550) in many ways resonates with the concerns of morality plays and interludes, embracing dramatic representation as an exemplary model for proper decorum. Udall's play is directly modeled on the Roman comedies of Terence and Plautus, borrowing devices of character as well as plot in the development of stock figures, including the braggart soldier and the parasite. Moreover, as a play written by a humanist pedagogue and performed by and for students, *Ralph Roister Doister* is situated within a didactic tradition fueled by expectations about the exemplarity of dramatic action. Unlike the earlier plays, however, Udall's work undermines the authority of the exemplar by calling attention in numerous ways to the instability of textual meaning, thereby undercutting the authority of the dramatic script.

Central to this destabilizing of textual authority is the love letter that Ralph Roister Doister writes to his widowed neighbor Christian Custance to ask for her hand in marriage. When Roister Doister's companion Matthew Merrygreek volunteers to read the letter to Custance, he shifts the punctuation and transforms the love letter into a bitter

diatribe. As Udall's contemporary (and former pupil) Thomas Wilson describes it in his third edition of *The Rule of Reason* (1553), the letter is "an example of such douthful writing, which by reason of pointing maie haue double sense, and contrarie meaning."[21] Take, for example, the opening lines of the letter: "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you, nothing at all/Regarding your substance and richesse, chief of all/For your personage, beauty, demeanor, and wit,/I commend me unto you; never a whit" becomes in the hands of Merrygreek, "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you nothing at all,/Regarding your substance and richesse chief of all,/For your personage, beauty, demeanor, and wit,/I commend me unto you never a whit." It is as a result of Merrygreek's misreading that the action of the play ensues, leading Christian Custance and her household to battle Roister Doister in order to punish him for his insults, including both the insulting letter and the insult of proposing to a widow who is already spoken for. More importantly, though, Merrygreek's misreading raises serious questions about whether interpretive authority rests with the author, the reader, or the listener of the scripted text. As we will see, the letter provides an ideal vehicle for highlighting the instability of textual authority.

Even before the letter is read, the issue of authorial determinism is called into question. Serving as messenger for Roister Doister, Merrygreek dutifully communicates to Christian Custance his friend's desire for her. But Merrygreek inevitably faces rejection, given that Custance is already promised to the absent merchant Gawyn Goodluck. As he returns to Roister Doister with the news, Merrygreek exclaims to the audience that Christian Custance will be "author" of all that he will speak: "Nowe that the whole answere in my deuise doth rest,/ I shall paint out our wower in coulours of the

best;/And all that I say shall be on Custances mouth;/She is author of all that I shall speake, forsoth" (III.iii.1-4). While Merrygreek faithfully conveys the rejection to Roister Doister, he does so by re-scripting Custance's words into an exaggerated attack on Roister Doister's person. Merrygreek subsequently undercuts Custance's authority as author, thereby blurring the identity of speaker as both passive and active agent of the scripted text. In addition, Merrygreek's re-scripting of Custance's words aggravate Roister Doister, thereby providing a catalyst for the foolish braggart to pursue his love interest further. Merrygreek's delivery thus stands as a misreading of Custance's message of rejection, enabling the devious parasite to become a kind of stage-manager to ensure that Roister Doister is thoroughly duped in the course of the play.

This emphasis on the instability of scripted authority becomes even more pointed in the context of Roister Doister's letter, which from its initial appearance in the play is marked by its potential to be miswritten and thus misread:

> MERRYGREEK: Who made it?
>
> ROISTER DOISTER: I wrote it each whit.
>
> MERRYGREEK: Then needs it no mending.
>
> ROISTER DOISTER: No, no.
>
> MERRYGREEK: No, I know your wit. (I.iv. 124-128)

Merrygreek's inquiry about "mending" the letter anticipates the transformative capacity of the written word in the play. Merrygreek's characteristically mocking critique of his master, "No, I know your wit," counters Roister's affirmative "No, no." In other words, Merrygreek skews the meaning of Roister Doister's response to suggest that the title

character's wit (or apparent lack thereof) will indeed require that the letter be mended. Furthermore, the notion of mending the letter suggests that its potential to be misread can be traced to its author or creator.

This ambiguity certainly becomes apparent following Merrygreek's presentation of the letter to Christian Custance in III.iv, where the line between misreading and miswriting becomes blurred. At this point, it is unclear whether Merrygreek simply misreads the letter or whether the marred text results from miswriting by either the Scrivener or Roister Doister himself. The vulnerability of the text to such ambiguity is central to the letter's comic effect. Misreading propels the dramatic action, but also unwittingly reveals satirical truths about Roister Doister's actual motives for marriage. "Whereas I love you nothing at all" thus reveals that Roister Doister's desire for Custance is based not on love, but instead on her position as a wealthy widow. Given its capacity as both an accomplice in and a consequence of the interpretive process, the letter becomes both the signifier (in its spoken capacity to signify the written text) and the signified (in its central position as part of the dramatic action, to be acted upon and transformed). That is, the letter serves as the script that dictates speech and as a space in which to manipulate (and mend) that speech and thereby govern dramatic action. In both cases, the letter motivates the spoken performance of the written word, thus confirming the authority of the speech-act in the device of the letter.[22]

Like the other actors in the play, Merrygreek transforms writing into speech simply by voicing the script. However, he takes this notion of speech as action one step further by manipulating the text. His "misreading" of the letter in III.iv becomes a way to

highlight the malleability of language, and clearly contrasts with the properly pointed version of the letter read by the Scrivener later in the play. Whether or not this transformation is the work of Merrygreek himself remains ambiguous until later in the play, thereby highlighting the propensity of text to be transformed by reader and author alike, and also by the listener (in the case of the audience). Elizabeth Pittenger states this potential for interpretive duplicity clearly in her article on *Ralph Roister Doister* :

> Implicit in the double reading is the sense that the repetition of the letter yields different results, that the effects of the letter depend upon its reader and its listener, including the possibility that the letter might be miscarried and mistaken.[23]

In light of the potential hazard of misreading the text, the play differentiates between improper and proper interpretive response. Merrygreek's initial reading is governed by the rhymed line endings that characterize the primary speech patterns of the play. By this token, the 'anti-love letter' blends into the language of the play. "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you nothing at all,/Regarding your substance and richesse chief of all" (III.iv.36-37) mirrors a characteristic line such as "E'en round about him, as many thousand sheep goes/As he and thou and I too have fingers and toes" (I.iv.55-56).

On the other hand, the Scrivener's corrective reading adheres to the proper rules of punctuation, marking, and spacing that resist the rhyming line: "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you, nothing at all/ Regarding your substance and richnesse, chief of all . . ." (III.v. 49-50). By neglecting the speech and rhyme patterns governing the rest of the play, this second version of the letter stands outside of the rhythm of the play itself. As

such, the 'correct' letter becomes a deviation, an anomaly highlighted as an exception to the rule of the play's language. Unlike the first reading, which serves as a catalyst for the ensuing comic actions of the play (and is likely a victim of such action by virtue of being miswritten or misread), the Scrivener's text is exempt from any direct responsibility. In a sense, the proper love letter is placed outside the linguistic economy that characterizes the rest of the play. By correctly pointing the Scrivener's letter, the play points to the proper reading of the text.[24] This second reading of the love letter evades the comic violence ushered in by Merrygreek's reading, yet ultimately, the duplicity of the letter functions more to highlight than to counter the unstable potential of scripted authority.

The concern with mispointing dramatized by Udall's play is of course a familiar trope in the early modern period. Student grammar texts (including Udall's own *Flouers for Latine Speking*) contain examples of writing in which meaning changes as a result of mutable punctuation. Jonson's epigram "To Groom Idiot" expresses the speaker's own anxieties about being misread. Not only does the speaker's groom "laugh in the wrong place," but also threatens the text in more significant ways by misplacing the punctuation: "And so my sharpness thou no less disjoints,/Than thou didst late my sense, losing my points." In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596), the production carried out by the Rude Mechanicals at Theseus's court similarly dramatizes the vulnerability of texts to mispointing (and thus misreading). The emphasis on proper ordering that characterizes Bottom's advice to the carpenter Peter Quince in Act One to "say what the play/ treats on, then read the names of the actors, and *so/ grow to a point*" (I.ii.8-10, my emphasis) is

entirely confounded in Act Five as Quince misses the point by confusing the punctuation of the Prologue. Quince transforms a conventional theatrical apology into a promise to offend: "if we offend, it is with our good will./That you should think, we come not to offend,/But with good will . . . All for your delight,/We are not here" (V.i. 108-10, 114-15). And by misreading, Quince does indeed offend, as evidenced by the response of his elite audience:

> THESEUS: This fellow doth not stand upon points.
>
> LYSANDER: He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.
>
> HYPPOLYTA: Indeed, he hath played his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.
>
> THESEUS: His speech was like a tangled chain: nothing impaired, but all disordered. (V.i. 118- 125)

Each of these statements underscores the unruly capacity of speech, vulnerable to corruption and at the same time corrupting meaning by mispointing.

Like Udall's play, Lysander's "moral" seems to suggest the dangerous consequences of misreading (in this case compromising the text's ability to "speak true"). But in both plays, the mispointed text functions as more than a didactic tool to exemplify the dangers of misreading. As we have already seen, the letter device in *Ralph Roister Doister* ultimately raises more questions than answers concerning the instability of textual meaning on stage. Although the letter device appears to provide an example of the dangerous consequences of misreading, the play ultimately resists any singular authoritative meaning by pointing out just how unstable and duplicitous textual and

dramatic representation can be. In the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as Patricia Parker has shown, the mispointing (and other textual and performative marring) evidenced by the Rude Mechanicals in their production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* provides a counterpoint to the notion of joining that informs both the literal joining of couples in matrimony and the symbolic joining of the social hierarchy enacted by way of the dominating gaze of the elite audience upon the lower class actors. Rather than simply disrupting the recuperative closure that the joining of the couples in matrimony may provide, the performance by Bottom and his companions proves generative as well by revealing the constructed and potentially unstable nature of authority (whether textual in the case of the dramatic script being enacted within the play or political in terms of Theseus and his court).[25] Even the misread letter in Udall's play has generative as well as detrimental consequences, since the identities of both the title character and his companion Merrygreek are ultimately shaped and confirmed by their interactions with the mutable text. Above and beyond this generative potential, however, both plays utilize mispointed texts to dramatize the unstable nature of textual authority, reminding viewers of the vulnerable nature of texts (including the plays themselves) to re-scripting by authors, listeners, and readers alike.

* *

In *Ralph Roister Doister*, misreading a mutable text serves to define the identities of its author, readers, and subjects while simultaneously confirming the potentially ambiguous nature of textual authority. This is certainly evident in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601), where misreading a written letter functions both to shape the identity of its

reader and to reinforce the instability of textual meaning. From its initial mention, Maria's fraudulent letter to Malvolio is indeed characterized by its proximity to Malvolio's physical body. She tells her accomplices that she "will drop in [Malvolio's] way some obscure epistles of love, wherein by the color of his beard, the shape of his leg, the manner of his gait, the expressure of his eye, forehead, and complexion, he shall find himself *most feelingly personated*" (II.iii. 131-35, my emphasis). This stands as an effective prediction, since Maria correctly anticipates Malvolio's erroneous recognition of himself as the subject of the letter.

More importantly, however, Maria's statement previews another kind of "personation" that the letter will enact, namely the unveiling of Malvolio's true identity as a result of his misreading. That Maria encourages her companions to "observe [Malvolio's] construction" of the letter seems in keeping with both meanings of "personation"–namely that Malvolio will construct the letter according to his own interpretive faculties, but will also be constructed as a result of the letter and its potential to be misread. This latter construction becomes particularly useful for the purposes of Maria, Sir Andrew, and the others. Resonating with the priority of humanists, Malvolio insists that his practice of proper social decorum elevates his status beyond their own. In response, the conspiring gentlewoman and her friends utilize the letter to punish and gull Malvolio for such lofty pretensions, thereby enforcing the boundaries of the social hierarchy.[26]

When Malvolio discovers the letter several scenes later, he has already begun to construct the fantasy that the letter will enable him to play out. Imagining himself to have

been married to Olivia for three months, he goes on to ascribe a social identity for himself that surpasses the social position of his superiors. "And then to have the humour of state; and after a demure travel of regard–telling them I know my place, as I would they should do theirs–to ask for my kinsman Toby–" (II.v. 44-46). This fantasy is perceived as an immediate and physical danger to Sir Toby, who suggests that "bolts and shackles" and even death ("may this fellow live?") are the only ways to contain such a threat to the social hierarchy. It is quite telling then that written language and its inherently unstable implications works to put Malvolio in his place. As the upstart steward picks up the letter, our attention is called once again to the scripted presence of the written word on stage. Fabian makes this connection clear as he states: "O peace, and the spirit of humours *intimate reading aloud to him*!" (II.v. 71-71, my emphasis). Within this oral context, Malvolio is predisposed to interpret the text for the audience both onstage and off. And in a reciprocal gesture, the text itself acts upon Malvolio, uncloaking his true identity as he misreads.

Much to the relief of Sir Toby and the other gentlemen and women slighted by the steward's social aspirations, Malvolio's inferior social position is confirmed from the moment that he picks up Maria's letter. Upon first glance, Malvolio's apparent recognition of Olivia's handwriting would seem to question his inferior status, since the ability to recognize and reproduce such signs and markings in early modern society confirmed one's membership in a learned elite. However, as Malvolio identifies "her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's," his association with the gentry rapidly deteriorates as he demonstrates his own lack of social decorum and an inability to

govern his sexually unruly self. As Gail Paster suggests in *The Body Embarrassed*, Malvolio's utterance of these particular letters is more than a device by which to provoke laughter from the audience. Paster calls attention to Norbert Elias's claim that "the rules of hierarchical society allowed the great to expose their bodies before their inferiors without shame or self-consciousness precisely because the knowing gaze of their inferiors did not count socially."[27] From this vantage point, Paster suggests, the fact that Malvolio recognizes Olivia making "her great P's" (i.e. urinating) discloses his likely and inferior duty as attendant of the chamber pot. That Malvolio mistakes Olivia's hand for her "c-u-t" (slang for genitals) further inscribes his inferior position by revealing the base nature of his unconscious desire. This bawdy fantasy counters his previous efforts to regulate bodily decorum, a concern that is epitomized in II.iii when he interrupts the antics of Feste, Sir Toby, and the others with

> Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? . . .My lady bade me tell you that, though she harbours you as her kinsman, she's nothing allied to your disorders. If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanours, you are welcome to the house. . . (II.iii.75-77, 81-83)

Already, Malvolio's misreading has figuratively uncloaked his hypocritical piety by revealing how far he stands from the conduct and decorum that he had earlier advocated.

This corrupted identity is further crystallized as Malvolio misreads himself into the letter, thereby enabling it to script and govern his subsequent indecorous actions. The lines "M. O. A. I. doth sway my life" provide the optimal site for Malvolio to further

implement his interpretive strategies for the purpose of reading himself into the letter, thus authenticating his fantasy. As Elizabeth Freund suggests,

> Malvolio's despotic way with a text digs his own hermeneutic grave and should stand as a warning to all interpreters who practice the self-deception of believing in the text's penetrability, and who would force the letter to yield its occult secrets by manipulation and cunning.[28]

Just as Maria ingeniously anticipates, the text unveils and confirms Malvolio's self-doting and vanity, for the letters on the page can only be misread. By imposing his own identity upon the otherwise ambiguous language (lacking any apparent signifier), Malvolio falls victim to the elasticity of the text.[29] Once this reading has been established, Malvolio plays the part dictated by the "script" of the letter. Misreading by attempting to undress the enigmatic letters on the page leads to the dressing up of Malvolio both figuratively, in his true identity as a self-doting social upstart, and literally, in his ridiculous costume of cross-garters and yellow stockings.

Like Viola's male garments, Malvolio's flamboyant outfit offers the potential to undermine the established social hierarchy. Elizabethan audiences would recognize Malvolio's gesture as a breach of sumptuary laws present in England since 1533.[30] Such laws regulated relations between social classes by enforcing limits on who could wear what. The high fashions of the gentry (albeit out-of-date ones in this case[31]) would be viewed as highly inappropriate for a figure of Malvolio's stature. The crossed garters become a sign of Malvolio's "crossed" actions and "crossed" reading. In this light, his cross-garters do to his dress what his misinterpretation does to the letter. Instead of

enabling Malvolio to ascend the social ladder (and thus question the boundaries of class division), the garments work to police the status quo by putting Malvolio in his place. The steward's comment that "this does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering" (III.iv. 19-20) takes on a double significance in this light: the clothing is too tight but his blood (i.e. his social identity) is also constrained and restricted by way of his foolish costume. Malvolio's attempt to play the part of the aristocrat, governed by the misreading of the letter, is interpreted as madness by Olivia and her household. For stepping out of bounds, Malvolio is severely punished. Through this gesture, the consequences of misinterpretation are once again articulated, both in terms of Malvolio's literal misreading of the letter and the misreading of class boundaries (by way of clothing) that follows.

It is quite telling then that Malvolio's attempt to redeem his position and prove his sanity hinges upon the ability to write a letter: "Good fool, as ever thou wilt deserve well at my hand, help me to a candle and pen, ink, and paper. *As I am a gentleman*, I will live to be thankful to thee for'it" (IV.ii. 66-69, my emphasis). Malvolio's lines confirm the proximity between writing and status. Indeed, writing serves a restorative function here, since the reading of Malvolio's letter in Act Five successfully nullifies his insanity and reiterates his position as a victim. However, textual instability is apparent even at the onset of this recuperative moment. Feste's assumption that the letter is the product of a madman leads the fool to read the letter as such, thereby prompting Olivia to question Feste's own sanity by asking, "How now, art thou mad?" (V.i.293). As such, the written text fashions identity even as its own identity as a madman's letter is being constructed:

"as a madman's epistles are no gospels, so it skills not much when they are delivered" (V.i.287-88).

It is only in the hands of the ever-polite and decorous Fabian that the unruly potential of the text can be contained and Malvolio's sanity can be restored, culminating in Olivia's statement that the steward "hath been most notoriously abused." But while "abused" is certainly an appropriate way to describe Malvolio's experience as a result of his misreading, it is important to recognize at the same time how misreading proves generative as well as destructive. In other words, the creative freedom which misreading enables in turn defines subject-positions in the play, for better or for worse. It is this process that in turn underscores the close proximity of the written text on stage to the literal script of the play. As we have seen in the case of *Roister Doister*, misreading written texts stands as a form of re-scripting, since the ensuing action indeed re-shapes the identity of the play's characters. At the same time, this connection between text on stage and stage *as* scripted text underscores the ambiguity of textual authority, since the process of misreading within the performative space reflects the creative process of generating text that is at the heart of the play itself.

For dramatic figures such as Ralph Roister Doister and Malvolio, misreading and being misread become originary gestures; the kind of self-fashioning that occurs by way of misinterpretation enables these figures to distinguish themselves as autonomous outside the collective framework of signs and structures that define the mimetic humanist individual. In this light, the theater (perhaps more than any other genre of representation) enables a 'playful' exploration of alternatives to humanist models of self-knowing,

including the self-fashioning of individuals, nations, and ideologies. The question of whether the authority of a dramatic work lies in the written text or the performance itself further challenges the stability of interpretation: To what extent is the performance faithful to the original text? To what extent does the text fall short of accurately 're-presenting' the performance? Do factors of complicity and authority even exist when discussing the relationship between text and performance? Thus, in addition to the kinds of misreadings that take place on stage and among the audience, dramatic representation itself stands as a challenge to and potential 'misreading' of the mimetic forces that embody Renaissance exemplarity.

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The examples of *Ralph Roister Doister*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* each call attention to the ways in which unstable notions of textual meaning challenge the representational authority of the dramatic medium. By dramatizing the act of misreading literal texts on stage, each of these plays highlights the instability of the scripted play itself. Within the performative space, this emphasis on the constructed nature of textual meaning problematizes the potential for meaning to follow from words, including both the interpretive authority of meaning dramatized on stage and the authority of the script to govern the actions of the players. Seen in this light, instability within the space of dramatic representation thus can be said to undermine the authority of anti-theatrical critics within the early modern period. In light of the ways in which the plays examined so far challenge and defy notions of exemplarity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is instructive to return to the claim that early modern anti-

theatrical critics were guilty of misreading plays. By examining some key examples of dramatic works that directly explore the relationship between theater and life, the misguided assumptions set forth by critics such as Stubbes, White, and Reynolds regarding theater's capacity to serve as an exemplar for action outside the playhouses come more clearly into focus.

The most obvious instances of misreading in Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (c. 1606) occur when the Citizen and his wife interrupt the performance, first to insist that their man Rafe partake in the drama and then to interject comments that further reveal their inability to distinguish theater from reality. As actors playing spectators who fail to play their parts as audience members, the Citizen, the Wife, and especially her man Rafe each blur boundaries between life and art. In their efforts to incorporate Rafe into the dramatic action, the Citizen and the Wife essentially re-script the play, and this in turn provides a critique of the mercantile class that the Citizen and his wife represent, as well as a critique of all audiences for their tendency to look for topical significance in every dramatic work. In the opening address to the reader, Beaumont emphasizes that any attempt to draw a direct correlation between figures on-stage and real-life personages stands as a misunderstanding of the play's significance. "Gentlemen, the world is so nice in these our times that . . . for plays [there is] no invention but that which now runneth an invective way, touching some particular person, or else it is condemned before it is thoroughly understood."

In the Epistle Dedicatory that precedes the address to the reader, Beaumont points out that the play was poorly received in large part because it was misinterpreted by

audiences: "Sir, this unfortunate child, who in eight days (as lately I have learned) was begot and born, soon after was by his parents (perhaps because he was so unlike his brethren) exposed to the wide world, who for want of judgment, or not understanding the privy mark of irony about it (which showed it was no offspring of any vulgar brain) utterly rejected it." While it is impossible to know the exact causes of the play's failure, scholars have often speculated that the play's coterie audiences were unwilling to accept the sympathetic though mocking portrayal of the merchant class.[32] Even if this was the case, Beaumont's point about misunderstanding "the privy mark of irony" seems more instructive in terms of recognizing why the play was not well received initially.

At issue here is the concern that audiences potentially misread the play when their interpretative priorities involve merely drawing direct parallels between the characters on-stage and their (presumed) real-life counter-parts. Jonson addresses this tendency and its shortcomings in several of his plays, including *Volpone* (1606), which was performed in the same year as *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. In the introductory Epistle, Jonson condemns those who impose topical significance on the dramatic action as a threat to the meaning of his work:

> I know that nothing can be so innocently writ or carried, but may be made obnoxious to construction; marry, whilst I bear mine innocence about me, I fear it not. Application is now grown a trade with many; and there are that profess to have a key for the deciphering of everything. But let wise and noble persons take heed how they be too credulous, or give leave to these invading interpreters, to be over-familiar with their fames, who

> cunningly and often utter their own virulent malice under other men's simplest meanings. (Epistle, 55-62)

Jonson himself fell victim to such "malice" following the debut of *Epicene* (1609), when Lady Arabella Stuart complained that the play contained a "slighting allusion to her alleged engagement to a fraudulent continental prince."[33] Following the accusation, the play was suppressed and the incident provided Jonson with even more cause to speak out against the practice of equating theatrical representation with real-life.

Nowhere is this critique more contemptuous than in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1611), where the Scrivener's introductory presentation of the "Articles of Agreement" between the play's spectators and its author include the following condition:

> In consideration of which, it is finally agreed by the foresaid hearers and spectators that they neither in themselves conceal, nor suffer by them to be concealed, any state-decipherer, or politic picklock of the scene, so solemnly ridiculous as to search out who was meant by the gingerbread-woman, who by the hobby-horse-man, who by the costermonger, nay who by their wares. Or that will pretend to affirm, on his own inspired ignorance, what Mirror of Magistrates is meant by the Justice, what great lady by the pig-woman, what concealed statesman by the seller of mousetraps, and so the rest.

Obviously, drawing parallels between gingerbread-women and notable real-life figures seems ridiculous, and it is through this exaggerated analogy that Jonson condemns the practice. At the same time, such statements about the limits of representation serve a

protective purpose for plays by Jonson, Beaumont, and others. Whether it is the playfully satirical representation of the burgeoning middle-class in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, the rather more scathing critique of Puritan hypocrisy illustrated by the character Rabbi Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, or other potentially denigrating portrayals in countless other early modern plays, theatrical representations do reflect social and cultural realities. By warning readers and viewers in introductory addresses as well as within the performance that to draw direct relationships between life and art is to misread the play, playwrights such as Jonson and Beaumont protect their plays against accusations of slander and other detrimental attacks. The Citizen and his wife are represented as foolish for treating the action of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as if 'real-life' was taking place before their very eyes. By dubbing these figures fools, Beaumont provides audiences with a model for how not to view the play, while simultaneously using the portrayal of the Citizen and his wife to mock very real social dynamics.

The meta-theatrical emphasis that shapes Beaumont's play thus serves two ironic and seemingly contradictory purposes: on the one hand, the mocking portrayal of the Citizen, his wife, and Rafe dramatizes the unfavorable effects of blurring established boundaries between theater and life. On the other hand, the play utilizes the spectators-turned-actors to comment on the changing nature of the social hierarchy, whereby those with money (including grocers) can sit on the stage alongside those whose titles traditionally gave them privilege. By providing this kind of social critique, the play bridges the gap between theater and life. Ironically, the kind of mistaking of theater for

life of which the Citizen and his wife are guilty simultaneously sustains and invigorates the action of the play. It is this kind of playful and potentially ambiguous representation that is central to dramatic works by the early seventeenth century.[34] In turn, it is this ironic ambiguity that anti-theatrical critics essentially miss in their condemnations of plays based on the assumption that theater directly influences and shapes real life.

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Much like *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1623) explores the meta-theatrical implications of dramatic representation. But unlike Beaumont's playful exploration, *The Roman Actor* works on at least some levels to scrutinize the influence of theater on real life. As such, critics including Jonas Barish have labeled it as the most anti-theatrical play of the Stuart period.[35] In many ways, this assertion holds up. For instance, while the play opens with a discussion between actors that seems to emphasize the non-threatening nature of theatrical representation (culminating in Latinus' defense of the theater with "[p]leasures of worse natures/Are gladly entertained, and they that shun us/Practice in private sports the stews would blush at"), the three ensuing 'playlets' each demonstrate the detrimental effects of theater on the audiences within the play, thereby contradicting the initial defense of the theater.

In the first instance, Parthenius (a freeman of Domitianus Caesar's) arranges a play to be performed for his father Philargus in an effort to change the father's miserly ways. Despite his son's efforts, Philargus misreads the didactic significance of the playlet entitled *The Cure of Avarice*. While viewing the play, Philargus resists identifying his

own subjectivity with the mirrored image of the actor on stage despite the actor Paris's confidence in the didactic authority of the performance. Paris reassures Parthenius with words of confidence, stating: "Your father . . . shall be so anatomized in the scene/And see himself so personated, the baseness/Of a self-torturing miserable wretch/Truly described, that I much hope the object/Will work compunction in him." (II.i.103-108). Rather than renouncing his past ways, Philargus only uses the performance to reiterate his identity: "I must not part with/My gold; it is my life; I am past cure" (II.i.435-36). For misreading the playlet's purpose, Philargus faces the wrath of Caesar and is swiftly sentenced to die. Caesar's words to Parthenius that "if the comedy fail/To cure him, I will minister something to him/That shall instruct him to forget his gold/And think upon himself" (II.i.164-67) underscore the destructive potential of theater, at once threatening to transform and destroy Philargus' identity. Presumably, if Philargus had read the play properly as a didactic device, then he would have renounced his miserly ways. But because Philargus misreads the play as a confirmation rather than an indictment of his identity as a miser, his very life is threatened.

The second playlet similarly problematizes the distinction between theater and reality and results in destruction. In this case, Domitia serves as stage director in addition to aiding in the preparation of the performance, staging *Iphis and Anaxarete* in the hopes of humbling Caesar's cousin Domitilla for refusing to recognize Domitia's position as Caesar's mistress. In the performance, Domitilla is forced to play Anaxarete, the noble lady whose rejection of the humble suitor Iphis (played by Paris) leads to his suicide and to her transformation into stone at the sight of his funeral procession. As the performance

begins, Domitia is unable to distance herself from the representation, interrupting the action with comments (much as Philargus does) and displaying her own emotional disposition in response to the convincing and commanding nature of Paris's performance as Iphis. Domitia's desperate interjections further undercut clear distinctions between theater and real life. As Anaxarete's porter berates Iphis for his lofty desires, Domitia interrupts the scene by threatening the porter: "But that I should disturb the scene, as I live,/I would tear his eyes out." Such threats lead Caesar to reassure Domitia that "'tis in jest" and "'tis his part." Despite the reminder, however, Domitia again neglects the distinction between theater and life as she interrupts Iphis's attempt to hang himself and promptly terminates the play. Yet Paris's reminder that "I ne'er proposed Madam/To do the deed in earnest" corrects Domitia's misreading of his suicide, while simultaneously bringing Domitia into the play. Domitia's subsequent attempt to woo Paris further highlights this blurring of theater and reality, and leads to Caesar's destructive wrath (and to the third playlet).

After discovering the illicit affair between Paris and Domitia, Caesar forces Paris to play the title character in a performance of *The False Servant*. The role is particularly fitting given that the playlet dramatizes the slaying of a servant by his lord after being caught in an affair with the lord's wife. The fact that the boy actor playing Domitia likely doubles as the female lover in *The False Servant* further blurs theater and reality, and provides Caesar with the incentive to stab Paris "in earnest," using his own sword rather than a prop to kill Paris while enacting the role of vengeful lord in the playlet. Throughout the brief performance, Caesar reiterates the hazy distinctions between life

and performance. He dismisses the actor Latinus (who typically plays the lord) and opts to play the role himself, claiming that Latinus "didst not do it to the life. We can perform it better." In the discovery scene, Caesar forgets his lines and admits to poor acting abilities, but in the process literally stabs Paris. As Paris dies, Caesar reassures the great actor:

> Twas my plot that thou
> Shouldst die in action, and to crown it die
> With an applause enduring all times,
> By our imperial hand. (96-100)

The fact that Paris dies within the theatrical space reiterates the destructive potential of dramatic representation.

Despite the destructive consequences of the plays-within-plays, *The Roman Actor* is not necessarily an anti-theatrical comment on performative representation. Some critics argue against the claim that the play is anti-theatrical by acknowledging that Domitia, Philargus, and Caesar all stand as

> obsessive characters, whose behaviour and attitudes have clearly not been created by exposure to plays, and who are unable to benefit from the opportunity to learn from what they see performed . . . The actions of these characters further demonstrate that if vice is so deeply embedded it cannot be supplanted through the agency of theatrical performance and that, by logical extension, neither can true virtue. [36]

But it seems to me that the play works as an even more complex and intriguing response to anti-theatrical critiques. By dramatizing tyranny in its most extreme form through the figure of Domitianus Caesar, the play reflects on the thematic of tyranny on a number of different levels, including the tyranny of interpretation that exists within the confines of exemplary forms of representation.[37] What is destructive about Philargus' encounter with theatrical performance is not so much his own misreading—his unwillingness to conform to the representation on stage—as is Caesar's misguided assumption that theater functions merely as an exemplary representation of real life.

Similarly, Domitia's desire for Paris revolves around the misguided expectation that the actor exists as an exemplary text or vessel through which his stage character (here Iphus) can be embraced: "Our Paris is the volume in which all/Those excellent gifts the stage hath seen him graced with are curiously bound up." Paris reminds Domitia of the flaws inherent in that argument: "The argument/Is the same, great Augusta, that I acting/A fool, a coward, a traitor, or cold cynic,/Or any other weak and vicious person,/Of force I must be such." And while Domitia in response accuses Paris of misreading her own analogy between theater and life as something more than an excuse to express her desire for him, the fact that she initially falls for Paris during his performance as Iphis problematizes her own ability to read properly.

The ensuing tragic action (including Paris's death within the third playlet) underscores the dangers that come from placing too much faith in the applicability of dramatic representation to real life. Yet it is precisely this tendency to assign a totalizing and direct relationship between theater and real life that sustains anti-theatrical critiques.

The vengeful murder of Caesar by Parthenius, Domitia, Julia, and the others at the end of the play thus dramatizes the obliteration of tyranny in the play. Along with the literal end of Caesar's despotic rule comes the possibility of interpretation outside the totalizing realm of exemplary representation, where theater is not necessarily a direct and singular representation of real life. And even though the closing lines uttered by the first Tribune reiterate Caesar's authority by punishing Domitia and the other 'rebels,' the Tribune's speech is not without a parallel condemnation of Caesar as a cruel ruler. "He in death hath paid/For all his cruelties. Here's the difference:/Good kings are mourned for after life; but ill,/And such as governed only by their will/And not their reason, unlamented fall;/No good man's tear shed at their funeral." The priority of the despotic will is clearly a destructive force within the play. But what is even more compelling is the dramatization of a parallel between despotic will and the tyranny of interpretations that place too much faith in a direct relationship between real life and theatrical representation.

While Paris and the other actors within Massinger's play acknowledge the "active virtue" of theatrical performance as a mimetic shaping force, Paris's defense of the theater to the Senate in I.iii suggests that audiences alone are responsible for the interpretive livelihood of plays. Responding to the Senators' accusation that actors are treasonous "libelers against the state and Caesar," Paris defends the theater by explaining that any potential for exemplary meaning comes from the audience's interpretation rather than from the play itself.

When we present

> An heir that does conspire against the life
> Of his dear parent, numb'ring every hour
> He lives as tedious to him, if there be
> Among the auditors one whose conscience tells him
> He is of the same mold, *we cannot help it.*
> Or, bringing on the stage a loose adult'ress,
> That does maintain the riotous expense
> Of him that feeds her greedy lust, yet suffers
> The lawful pledges of a former bed
> To starve the while for hunger; if a matron,
> However great in fortune, birth, or titles,
> Guilty of such a foul unnatural sin,
> Cry out, "'Tis writ by me," *we cannot help it.* (I.iii.109-22, my emphasis)

Paris's speech highlights the idea that plays and their creators are ultimately not responsible for the potentially exemplary effects of the performance. This theatrical defense thus parallels the function of the playlets in Massinger's play. Each of these instances complicates the notion of dramatic exemplarity, not so much to doubt that plays can model virtue and vice, but instead to demonstrate the limitations inherent in imagining theatrical representation as *merely* a transparent signifier of reality. Thus, the condemnations leveled by anti-theatrical critics parallel the tyranny of Caesar, as well as the misguided assumptions of other figures in the play who place too much stock in the interpretive parallels between life and theater. In the case of *The Roman Actor*,

dramatizing the dangers of misreading theater as merely a representation of real life serves a protective purpose, since the play itself challenges Stuart-era condemnations of theatrical performance that would directly threaten the theater. In addition, the play invites a comparison between the tyrannical figure of Caesar and the Stuart regime, again requiring the kind of protective device that a critique of theatrical mimesis would provide. To this end, even as Paris presents his most pointed defense of the theater to the Senate in I.iii, his fellow actor Aesopus praises him thus: "I never saw him/Act an orator's part before." Such reminders of the disparity between playing roles and real life reinforce the protective distancing achieved by complicating notions of theatrical exemplarity.

Nevertheless, Massinger's play challenges totalizing notions of interpretation for other reasons as well, since it insists that subject-definition both onstage and off is a more complex process than simply establishing a direct correlation between theatrical performance and consequent actions in the real world or vise-versa. Domitia's description of Paris as a book in which the virtues of his stage character are "bound up" exhibits this kind of misreading. This is not to say that the play entirely refutes the idea that performance can serve a mimetic function, but misreadings such as Domitia's and Caesar's do illustrate the notion that subject-definition is a more complex process than these views would seem to suggest. Through the course of the dramatic action, exemplary forms of representation come under scrutiny as a form of tyranny. Once again, the capacity of the exemplary to shape and guide action is not necessarily denied; rather, it is the tendency of exemplary models to restrict interpretation to mimetic relationships

between theater and life that is critiqued in the play. The fall of Caesar symbolizes the end of tyranny, including totalizing models of interpretation that limit the possibilities of theatrical representation, and of the complex process of subject-definition that performance both reflects and produces. While *The Roman Actor* does not necessarily provide clear alternatives to interpretive tyranny, the play does provide a pointed response to the anti-theatrical debate that raged in England during the seventeenth century.

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Plays such as *The Roman Actor* provide responses to the anti-theatrical critiques leveled by Stubbes, Prynne, Gossen and others by revealing how the tyranny of interpretation itself constitutes a misreading of the limits of dramatic representation. While works such as Prynne's massive *Histriomastix* and Stubbes' *Anatomy of Abuses* reveal a confidence in the mimetic and exemplary relationship between theater and life, even early modern defenses of the theater such as Heywood's *Apology for Actors* have often been described as "compounding" Puritan charges against the theater. In his *Apology*, Heywood cites the example of Roman emperors such as Caligula, Nero, and Commodus, who used theatrical display to enact "tragedies naturally performed," namely actual executions within the public space of the theatrical performance. While critics such as Jonas Barish wonder at Heywood's gesture of "befog[g]ing the distinction between theater and life" (thereby apparently aligning himself with his Puritan adversaries), the example of the Roman emperors arguably serves another function. Much like the playlets in *The Roman Actor*, the example of Nero, Caligula, and other historical tyrants works to

distinguish theatrical representation from totalizing interpretations that insists upon negating distinctions between theater and life.

By highlighting truly destructive theatrical acts (performed by literal tyrants, no less), Heywood underlines the disparity between these examples and conventional theater. Barish condemns Heywood's example on the grounds that it "converts a real occasion—the emperor's genuine violence—into a fictitious one." But I would argue that Barish's assessment itself stands as a potential misreading, much like the gesture of labeling *The Roman Actor* as an anti-theatrical play. In both cases, the line between theater and reality is laid bare not simply to reinforce the connection between the two realms, but also to underscore the potential dangers of placing too much faith in the connection between plays and real life. Heywood's account of Julius Caesar slaying a fellow actor during a performance parallels the murder of Paris by Caesar in Massinger's play. In both instances, abolishing the boundary between theater and life becomes a destructive act of interpretive tyranny:

> Amongst many other parts acted by [Caesar] in person, it is recorded of him that with generall applause in his own Theater he played *Hercules Furens*, and amongst many other arguments of compleatnesse, excellence, and extraordinary care in his action, it is thus reported of him: Being in the depth of a passion, one of his servants (as his part then fell out) presenting *Lychas*, who before had from *Deianeira* brought him the poisoned shirt, dipt in the bloud of the Centaure *Nessus*: he in the middest of his torture and fury, finding this *Lychas* hid in a remote corner (appointed him to

creep into of purpose) although he was, as our Tragedians use, but seemingly to kill him by some false imagined wound, yet was *Caesar* so extremely carried away with the violence of his practiced fury, and by the perfect shape of the madnesse of *Hercules*, to which he had fashioned all his active spirits, that he slew him dead at his foot, & after swoong him *terq; quaterq* (as the Poet sayes) about his head.[38]

Ironically, it is Caesar's desire to act the part effectively that ensures the tyranny of the interpretive act by collapsing distinctions between actor and executioner.

While Heywood does go on to demonstrate his confidence in the instructional usefulness of plays throughout the *Apology*,[39] his unwillingness to condone any anti-exemplary theatrical representation suggests that there is some hesitancy to acknowledge direct relationships of causality between theater and life. This somewhat paradoxical stance is made evident as Heywood summarizes the usefulness of various dramatic forms:

> Briefly, there is neither Tragedy, History, Comedy, Morrall, or Pastorall, from which an infinite use cannot be gathered. I speake not in the defence of any lascivious shewes, scurrilous jeasts, or scandalous invectives: If there be any such, I banish them quite from my patronage . . .[40]

By acknowledging the potentially detrimental influence of theatrical representation, Heywood to some extent undermines the distinction between his defense and anti-theatrical critiques of the theater. In this sense, Barish's point that defenses such as Heywood's only reinforce Puritan invectives is well taken. Yet as we have seen (and as

Barish himself argues), it is the plays themselves that provide the most pointed responses to anti-theatrical voices. Within this context, it is the anti-theatrical critics' inability to recognize ambiguities within the space of dramatic representation, as evidenced by their continued confidence in the notion of plays as exemplars, that underscores simultaneously the pointedness of the theater's rebuttal and the misguided readings exhibited by the anti-theatrical critiques.

Chapter 4 Paper Boats in a Sea of Fancy: Willful Misreadings of Geographic Place

Building on the claim that the widening of interpretive parameters in early modern England is inextricably linked to literary forms, I turn from drama to the travel narratives of John Taylor and Margaret Cavendish's utopian *Blazing World*. With their highly idiosyncratic representations of geographic and textual place, these texts complicate and enhance the discussion of representational authority that we have been pursuing. As I will argue here, disputes over the authority of language and the influence of exemplary *topoi* are closely connected to the larger challenge of defining identity with regard to literary and geographic space.

Given this emphasis on the relevance of geographic space to an exemplary notion of historical place, it is not surprising that efforts to define England in terms of geography were inextricably linked to notions of *topoi* circumscribing textual space. The priorities of humanists such as Agricola and Guicciardini in designating textual examples as authoritative markers become relevant to an understanding of early modern geographic space. Central here is the notion that 'places' in both the geographic and textual sense gain legitimacy through their relevance to an authorized historical past. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, both notions of 'places' were marked by ambiguity and instability. In the case of language, as I have been arguing, socio-cultural transformations worked to undermine the integrity and relevance of classical models. In the case of geographic place, English nationhood was in the process of becoming rather than firmly established. It is the unfixity of this identity—wavering between insularity

and expansion, between categories of self and other, between native and stranger, and between home and abroad—that proves central to the process of defining notions of Englishness within the context of literary representation.

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In *The Excellencie of the English Tongue* (1614), the chorographer and parliamentarian Richard Carew diverges from the conventional view of the English language as barbarous and uncivil by offering an unusually praiseworthy assessment of his mother tongue as advantageous in learning other languages:

> A straunger though neuer soe long conuersant amongest vs carryeth euermore a watch woorde vppon his tongue to descrye him by, but turne ann Inglish-mann at any time of his age into what countrey soeuer, alloweing him dew respite, and you shall see him perfitt soe well that the Imitation of his vtteraunce will in nothing differ from the patterne of that natiue Languadge: the wante of which towardnes cost the Ephramites their skynnes.[1]

"Towardness" here stands as a measure of the mimetic, delineating the degree to which English imitates the native languages of other countries and thus provides English travelers with protective as well as profitable means of concealment. Central to this mimetic authority is the fact that English itself borrows from so many other languages, as Carew explains:

> Now wee in borrowing from them geue the strength of Consonantes to the Italyan, the full sounde of wordes to the French, the varietye of

termi[na]cions to the Spanish, and the mollifieinge of more vowells to the Dutch; and soe (like bees) gather the honye of their good properties and leaue the dreggs to themselfes.[2]

Lacking this ability to imitate or blend in paradoxically cancels rather than confirms any autonomous distinction of community-defined subjectivity, as evidenced by the biblical example of the Ephraimites who are literally deprived of their identity (their "skins") because they lack such "towardness."

At the same time, Carew's description of the ways in which the mother tongue benefits the speaking of other languages abroad betrays English insecurities about nation-formation and domestic boundaries, so that the description itself becomes a desperate attempt to impose and simultaneously collapse difference. Notice, for example, how the statement opens by providing a clear distinction between the stranger setting foot on English soil and the Englishman venturing abroad. From the moment that he begins to speak, the "Stranger" is always distinctly othered by virtue of his linguistic difference. In contrast, the English traveler becomes indistinct from the inhabitants of any country "soever" to which he travels. While this chameleon-like ability provides a counterpoint to the more negative limitations of barbarous English (see Chapter One), the potential to blend in also reveals just how malleable and undecided English identity can be. Imitating the other by way of speaking enables the English traveler to be misread as a native upon foreign soil, at once rendering the encounter more profitable and compromising the articulation of any uniquely defined category of Englishness.[3]

Carew's confidence in the mother tongue's value abroad indeed contrasts with the more conventional criticisms of English as barbarous and uncivil, a view that by the early seventeenth century was held largely by pedagogues as well as by foreigners contrasting the English language with their own.[4] Carew and other advocates of English worked to protect the language from cultural marginalization, and this effort in turn responds to a long tradition of denigrating English as inferior to virtuous Latin and Greek. Carew himself addresses this denigration directly in his work by exploring the shortcomings of classical language in relation to English. Reversing the conventional contrast between vulgar English and virtuous Latin, Carew explains how certain letters sound superior when pronounced in English and then condemns the Roman practice of naming people after bodily imperfections as a "blemish" of classical language and culture. For Carew, then, the authority of language is circumscribed within notions of geographic as well as historical place. Defending the virtues of English thus requires Carew to challenge conventional boundaries of geographic and historical space that would otherwise render the language inferior.

In the context of humanist attempts to recuperate the integrity of classical language in order to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of vernacular English, I argue here that efforts to articulate and define notions of "Englishness" and domestic space are circumscribed both by England's conflicted sense of an exemplary historical past and by its tenuous place on the global map. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, categories of difference central to nation formation and the definition of an autonomous notion of Englishness were taking shape rather than firmly established.

Thus, efforts to circumscribe England within the distinct parameters of nation are marked by contradiction and inconsistency, as Carew's statement about English travelers abroad reveals.

* *

In *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (1994), John Gillies asserts that the literary imagination is "informed by a rich geographic tradition which is already moralized, already inherently 'poetic' in the sense of being alive with human and dramaturgical meaning: specifically, with the meaning of human difference."[5] Embracing Vico's notion that geography as "an articulation of human perspective can be understood in precise 'poetic' or dramaturgical terms,"[6] Gillies simultaneously exposes the myth-making inherent in Vico's thesis by demonstrating its dependence upon the classical conceptions of *oikumene* and the *orbis terrarum*, which systematically construct notions of difference in relation to the home or center-point. This construction in turn leads to a "reverence for symmetry," whereby all topographically extreme lands are "represented as inversions of *Hellas*" and as mirror images of one another. As Gillies explains, the mythology of the *oikumene* is both defined and preceded by very real geographic boundaries such as oceans and mountains, thus articulating how classical notions of place were "as much a construction of the 'poetry' and rhetoric as of factual geography." Gillies traces the enduring legacy of the geographic imagination in terms of how these exemplary notions bear upon "the drama of transgression in Shakespeare." The powerful ideological constructions of place articulated through the spatial representations of the

map, the theater, and the drama itself all attest to the enduring authority of classical exemplarity in shaping the geographic imagination.

By exploring representations of England and its boundaries that complicate any distinction of a singular or unified notion of nation, however, I want to build on Gillies' argument by elaborating on how the early modern period articulated complex responses to the authority of exemplary geographic space. On one level descending from the classical legacy of Troy by way of Brutus's mythical foundation of London (Troynovant) while on another level existing in a remote and barbarous backwater overshadowed by the mercantile supremacy of the Ottoman Empire and southern Europe, England in the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries was circumscribed within a highly conflicted geographic space.

Moreover, efforts to 'put England on the map' in the sixteenth century were relatively unsuccessful. Despite intermittent assertions of English might such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, by the end of the sixteenth century, English national identity was still clearly marked by a sense of global inferiority. Such anxieties regarding "imperial belatedness"[7] are clearly perceptible, for example, in Richard Hakluyt's preface to the second edition of his *Principal Voyages* (1598):

> Be it granted that the renowned Portugal Vasco da Gama traversed the main ocean southward of Africa. Did not Richard Chancellor and his mates perform the like, northward of Europe? Suppose that Columbus that noble and high-spirited Genoese escried unknown lands to the westward of Europe and Africa: did not the valiant English knight Sir Hugh

> Willoughby; did not the famous pilots Stephen Burrough, Arthur Pet, and Charles Jackman accost Novaya Zemlya to the north of Europe and Asia? Howbeit you will say perhaps, not with the like golden success, not with such deductions of colonies, nor attaining of conquests. True it is, that our success hath not been correspondent unto theirs: yet in this our attempt the uncertainty of finding was far greater, and the difficulty and danger of searching was not whit less.[8]

Hakluyt's preface, and indeed his entire project of anthologizing English voyage accounts from the time of Mandeville to the late sixteenth century, attempts to appease anxieties surrounding England's perceived inferiority within the global picture. However, the fact that gold, colonies, and conquest were not forthcoming for the English in the way that such spoils of exploration proved attainable for the Portuguese, the Spanish, and other European powers prevented England from asserting a fully realized and distinct sense of national identity. Nevertheless, Hakluyt's insistence upon the difficulties of English exploratory endeavors abroad does shed light on the country's determined efforts (eventually realized later in the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries) to assert itself as a viable global power. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, such an identity was still in the process of taking shape. As such, notions of national identity and distinctions of difference demarcating self and other remained provisional and often fraught with ambiguity during this period.[9]

Along with England's mutable sense of political and territorial space comes an equally uncertain sense of historical place. Gillies' discussion of the "Shakespearean moment" and its indebtedness to the classical past is useful, particularly in terms of understanding the co-existence of ancient and modern values in the interplay between ancient cosmography and the emerging new geography (emblematized by the work of Ortelius and Mercator). In this context, "the Shakespearean moment thus coincided with a moment of unprecedented hermeneutic instability in the *imago mundi*, in which a new geographic poetic was now emerging from, now being swallowed by, the old poetic geography."[10] On the one hand, priorities of global expansion and exploration largely fueled the new geography and its designations of political boundaries and cultural distinctions. Yet, conceptions of the older cosmographic world endured as England attempted to confirm its historical legacy (rivaling Spain) as the true inheritor of Rome. Thus, tensions between old and new geographical representations of space further complicate the process of English nation formation during the period. This chapter explores the dynamics of this process, using a rather unexpected set of texts—the "domestic" travel narratives of John Taylor and Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*—to demonstrate how the "unprecedented hermeneutic instability" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries played an important role in shaping and simultaneously confounding distinctions of identity based on geographic place.

The writings of John Taylor the Water-Poet and Margaret Cavendish are particularly useful to illuminate the present discussion. Both Cavendish's and Taylor's idiosyncratic hybridization of literary forms, coupled with their similar positions as

faithful Royalists, complicates the distinction that Richard Helgerson and others have drawn between the authority of the monarchic dynasty and the authority of the land itself in cartographic and literary representation. While Taylor's gesture of asserting his own artistic autonomy by complicating rather than confirming official demarcations of power is in line with Helgerson's discussion of Drayton, Saxton, and others, Taylor's work undermines any neatly polarized opposition between monarchic authority and subversive responses to that authority. Likewise, Cavendish's distinctive melding of travel narrative, utopian discourse, and proto-science fiction in *The Blazing World* complicates any singular distinction of literary genre and problematizes distinctions of geographic space within the narrative as well.

Thus, examining such writers helps to recognize the limitations of any clear-cut distinction between authorized power and its efforts to contain and circumscribe subversion. For Taylor and Cavendish alike, reading against exemplary notions of history and place is not so much a subversive act as an opportunity to define a unique literary space. While both Cavendish's and Taylor's peculiar social and cultural positions in many ways render distinctive their strategies of representing geographic place, each writer's idiosyncratic status at the same time testifies to the broader instability of boundaries delineating topographic and territorial (as well as authorial) space during the period.[11]

Central here is the way in which texts such as Cavendish's *Blazing World* and Taylor's travel writings problematize and complicate stable distinctions of alterity. De Certeau's discussion of Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" in *Heterologies* provides a

useful framework for the present examination. To scrutinize "the status of the strange," as both these writers and Montaigne do, is "to place into question both the text's power of composing and distributing places, its ability to be a narrative of space, and the necessity for it to define its relation to what it treats, in other words, to construct a place of its own."[12] In this equation, it is "the text's reworking of space that simultaneously produces the space of the text." While Montaigne collapses distinctions between self and other by identifying as barbarians his fellow inhabitants of Europe (in contrast to the virtuous and natural Brazilians), unconventional discourses such as those of Cavendish and Taylor impose this ambiguous status upon themselves as textual and geographic anomalies. As we will see in narratives that simultaneously delineate and confound boundaries of nationhood, blurring distinctions of difference provides a powerful opportunity to define autonomous notions of literary and cultural place. While these re-thinkings of place may register as misreadings of conventional boundaries, such misreading in turn offers a generative potential in terms of shaping discourses as well as autonomous literary identities.[13]

* *

In his dedicatory address to John Taylor's *Last Voyage* of 1648,[14] John Dorney writes: "Strange newes! There is arrived at our key;/A wandering poet always in his way;/Whose wilfull errors makes him thus to vaunt,/Aeneas-like, I came from Troynovant." Foremost among these errors is the fact that Taylor's lack of Latin marks his distance from rather than his allegiance to the Aeneas analogy. Dorney makes this distinction clear with the following lines: "And hence he must, but yet he will I trow/To

the Brittaines rather than the Latines row:/English will serve him rightly to rehearse/His crooked travels in good prose or verse." As I will demonstrate, "wilfull errors" inform John Taylor's work in a number of other provocative ways, most notably in his willful misreadings of distinctions of geographic place in order to define his own space within the literary and cultural landscape. In an earlier preface "To Any Body" that opens *Taylor on Thame Isis* (1632), Taylor makes clear his own anxieties with regard to literary models:

> I that ne'r tasted the Castalian fount,
> Or came in ken of the Thessalian Mount . . .
> Who with good poets dare compare no way
> But one, which is in being poore as they;
> And having never seene the Muses hill,
> Am plentifully stor'd with want of skill . . .
> Though (for the most part) in the tracts I tread,
> Of learned Camden, Speed, and Hollinshead,
> And Draytons painfull Polyolbyon,
> Whose fame shall live, despight oblivion,
> These are the guides I follow, with pretence
> T'abbreviate and extract their quint-essence;
> Nor can it be to them disparagement,
> That I come after in the wayes they went,
> For they of former writers followers be,

I follow them, and some may follow me;

And man to man a president is made

In art or science, mysterie or trade,

As they before these rivers bounds did show,

Here I come after with my pen and row.[15]

This address is useful for contextualizing Taylor and his conception of historical and geographic space in a number of ways. At the start of the poem, Taylor admits his limited travel experience, but the lack of exposure to the places that he identifies also underscores a perceived lack of learning.[16] In response to this potentially vulnerable position that distinguishes him from "good poets" in all but one way, Taylor explains how local and domestic topographic and literary influences will compensate for his apparent distance from established notions of place (in terms of both the geographic place of the traveler and the classical place of the literary figure). The domestic river Thames-Isis stands in for the more traditional figures of the "Castilian fount" and "Tempes liquour" in order to inspire as well as authorize Taylor's writing. Likewise, the works of Camden, Speed, Drayton, and other domestic influences provide exemplary models for Taylor's own descriptions of place. The notion of these writers as "guides" which Taylor follows reiterates the concept of 'places' that we have been tracing. On the one hand, these predecessors are guides who have literally mapped the geographic landscape that Taylor describes so that Taylor follows their travels in a very real topographical sense. On the other hand, Taylor appropriates these guides as literary exemplars, following the

forms and textual strategies of his models. In both senses, however, Taylor cannot be entirely faithful to textual and topographical notions of place.

In order for Taylor to assert his own autonomous literary authority, it is simply not enough to follow in the footsteps of his guides or to follow the exact contours of spatial boundaries. To do so would be to designate his encounters with the domestic as banal rather than as worthy of occupying literary space. Thus, Taylor presents a set of idiosyncratic travel accounts involving travels on foot and by unconventional sailing craft throughout England. The gesture of traveling across familiar topography in an unusual or note-worthy way imposes the marvelous onto the ordinary and in the process, upsets chorographic and geographic boundaries. By misreading boundaries between familiar and exotic within his domestic travel accounts, Taylor thus transcends banality and defuses the textual and cultural forces that would otherwise mark his own literary identity as vulnerable.

* *

After devoting numerous pages to the multiple uses of hemp, particularly as a basis for paper making, Taylor concludes his pamphlet *The Praise of Hempseed* (1620) by providing readers with a strange yet apparently factual account of his wagering voyage from London to Queenborough, Kent with his friend Roger Bird upon a paper boat rowed with oars made of dried fish. Although the paper boat all but disintegrates en route to Queenborough, the two travelers do manage to reach their destination by holding on to inflatable bladders that had formerly held their wine supply. Upon arrival, Taylor and his companion donate the devastated boat to the city as a memento of their

adventures. This kind of account is typical of Taylor's wagering journey narratives and other travel writings, but particularly interesting here is the way in which the paper boat works as a metaphor for the process of writing the journey and marketing it as a work of literature. Like the paper boat itself, the pages of Taylor's account are vulnerable once they enter the public realm. The fact that the voyage exists for the purpose of being written about further emphasizes the interconnection between the paper boat and the printed page. The process by which the text is 'salvaged' is very much like the salvaging of the boat by offering it to the community of Queenborough. In both cases, public patronage (particularly the market of readers) determines the livelihood of the endeavor.

Taylor underscores the susceptibility of his venture as he recounts how the paper boat was torn apart by the community after being presented to the mayor and put on display: "The country people tore our tatter'd wherry/In mammocks peecemeale in a thousand scraps,/Wearing the reliques in their hats and caps./That never traytors corps could more bescatter'd/By greedy Ravens, then our poore boat was tatter'd . . ."[17] The anxiety about pages being torn reflects Taylor's own fears about the reception of his writing by critical readers. That the boat itself is likened to a traitor's corpse situates Taylor's project in contradistinction to his reading public as a kind of outsider vulnerable to hostile reception. Beyond general anxieties about the work's vulnerability to criticism, however, there is also a concern over whether the 'truth' of Taylor's account is rightly received. By tearing up the boat, the villagers transform the vessel back into pages, but pages that remain blank in terms of providing scant evidence of the boat's and the journey's existence. As a result, the validity of Taylor's story (which sounds very much

like a tall tale) is called into question. Despite the fact that Taylor concludes his poem by reminding readers that it deals with the truth ("Take not my lines all for a Paradox:/For most of them seeme true, and I doe rue,/That many of them I doe know too true"), the authority of interpretation ultimately lies with the reader. Taylor's vulnerable boat within the text is thus a reflection of the poem's vulnerability in the hands of readers. To tatter the text is to condemn it critically, but also to deprive it of the kind of truth-telling for which Taylor frequently claims to strive.

While vulnerability within the marketplace and to the scrutinizing eye of disbelieving readers characterizes the reception of most early modern travel narratives, Taylor's account, along with his other travel writing, is vulnerable in other ways as well. As a Thames waterman who aspired toward a literary career, Taylor attempted to embrace a legitimate and authoritative identity as a writer despite his limited formal learning. In addition, Taylor's travels are for the most part restricted to England and its neighbors (with the exception of a journey to Bohemia and Germany around 1617). As such, he faces the scrutiny of those who either disregard his travels as overly provincial (and not wondrous enough) or else those who doubt the validity of the accounts as a result of Taylor's attempts to embellish his domestic travels with marvelous elements in order to attract curious readers.

Thus, Taylor utilizes the domestic journey and appropriates the conventions of exploration narrative in order to upset and ambiguate the "status of the strange," thereby ensuring the financial success of his works (by transforming the familiar into the wondrous in his accounts of domestic travels) and evading potentially vulnerable

positions by problematizing distinctions between learned and unlearned, familiar and exotic, and truth and fiction. It can be argued, then, that Taylor intentionally misreads conventional distinctions of difference in order to demarcate his own autonomous literary and cultural place. As a result, Taylor's vulnerable position—within the marketplace, as a common rower (i.e. "sculler"), and as a traveler—becomes less a threat than a creative asset in terms of enabling a unique position from which to scrutinize and challenge (while at the same time embracing) the process of boundary-drawing.

As a Thames water-man who had served in Elizabeth's navy and had taken part in expeditions to Cadiz in 1596 and to the Azores the following year, Taylor was well-versed in the discourses of travel by the time he began his literary career in 1612 with the publication of *The Sculler, Rowing from Tiber to Thames, with his Boate laden with a hotch potch, or Gallimawfrey of Sonnets, Satyres, and Epigrames*. While Taylor published widely on subjects ranging from elegies on public figures and a biography of the Virgin Mary to satires, miscellanies, and his famous "Thumb-bibles," his published travel writings are particularly note-worthy. At least fifteen distinct published accounts survive.[18] Many of these were wagering journeys, whereby Taylor solidified subscribers (sometimes numbering in the thousands) prior to the journey who would pay Taylor at the completion of his travels and in return receive a copy of the travel account.[19]

In addition to these literary patrons, Taylor also received the support of many hosts along his journeys. These included aristocratic personages accessible to Taylor by 1613 when he became a "King's Waterman," a post that made him responsible for shuttling members of the royal family and court across the Thames. Other travels were

undertaken for more practical purposes, such as the 1623 sailing journey from London to Salisbury in order to assess the navigability of inland waterways. Bridging the identities of waterman, sailor, and literary figure in all of these accounts, Taylor was in a unique position to capitalize on the inter-relationship between textual pursuits and the pursuit of geographic place prioritized by the explorer. For Taylor, this involved becoming a kind of mediator, at once established within the literary tradition and at the same time always an outcast by virtue of his position as a common waterman.

In his literary feud with the traveler and humorist Thomas Coryat, Taylor makes this mediating position explicit as he at once embraces and rejects his position as "sculler" in contrast to Coryat's more learned identity as "scholar." In "Oldcombs Complaint: or Coriats Funerall Epicedium: Or Death-Song, upon his late-reported drowning," Taylor takes advantage of a rumor about Coryat's supposed drowning abroad to defend his own poetic abilities, in response to Coryat's scholar/sculler distinction. In the opening section entitled "The Authour in his owne defence," Taylor confidently asserts,

> I know my Dactils, and my Spondees well;
> My true proportion, and my equall measure,
> What accent must be short, and what at leasure . . .
> To give my poesie the greater grace,
> Either in Pastorall or Comick straine,
> In Tragedy or any other vaine . . .
> I know these like a Sculler, not a Scholler.[20]

Interestingly, this distinction between sculler and scholar enables Taylor to blur boundaries between learned and unlearned, at once capitalizing upon and condemning the label of "sculler." Taylor dedicates the work to Archie Armstrong, the famous court fool, and in keeping with the dedication, his verse invokes fools and jest book writers as exemplary figures through which Taylor frames his own verse: "O were my wit inspir'd with Scoggins vaine,/Or that Will Summers ghost had seaz'd my braine:/Or Tarlton, Lanum, Singer, Kempe, and Pope,/Or she that danc'd and tumbled on the rope/Or tilting Archy, that so bravely ran/Against Don Phoebus knight, that wordy man."[21] As fools, jesters, and comedians, these figures are anti-exemplary in the conventional sense; yet Taylor appropriates them as authoritative models for his verse, thereby further complicating boundaries between learned and unlearned. At the same time, Taylor confounds distinctions of social class here by embracing lowly figures as literary exemplars.

In keeping with this project of destabilizing boundaries between scholar and sculler, Taylor centers his critique on the accusation that Coryat's excessive learning (particularly his grasp of classical as well as eastern languages) will ultimately ostracize him from his native English readership. Building on this critique, Taylor presents two epitaphs written in commemoration of Coryat following his supposed drowning. While both the "Epitaph in the Barmooda tongue" and the "Epitaph in the Utopian tongue" mock Coryat's esoteric linguistic abilities, the two verses also enable Taylor to further blur distinctions between the labels of scholar and sculler. More importantly, the epitaphs challenge boundaries between self and other, familiar and exotic, fictive and real, and

explorer and native, thereby underscoring Taylor's own position as at once authoritative literary figure and peripheral waterman traveler.

Both the Barmooda and the Utopian epitaphs are written in fictitious languages, the former to be "pronounced with the accent of the grunting of a hogge" and the latter invoking a strange blend of Latinate and eastern diction (Figure Five). Taylor also includes a translation into English by "Caleb Quishquash, an Utopian borne, and principall Secretary to the Adelontado of Barmoodoes." Following the epitaphs, Taylor offers his services as translator: "If there be any Gentleman, or others that are desirous to be practitioners of the Barmoode and Utopian tongues: the Professor (being the Author hereof) dwelleth at the Old Swanne, neere London Bridge, who will teach them (that are willing) to learn, with agility and facility."[22] While these epitaphs can be seen as another instance of "faking" that accompany the faking of Coryat's death,[23] I would argue that they play a more important role not only in the text, but also in Taylor's self-definition within the literary space.

Central to each of these artifacts (the epitaphs as well as the subsequent English translation and the note about the author's translation services) is a tendency to blur boundaries of place within the linguistic space. As self-professed translator, Taylor acknowledges his authoritative grasp of the Barmooda and Utopian tongues, thereby

EPITAPH in the *Barmooda* tongue, which muſt be pronounced *with the accent of the grunting* of a hogge.

HOugh gruntough wough Thomough
Coziatough, Odcough robinquogh
Ff 2 Wara-

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Waralwogh bogh Comitogh
ſogh wogh termonatogrogh,
Callimogh gogh whobogh Kage-
wogh bemagorgogh palemogh,
Lomerogh nogh Tottertogh ille-
morrogh eagh Allaquemquogh.
Teracominogh Jagogh Jamerogh
mogh Carnogh pelepſogh,
Antmogh trogh berabrogh waramogh
hogh Flendzogh calepſogh.

Confabuley Odcumbey Prezeugmoſſiow tymarwmney,
Omalim orausſhte paraleſcus tolliuon vmbrey.

The ſame in Engliſh, tranſlated by Caleb Quiſhquaſh, *an Utopian borne*, and principall Secretary to the great *Adelantado of Barmoodoes.*

HEre lies the wonder of the Engliſh Nation,
Inuolu'd in *Neptunes* briniſh vaſty maw:
For fruitleſſe trauell, and for ſtrange relation,
He paſt and repaſt all that e'r eye ſaw.
Odcomb produc'd him; many Nations fed him,
And worlds of Writers, through the world haue (ſpred him.

Epitaph in the *Vtopian* tongue.

Nortumblum callimũquaſh emyſtolitom quaſtee (burgſtee,
Scribuke wobtay ſolusbey per ambulauſhte;
Grekay ſons Turkay Paphay rams Ieruſalauſhte.
Neptus eſbt Ealors Imerremey dez Dolorauſhte,

FINIS.

Figure 5: John Taylor, "Epitaph in the Barmooda Tongue" and "Epitaph in the Utopian Tongue," (1630)

underscoring his close proximity to far away places while simultaneously deflating this authority because neither place is real. Nevertheless, by taking pains to detail his Southwark address ("at the Old Swanne, neere London Bridge"), Taylor situates himself within the space of the familiar by locating his place on the London map. It is within this space of the familiar that Taylor confidently voices his own authority as translator (albeit a fake one), an occupation that negotiates the boundaries between the familiar and the unknown or unknowable. Thus, in addition to mocking Coryat's linguistic pretensions, Taylor's epitaphs work to undermine stable boundaries between familiar and strange. As we will see, this gesture proves central to Taylor's willful misreading of England and its boundaries, a misreading that subsequently defines his own place as a literary and cultural entity.[24]

Taylor's position as mediator between the realms of the familiar and the exotic (as evidenced by his position as a self-professed translator of the Utopian and Barmooda tongues) extends beyond the realm of linguistic boundaries to geographic place as well. To identify how Taylor further problematizes these kinds of boundaries, it is instructive to examine several instances from Taylor's accounts of his journeys around England and its environs, both on waterways and on land. *The Pennyles Pilgrimage* (1618) relates the journey that the author made on foot from his home in Southwarke to Edinburgh. What makes the trip notable is the fact that Taylor carried no money with him, and neither begged nor asked favors, instead relying on the goodwill of those he encountered along the way to lodge and feed him. While neither the wager to travel penniless nor the idea of walking long distances on foot is in itself wondrous, what is crucial here is the way that

Taylor imposes a sense of wonder upon his literary project of recounting the journey. Describing an encounter with English villagers along the way, Taylor explains how the locals received this unusual perambulatory traveler: "The Chamberlaines with admiration all/Were fild with wonder more than wonderfull,/As if some monster sent from the Mogull,/Some elephant from Africke, I had beene,/Or some strange beast from th'Amazonian Queene."[25] By casting himself in the language of the exotic and the marvelous, Taylor imposes upon himself an 'othered' identity that complicates his position as a traveler upon his own familiar soil. While this exaggerated language may seem only to reinforce the ephemeral status of Taylor's account, the emphasis on being recognized as a specifically non-English and non-human entity serves an additional literary purpose. By writing himself into print as both marvelous other and indigenous Englishman treading on familiar soil, Taylor disrupts stable binaries of difference that would otherwise confirm his inferior and unremarkable place as a domestic traveler and common "sculler."

Even when he arrives in Scotland, itself in many ways distinct from the domestic space of England during this period, Taylor takes pains to complicate distinctions between foreign and domestic. Upon crossing the border, Taylor emphasizes the similarity between his sought-after destination and his native soil: "I being come to this long-look'd for land,/Did marke, remark, note, renote, viewed and scand:/And I saw nothing that could change my will,/But that I thought my self in England still."[26] On one level, Taylor's words about Scotland's resemblance to England remind readers of James I's legitimacy upon the English throne. In fact, Taylor's journey to Scotland was in many

ways inspired by James' symbolic expedition to Scotland the previous year. This element is confirmed shortly after, as Taylor remarks: "the kingdoms are so neerely joined and fix't,/There scarcely went a pair of sheares betwixt."

Yet, in keeping with his tendency to ambiguate boundaries of place in his writing, Taylor once again imposes the exotic upon himself by emphasizing his position as a stranger:

> viewing and circumviewing every mans face I met, as if I meant to draw his picture . . . and presently fixing mine eyes upon a gentleman-like object, I looked on him, as if I would survey something through him, and make him my perspective: and *he much musing at my gazing*, and I much gazing at his musing, at last crost the way and made toward me.[27] (my italics)

Prioritizing the topographic language of surveying, circumviewing, and defining perspective, Taylor objectifies the subject of his gaze as distinctly othered. While Taylor's gaze imposes difference upon its object, Taylor becomes singled out as other in the process of gazing. As a result, Taylor destabilizes Scotland's status as familiar (where boundaries between England and Scotland seem almost nonexistent), thus imposing a sense of strangeness that defines the country as other by virtue of Taylor's own position as visitor. Once again, categories of difference are obscured in order for the writer to delineate and define idiosyncratic notions of literary and cultural place that will authorize his otherwise vulnerable identity.

To recognize this process, it is helpful to consider several more examples. Taylor provides an account of his 1622 voyage in a small wherry from London to York in "A Very Merry Wherry-Ferry Voyage." While the prospect of sailing along the English coast in a small boat is itself of limited value as a wondrous endeavor, Taylor once again capitalizes upon the textual space of his account in order to emphasize the journey and its printed report as marvelous. Central to this process is the description of Taylor's reception by the village of Cromer, which apparently mistook Taylor and his crew for foreign pirates as their small wherry struggled to come ashore during a storm:

> Some Women, and some Children there
> That saw us land, were all possesst with fear:
> And much amaz'd, ran crying up and downe,
> The Enemies were come to take the Towne.
> Some said that we were Pirats, some said Theeves,
> And what the women sayes, the men believes.[28]

The unusual prospect of sailing a small wherry in a storm marks Taylor as an other to be "amaz'd" at, but it is the account itself that solidifies this identity: "People came in clusters . . . And had mine Host tooke pence apiece of those/Who came to gaze on me, I doe suppose,/No Jack an Apes, Baboone, or Crocodile,/E'r got more mony in so small a while."[29] As in *The Pennylese Pilgrimage*, the gaze of the on-lookers transforms Taylor into a distinct and in this case monstrous 'other,' thereby compromising his identity as a fellow Englishman.

Yet Taylor takes this blurring of boundaries a step further in this case. As a result of misreading Taylor and his crew (an error that subsequently incites the town to action against the strange visitors), the villagers become for their barbarity "Turks and Mores," "Mungrells," and "Men of Gotham."[30] And to make the close proximity between the riotous villagers and foreign foes even more pronounced, Taylor explains that "The dreadfull names of Talbot, or of Drake,/Ne'r made the foes of England more to quake/Then I made Cromer; for feare and dolor,/Each man might smel out by his neighbors collor."[31] At once aligned with prominent world explorers and a foreign and potentially threatening pirate, Taylor's identity underscores the instability of authoritative signifiers by which to demarcate boundaries between self and other, as well as between familiar and exotic.

However, it is his subsequent gesture of proving his identity to the villagers that is most compelling in terms of destabilizing boundaries. After attempting to ward off the enraged townspeople for some time, Taylor manages to present some of them with copies of his writing in an effort to confirm his identity. "I freely op'd my Trunke, and bade them view,/I shew'd them Bookes of Chronicles and Kings,/Some prose, some verse, and idle Sonnettings/I shew'd them all my letters to the full . . ." In keeping with their misreading of Taylor, the villagers initially insist that the texts must be counterfeit, but eventually recognize Taylor after identifying some of his familiar writings: "They quickly understood me what I was:/And though they knew me not in prose and looks,/They had read of me in my verse and books."[32]

Both the initial misreading and the eventual recognition are particularly compelling here, since the two readings of Taylor taken together underscore the mutability of his identity within the textual as well as the geographic space. Being recognized for his books and verse underscores Taylor's familiarity within the textual and thus within the chorographic space. To be known for his writing validates Taylor's own identity as a familiar figure among the people of Cromer. At the same time, however, Taylor's textual pursuits call into question the stability of this identity. Once again imagining himself as a monstrous beast brought forth from unfamiliar lands to entertain and amaze the local population, Taylor likens himself to a "Jack an Apes, Baboone, or Crocodile" and thus reiterates his strategy of imposing wonder upon both his text and his journey. And much like the exotic animals that draw crowds of people eager to pay for the unusual sight, Taylor secures the attention of readers and viewers alike by virtue of his strange journey and its published account. At once a household literary name and an exotic figure defined by his unprecedented journeys, Taylor impresses upon his readers and patrons an identity simultaneously authorized and idiosyncratic.

In the sailing voyage to Salisbury entitled *A New Discovery by Sea, with a wherry from London to Salisbury* (1623), Taylor describes another noteworthy encounter that problematizes distinctions of geographic place. Taylor's account of the features and towns along the coast of southern England is interrupted by an encounter with a strange, "meareman" creature wading in the sea. After describing the crew's fear at this wondrous sight, Taylor explains how he took courage and spoke to the creature in language that

sounds very much like Stephano and Trinculo's encounter with Caliban in II.ii of *The Tempest*:

> *Man, monster, fiend or fish, what-e'r thou be,*
>
> *That travelest here in Neptunes Monarchy,*
>
> *I charge thee by his dreadful three-tin'd Mace,*
>
> *Thou hurt not me or mine, in any case,*
>
> *And if thou bee'st produced of Mortall kinde,*
>
> *Shewe us some course, how we the way may finde*
>
> *To deeper water, from these sands so shallow,*
>
> *In which thou seest our Ship thus wash and wallow.*

As in the case of Trinculo and Stephano, Taylor's amazement is both tempered and increased by the realization that this creature possesses language.

> With that (he shrugging up his shoulders strong)
>
> Spake (like a Christian) in the Kentish tongue,
>
> Quoth he, Kinde Sir, I am a Fisherman,
>
> Who many yeers my living thus have wan
>
> By wading in these sandy troublous waters
>
> For shrimps, Wilks, Cockles, and such usefull matters,
>
> And I will lead you, (with a course I keepe)
>
> From out these dangerous shallowes to the deepe.[33]

This misreading of the Kentish fisherman for a merman once again enables Taylor to exploit the wondrous in his narrative, making his journey to Salisbury more engaging to

read. As we have seen, however, imposing the marvelous upon the familiar (geographically and textually) has the effect of disrupting boundaries of space, thus highlighting the constructed and superficial nature of these distinctions of difference.

In the last of Taylor's travel accounts, written just months before his death in December of 1653, the Water-Poet reflects on the motivation of travelers and of his own influence as a traveler upon domestic soil:

> Some do disdain, and hold it in high scorn
> To know thatcht cottages where they were born
> Some crosse the sea to see strange lands unknown
> And heer, like strangers, do not know their own. . .
> * *
> *Nosce teipsum*, know thy selfe, and then
> Each one will know himselfe the worst of men.
> Many of foreign travels boast and vaunt,
> When they, of England, are most ignorant.
> But yearly I survey my country native,
> And, 'mongst 6. cases, live upon the dative.[34]

Distinguishing himself from those who travel to foreign lands, Taylor emphasizes the close proximity between knowing one's native soil and knowing one's self. Seen in this light, Taylor's travels transcend banality, since the familiar takes on a quality of enlightenment rather than mere repetition. In addition, "liv[ing] upon the dative"

suggests how the travels in turn work to shape Taylor, much as the dative case acts upon and thus defines its subject.

At the same time, those who seek to know the strangeness of foreign places become "strangers" to their own land. While such designations seem to reinforce boundaries between self and other, Taylor's own literary and cultural position requires that such boundaries remain less clear-cut. As we have seen in *A New Discovery by Sea*, *A Very Merry Wherry-Ferry Voyage*, and *The Pennylese Pilgrimage*, descriptions that blur distinctions between familiar and exotic enable Taylor to willfully misread and ultimately challenge the stability of authoritative boundaries, including polarities of self and other, foreign and native, and exotic and familiar. While it is inaccurate to suggest that Taylor's willful misreading of England stands as a conscious attempt to subvert or undermine the project of national expansion and identity, this misreading does serve the purpose of placing Taylor on the literary and cultural map. Complicating distinctions between self and other (Taylor is at once ordinary indigenous country-man and foreign monster) within the textual realm enables Taylor to heighten the significance of his literary project by emphasizing the simultaneously familiar and idiosyncratic nature of his identity. As such, Taylor destabilizes categories of difference that would otherwise render his writing and his literary identity vulnerable as socially and intellectually inferior.

* *

Like John Taylor, Margaret Cavendish embraced hybridized and idiosyncratic literary representation to etch out a unique literary and geographic space. And like

Taylor, Cavendish's embracing of unorthodox literary forms complicated her position as a faithful supporter of the Royalist cause. Although Cavendish's social rank was considerably higher than Taylor (as the Duchess of Newcastle), her displacement during the Civil War and her position as a female writer in a male dominated literary realm exposed her to analogous kinds of literary and cultural vulnerabilities that Taylor confronted in his writing. For both writers, then, constructing highly idiosyncratic and unprecedented literary spaces provided an opportunity to transcend the potential limitations of their social contexts.

Appended to her scientific treatise *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*, Cavendish's highly idiosyncratic *Description of the Blazing World* (1666) underscores notions about the authority of geographic place and the potential instability of that authority that we have been tracing throughout this chapter. From the start of *The Blazing World*, Cavendish employs the language of geographic place to distinguish the intellectual priorities of her discourse. Arguing that there cannot be an absolute distinction between reason and the workings of the imagination (i.e. fancy), Cavendish explains that the "Rational search and enquiry into the causes of Natural Effects"

> Requires sometimes the help of *Fancy*, to recreate the Mind, and withdraw it from its more serious Contemplations.
>
> And this is the reason, why I added this Piece of *Fancy* to my *Philosophical Observations*, and joined them as two Worlds at the ends of their Poles . . . But lest my Fancy should stray too much, I chose such a Fiction as would be agreeable to the subject I treated of in the former

parts . . . [35]

The act of joining here not only underscores the potentially indistinct boundary between fancy and reason, but also the multiplicity of narrative strategies that Cavendish joins together in the narrative, including romance, scientific discourse, discovery narrative, philosophical dialogue, and utopian fiction. In many ways, this unprecedented joining of narrative forms (alongside the joining of fancy and reason) marks Cavendish's distance from exemplary predecessors that have been neglected or in some cases willfully misread in the course of Cavendish's narrative project.

As we will see, however, this hybridization of various forms and the attendant misreadings that accompany this process distinguish Cavendish's authorial identity as inimitable and distinct and also enables her to confirm absolute ways of knowing which the narrative and its discursive ambiguities would seem to resist. Yet to disrupt the categories of fancy and reason, as Cavendish's text does in a number of compelling ways, is to underscore the inevitable unfixity of subjectivity both within the narrative and in terms of Cavendish's own socio-cultural and literary positions. By capitalizing upon the mutability of narrative and subjective definition throughout *The Blazing World*, Cavendish negotiates an authorized space in which to announce her allegiance to orthodox cultural values while simultaneously reminding readers of how vulnerable these values can be.

Throughout *The Blazing World*, Cavendish repeatedly acknowledges her narrative's distance from exemplary models of literary and cultural representation. She

famously introduces her work by asserting her own position as absolute monarch over her text by stating:

> Though I cannot be Henry the Fifth or Charles the Second, yet I endeavor to be *Margaret the First*; and although I have neither power, time, nor occasion to conquer the world as *Alexander* and *Caesar* did; yet rather than not to be mistress of one; since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made a world of my own: for which nobody, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every one's power to do the like.[36]

What is interesting here is not so much that Cavendish rejects exemplary models, but instead that she appropriates the authority of monarchs and conquerors in order to designate her position within her own textual creation. Nor does Cavendish suggest that her authority as "Margaret the First" should be regarded as a usurpation of the kind of official power exerted by figures such as Alexander and Charles the Second. Instead, she calls attention to the apparently commonplace gesture of defining one's self as an absolute and original sovereign over one's literary creation, since everyone has the power to do so.

Nevertheless, the declaration of monarchic authority over the world of one's textual landscape does assert a sense of autonomy that reinforces rather than challenges Cavendish's distance from the exemplary models that she cites. Desiring to write her own Cabbala, for example, the Empress of the Blazing World considers the various authorities who might provide the foundation for her project: "Then I will have, answered she, the soul of some ancient famous writer, either of Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, or

the like." The fact that she finally settles on the "soul" of the Duchess of Newcastle (Cavendish herself) to help her write her Cabbala attests to the ultimate inadequacy of conventional exemplary models within the space of the Blazing World. This notion becomes even more convincing further along in the text, when the figure of the Duchess attempts to create *her own* imaginary world after being inspired by witnessing the Blazing World over which the Empress rules. As the Duchess begins to frame her world within the principles of numerous authorities including both ancients such as Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and moderns such as Descartes and Hobbes, we witness the inadequacy of exemplary models as a foundation for the Duchess's project. In each case, it is not so much the idea of exemplarity that is challenged, but instead the perceived failure of each set of principles as espoused by these authorities as a basis for the Duchess's world. To take one brief example, the Duchess rejects Aristotle as a foundation for her world after realizing that his notion that "out of nothing, nothing could be made" would in itself nullify her project of creating an imaginary world.

By categorically scrutinizing and then rejecting each authority as an incompatible model for her world, the Duchess (and by extension Cavendish herself) challenges the integrity of patriarchal rational discourse. But rather than reject this legacy altogether, Cavendish offers an alternative in her insistence upon the fusing of reason and fancy as central to objective determinism. Instead of rejecting exemplary authority outright, Cavendish highlights the insufficient nature of exemplary traditions in the framing of her own autonomous discourses. In fact, the Duchess's imaginary world proves to be so idiosyncratic that even language is unable to represent it: "which world after it was made,

appeared so curious and full of variety, so well ordered and wisely governed, that it cannot possibly be expressed by words, nor the delight and pleasure which the Duchess took in making this world of her own." Existing outside of the representational constrictions of language, the Duchess's world is likewise outside the parameters of conventional exemplary traditions, including the potential for her own creation to serve as an exemplary model for literary successors.

Cavendish reiterates this anxiety regarding the inimitable nature of her discourse at the end of the narrative. Describing those who might follow her lead in creating literary worlds of their own, Cavendish warns: "But yet let them have care not to prove unjust usurpers, and to rob me of mine; for concerning the philosophical world, I am Empress of it myself . . ." In many ways, this assertion of autonomous authority comes as a response to de-centered subjectivities both within the text and within Cavendish's biographical experience. While we will trace these in the following pages, I want to suggest that this concern with the contested space of exemplary traditions enables Cavendish to complicate (and indeed fracture) delineations of authority that would potentially contain and circumscribe her. Cavendish's acknowledgement of exemplary traditions as potentially unreliable (in terms of narrative forms as well as ideologies within the narrative) at once reinforces her authority within her text and underscores the ineffective nature of a distinct patriarchal past in the shaping of present-day discourses. As Cavendish reminds readers throughout *The Blazing World* (and through the gesture of joining this work to her *Observations*), the key shortcoming of Western patriarchal discourse stems from its misguided attempts to distinguish reason and fancy. For

Cavendish, these concepts cannot be thoroughly separated within the space of scientific discourse. To do so, Cavendish's text ultimately argues, would be to misread the authority of natural philosophy as well as the priority of geographic and textual place that Cavendish's work defines for her.

* *

In the dedicatory address that opens the work, William Cavendish highlights the role that fancy plays in the creation of his wife's *Blazing World.* Distinguishing the processes of discovering new worlds, William Cavendish contrasts the notion of finding a world (such as Columbus did when he sailed to America) with the notion of making a world, as his wife does in her text:

> Columbus then for Navigation fam'd,
> Found a new World, America 'tis nam'd:
> Now this new World was found, it was not made,
> Only discovered, lying in Time's shade.
> Then what are You, having no Chaos found
> To make a World, or any such least ground?
> But your creating Fancy, thought it fit
> To make your World of Nothing, but pure Wit.[37]

While Cavendish praises his wife by going on to describe her work as "enlighten[ing] all with a Celestial Fire," the distinction between creating and discovering a world that William draws may not necessarily do justice to Margaret Cavendish's project. As we will see, by collapsing the distinction between creating and discovering in the process of

witnessing new worlds, Margaret Cavendish and her authorial figures within the text (the Empress, the Duchess) locate authoritative literary and cultural positions precisely by undermining rather than confirming the boundary between "making" and "finding" geographic place.

Indeed, the blurring of created and discovered worlds and of reason and fancy occupies Cavendish's narrative on a number of levels. From the start, Cavendish tells her reader that her work will be divided into three parts, "the first part whereof is *romancical*, the second philosophical, and the third is merely *fancy*." Despite this apparent distinction between the parts, Cavendish continues her address to the reader by suggesting an autobiographical significance as well. Describing the wealth of the Blazing World, Cavendish explains: "As for the rocks of diamonds, I wish with all my soul they might be shared amongst my noble female friends, and upon that condition, I would willingly quit my part; and of the gold I should only desire so much as might suffice to repair my noble lord and husband's losses . . ." The references to "my noble female friends" and "my noble lord and husband's losses" of course refer to the displacement (financial and otherwise) of the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle following the Civil War. Seen in this light, the *Blazing World* provides a space in which to address anxieties about Cavendish's own place as well.

Yet in keeping with the kinds of blurring that we have been tracing so far, the ensuing narrative constantly thwarts any effort to distinguish the hybridized discourses and modes of representation inherent within it. The initial description of the "young Lady" pursued by a merchant traveling in her country is indeed the stuff of romance, but

the underlining issues of vulnerability as well as the subsequent empowering of the lady by crowning her Empress of the Blazing World provide layers of interpretive significance (autobiographical, utopian, Platonic) that resist any singular categorization. And although the discovery of the Blazing World is couched in the language of exploration narrative as the ship is driven "even to another Pole of another world" and "forced into another world," it becomes evident that the act of discovering is very much indistinguishable from the act of creating this world within the space of the literary imagination.

This blurring can be seen as an attempt to inscribe the female voice within a space of authority, to transcend limitations of gender (particularly within the realm of science) by reassessing the parameters of objective discourse. Cavendish's reception within the male-dominated space of experimental science attests to this motivation, since the authority of early modern women as acting subjects (as opposed to passive objects) was almost always called into question by the dominant voices of patriarchal society. Take, for example, Samuel Pepys's reaction to Cavendish's 1667 visit to The Royal Society. Although the Duchess had come to the Society as an observer of empirical sciences not unlike her male counter-parts, Pepys's diary entry on the occasion clearly relegates her to the position of object, of that which is on display:

> The Duchess hath been a good comely woman; but her dress so antick, and her deportment so unordinary, that I do not like her at all, nor did I hear her say anything that was worth hearing, but that she was full of admiration, all admiration.[38]

Where "admiration" for Cavendish serves as a reminder of her position as an active observer, for Pepys this becomes an indication of her shortcomings as an object on display. By not saying "anything worth hearing," Cavendish fails in Pepys's eyes to live up to her potential as either acting subject or as object on display. It is in light of these kinds of considerations regarding her position as a female subject that Cavendish chooses to etch out an authoritative identity within the formally variable space of her narrative.

In contrast to the encounter between Pepys and Cavendish at the Royal Society, the encounter between the Empress of the Blazing World and the representatives of her various societies reinforces the absolute authority of the female figure as knowing subject. Throughout the discussions, this authority is characterized by two key elements: 1) the power to ask questions and scrutinize which makes clear the distinction between Empress as acting subject and her respondents as objects of her inquiry and 2) the repeated reminder that fancy and reason cannot be separated within the realm of scientific inquiry. Questioning becomes a powerful tool for the Empress, in terms of both announcing her authority within the realm of her societies and enabling her to shape the societies themselves by way of scrutiny. In the second case, the category of wonder becomes a defining feature of scientific discourse; the Empress and by extension Cavendish critique patriarchal scientific endeavors by emphasizing how these pursuits work to dissociate the wondrous from the rational by way of experimentation.

Cavendish's misreading of the conventional boundaries of scientific discourse thus becomes an enabling gesture, since the Empress's critical responses to her various societies reveal just how limiting these boundaries can be. Take, for example, the episode

in which the Empress converses with the Bear-Men, who represent her experimental philosophers. Observing a flea, a louse, and a drone-fly under a microscope leads the Empress to describe these as "monstrous," thus emphasizing science's ability to transform the familiar into the wondrous. But any potential for wonderment is undercut as the Bear-Men explain that the "multitude of small pearls or hemispheres" on the head of the enlarged drone-fly are simply the insect's eyes. In response, the Empress questions the authority of the microscopes as "true informers," thereby refuting the assumption that scientific observation nullifies rather than provokes wonder. Suggesting that the eyes may indeed be "small pearls" instead of eyes, the Empress insists upon the authority of the imagination as central (rather than opposed) to scientific discovery.

The subsequent description of the Bear-Men and their microscopes illustrates this critique by underscoring the inability of science to witness the wondrous:

> Not withstanding their great skill, industry, and ingenuity in experimental philosophy, they could yet by no means contrive such glasses, by the help of which they could spy out a vacuum, with all its dimensions, nor immaterial substances, non-beings, and mixed-beings, or such as are between something and nothing . . .[39]

While the Bear-Men fall short, Cavendish's text does meld the wondrous and the rational by extending the notion of witnessing to include both the eye (including the "glass" of the microscope) and the poetic imagination, enabling the author to situate herself within a unique and unrivaled literary space. Similarly, the Empress and to some extent the figure of the Duchess within the text also circumscribe their identities within a space that

integrates the wondrous and the rational and thus affords them authoritative notions of place within Cavendish's narrative.

* *

Building on the claim that unfixed demarcations of geographic space ultimately strengthen authoritative notions of place, it is instructive to examine the two episodes in which the Empress and the Duchess return to their respective native countries. In each case, a return to the native space is marked by an imposing of the wondrous upon the familiar, thereby undermining any clear distinction between the two categories. At the same time, this gesture of returning to native soil imbues the narrative with a sense of legitimacy concerning real as opposed to imagined geographic place.[40] In the first instance, the Empress accompanies the Duchess's soul to her native world.

> Thus those two female souls traveled together as lightly as two thoughts into the Duchess her native world; and which is remarkable, in a moment viewed all the parts of it, and of all the creatures therein, especially did the Empress's soul take much notice of the several actions of human creatures in all the several nations and parts of the world, and wondered that for all there were so many several nations, governments, laws, religions, opinions, etc. they should all yet so generally agree in being ambitious, proud, self-conceited, vain, prodigal, deceitful, envious, malicious, unjust, revengeful, irreligious, factious, etc.[41]

As she surveys the earth, the Empress responds with a sense of wonderment not unwarranted from one visiting an unfamiliar place. Yet this wonder is somewhat

tempered by the wonder imposed by the image of two souls circumnavigating the entire earth "in a moment." Thus, for readers of Cavendish's text, the categories of wondrous and familiar blur in this unusual encounter between the souls of the two women and the geographic space of the earth.

As they proceed to examine the various nations of the world, the distinction between wondrous and familiar becomes even more problematic:

> [The Empress] also did admire, that not any particular state, kingdom, or commonwealth, was contented with their own shares, but endeavored to encroach upon their neighbors, and that their greatest glory was in plunder and slaughter, and yet their victories less than their expenses, and their losses more than their gains, but their being overcome in a manner their utter ruin. But that she wondered most at, was, that they should prize or value dirt more than men's lives . . .[42]

This critique of territorial expansion is compelling for several reasons. First, in keeping with the priorities of narrative representation that we have been tracing, Cavendish situates a commentary concerning very real concerns about the detrimental consequences of imperialism within the apparently fictitious space of this encounter narrative. Furthermore, the Duchess's response that this critique of imperial expansion seems problematic coming from one who similarly rules with absolute authority over her world highlights the idea of moderate authority. In turn, this emphasis helps the Duchess distinguish the temperate rule of the English monarchy from the more extreme authority of the Grand Signior and the Islamic world initially praised by the Empress. Thus, the

Empress's wonderment becomes a catalyst for embracing familiar (and very real) priorities about political authority that resonate with Cavendish's own nostalgia concerning an idealized Royalist past.

In the second part of *The Blazing World*, the Empress returns to her native land in order to defend the monarchic authority that is under attack. If, as Rosemary Kegl and others have suggested, the Empress's native country of "ESFI" can be seen as a representation of an idealized Britain (where the letters form an acronym standing for England, Scotland, France, and Ireland), then the intersecting of wondrous and familiar becomes even more striking in the Empress's defense of ESFI's threatened monarch.[43] In one sense, this is the closest we come to a representation of Cavendish's own anxieties concerning monarchic vulnerability informed by her own experiences during the Civil War and in light of her unwavering Royalist disposition. But the episode also underscores how the blurring of real and imagined (as well as wondrous and familiar) disrupts as well as reiterates stable notions of place. In this case, the Empress's return to her native country marks her simultaneously as an outsider (as the wondrous absolute ruler of the Blazing World) and as a native inhabitant (a self-professed former subject of ESFI's own monarchic authority).

The Empress provokes wonder among the natives of ESFI as she prepares to address them:

> [T]he Empress appeared with garments made of the star-stone, and was born or supported above the water, upon the fish-men's heads and backs, so that she seemed to walk upon the face of the water, and the bird- and

fish-men carried the fire-stone, lighted both in the air, and above the waters.[44]

This spectacle of the marvelous, by which the Empress appears as a kind of magical goddess to the people of her country, is reiterated in the actions of the Empress, thereby resulting in the successful defense of the ESFI monarchy. Despite this wondrous presence, however, the Empress constantly reminds her native country-people of her unfixed status as both absolute ruler of the Blazing World and a subject of ESFI. As she addresses her "country-men," the Empress implores her audience to recognize "my power, love and loyalty to my native country; for although I am now a great and absolute princess and empress of a whole world, yet I acknowledge that once I was a subject of this kingdom."Despite the Empress's attempt to circumscribe herself within the space of the familiar as a former native, however, the people of ESFI identify her only as a marvelous other: "some said she was an angel; others, she was a sorceress; some believed her a goddess; others said the devil deluded them in the shape of a fine lady." In a sense, this unwillingness to acknowledge the Empress as a fellow country-person attests to the ambiguous status of the narrative itself, wavering as it does between the realms of fiction and reality. Just as the logistics of traveling from the Blazing World back to ESFI prove dauntingly difficult, so too does the move between the fictitious and the real. Rather than clarify the distinction and thus facilitate movement between these spaces, Cavendish's narrative complicates these divisions, and in the process establishes a unique and unprecedented space for her authorial self, as well as for the figures represented within the account.

As these examples regarding distinctions between native and unfamiliar geographic place have demonstrated, Cavendish's insistence that her text involves a blurring of the discovered and the created provides her with an authorized space in which to announce her allegiance to orthodox cultural values. In this light, the capacity to become the absolute ruler of her own text by way of the imagination stands as a response to the displacement of Cavendish and her husband following the Civil War and the execution of Charles the First. By recuperating aristocratic and Royalist values through the celebration of both the Empress and the Duchess herself as absolute rulers of their own worlds, Cavendish takes the initial step toward "repair[ing] my noble lord and husband's losses." The appearance of the Duchess's spirit in the narrative as an advisor and Platonic friend to the Empress thus further problematizes distinctions between the real and the imagined.

Not only does Cavendish's appearance in the narrative remind the reader of the over-arching authority of the author, but also of the ways in which what is being written in fact deals with very real concerns. In response to the Empress's request for a scribe to write her Cabbala, the spirits being consulted recommend Cavendish herself:

> there's a lady, the Duchess of Newcastle, which although she is not one of the most learned, eloquent, witty, and ingenious, yet is she a plain and rational writer, for the principle of her writings, is sense and reason, and she will without question, be ready to do you all the service she can.[45]

Once again, an apparently fictional text offers the space to confirm truths, in this case, the capacity for "sense and reason" demonstrated by Cavendish's own writing. While it is

ironic that such utterances take place within the realm of the imagination, this factor at the same time emphasizes how fiction works to further truth. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Duchess's speech in defense of her husband toward the end of the first part of *The Blazing World*. Mirroring Cavendish's own speech to Parliament in 1651, where she unsuccessfully attempted to recuperate her family's Civil War losses, the Duchess's soul defends her husband by aligning herself with Prudence, Truth, and Honesty against Fortune, Folly, and Rashness.

However, where Cavendish was unsuccessful in her appeal to Parliament, the Duchess's speech within the narrative leads to the promise by Prudence and Honesty "that they would endeavor in time to make a peace and agreement between Fortune and the Duke." Moreover, the military battle that plays out in the second part of *The Blazing World*, involving the Empress's defense of her own native country of ESFI, can be seen as a fantasy of monarchic restoration that symbolically affirms Cavendish's historical bid for restitution. Given the historical relevance of these concerns, Cavendish's unique narrative strategies may be said to serve regenerative in addition to generative purposes.

Nevertheless, as critics such as Catherine Gallagher have asserted, Cavendish's attempt to embrace an absolute identity "leads less to an affirmation of female independence than to the division and cancellation of personal identity," initiating a "regressive self-pursuit" that ends in "a classic mise-en-abyme."[46] Rachel Trubowitz counters this potentially pessimistic reading by suggesting that Cavendish's text isolates a community of female agency (rather than any singular absolute authority) as central to subject-definition.[47] I would argue, however, that the text does not necessarily settle for

such conclusive effects. As I have demonstrated, Cavendish consistently negotiates between competing discourses of truth and fiction, the real and the imagined, and the created and the found, in order to frame her own subjectivities both within the text and within her cultural contexts.

The hybridization of discourses within *The Blazing World*, along with blurred boundaries of geographic as well as inter-subjective space, provide an opportunity for female agency that hinges on dislocating rather than confirming notions of authority. As such, the narrative and Cavendish herself refuse to offer any singular or unified concept of representation. While there is no doubt that restoration (including decidedly monarchic models of restoration) is a priority both within *The Blazing World* and in Cavendish's own life, it may be misleading to expect any such resolution from the text itself. To do so would be to embrace an exemplary tradition in many ways at odds with Cavendish's own priorities and values. The fact that Cavendish joins *The Blazing World* to her more straightforwardly scientific *Observations* underscores a consistent tendency in Cavendish's writing toward prioritizing hybridization and multiplicity over singular forms and discourses. Like John Taylor, this strategy of blurring boundaries (including distinctions of geographic place) provides a powerful opportunity to define autonomous notions of literary and cultural place. While these re-thinkings of place may register as misreadings of conventional boundaries, such misreading in turn offers a generative potential in terms of shaping discourses.

Chapter 5 A Crisis of Misreading: the English Civil War and Republican Responses

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the increasingly autonomous agency of the reader (including readers involved in the processes of textual production and dissemination in addition to reception of texts) came into conflict with the increasingly totalizing authority of the Stuart monarchic regime. As we will see in this chapter, republican writers and other critics of Stuart rule embraced the agency of generative misreading as a means of discerning true faith. For Milton and his compatriots, notions of proper reading certainly existed, but without the opportunity to misread or swerve from the proper path, right reading can only be seen as a false imposition of faith by a totalizing authority that is itself guilty of straying.

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In the politically evocative poetry and prose of John Milton, as well as in other Civil War and Restoration era republican texts, the tension between engaging with the past and accomplishing social transformation poses distinct challenges for readers both within and of the texts. According to Milton and his republican contemporaries, proper interpretation of the biblical and typological past proves crucial to defining one's true political and religious faith, but at the same time, misreading must be recognized as a viable option in the interpretive process. As both a didactic tool and as a reminder that individual action transcends the realm of mimetic authority, misreading proves generative as a test for readers.[1] To deny readers the opportunity to err is to impose a superficial and

specious brand of faith that ultimately undercuts rather than upholds the complex workings of divinely sanctioned will. Within the context of this interpretive debate, critics of the Stuart monarchy accused the Royalist regime of misreading the classical and typological past. In this light, social and political reformation in seventeenth century England is less about radical restructuring than about reclaiming a particular reading of history in the face of a degenerate body of readers. To explore how misreading plays a productive role in testing and ultimately shaping the religio-political faith of readers, I first look at Milton's prose tracts *Areopagitica* and *Eikonoklastes* and each text's concern with the notion of interpretive agency. I then focus on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*, and Andrew Marvell's commendatory poem on *Paradise Lost* in order to show how these representations of the Genesis story enable their authors to scrutinize notions of origin and transgression relevant both to England's contemporary political situation and to the idea of engaging with an exemplary past, whether biblical or historical.

Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) provides a useful starting point for this argument, since his critique of pre-publication censorship (itself often misread as a plea for universal freedom of speech and press) closely interrogates the limitations of interpretive authority.[2] As a critic of Royalism and the episcopacy, Milton objected to pre-publication licensing not because of any conviction that all texts should be free of authoritative control, but rather because he feared that such regulation would mirror the monopolizing practices of the continental Counter-Reformation. Like the abuses of private interest by the totalizing state, pre-publication regulation "confines what ought to be a public space

to a particular interest."[3] Within this context, Milton places the Catholic Church, and the inquisition in particular, at the heart of the historical precedent for restricted print:

> Which cours [i.e. censorship] Leo the 10, and his successors follow'd, until the Councell of Trent, and the Spanish Inquisition engendering together brought forth, or perfeted those Catalogues, and expurging Indexes that rake through the entralls of many an old good Author, with a violation wors then any could be offer'd in his tomb. Nor did they stay in matter Hereticall, but any subject that was not to their palat, they either condemn'd in prohibition, or had it strait into the new Purgatory of an Index.[4]

This passage establishes a parallel between the Royalists and the international Counter-Reformation within the realm of printing regulation. In light of this relationship, Milton's pamphlet speaks for the rights of a relatively select body of non-Catholic texts that challenge the apparent 'truth' comprising the domain of Royalist episcopacy:

> . . . if all cannot be of one mind, as who looks they should be? This doubtles is more wholesome, more prudent, and more Christian that many be tolerated, rather then all compell'd. I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpats all religions and civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat, provided first that all charitable and compassionat means be us'd to win and regain the weak and misled: that also which is impious or evil absolutely against faith or maners no law can possibly permit, that intends not to unlaw it self: but those neighboring

> differences, or rather indifferences, are what I speak of, whether in some point of doctrine or of discipline, which though they may be many, yet need not interrupt *the unity of Spirit*, if we could but find among us *the bond of peace*.[5]

Milton's own conception of truth stands in contradistinction to monarchic ideology, which Milton does not hesitate to align with papist idolatry, and the appeal to Parliament makes subtle as well as not so subtle reminders of this parallel.

Many critics, including Stanley Fish and Thomas Corns, have attempted to explain away Milton's paradoxical tolerance for print and intolerance for papist texts by suggesting that books themselves ultimately play little role in assuring one's ability to embrace godliness: "books are no more going to save you than they are going to corrupt you; by denying their potency in one direction, Milton necessarily denies their potency in the other . . ."[6] I would argue that both types of books matter to Milton. As I will demonstrate, this potential contradiction may be rectified by acknowledging the underlying thrust of Milton's argument, namely that "bad books" serve to test readers. Given that the act of rejecting these books confirms the reader's close proximity to true faith, Milton's condemnation of papist texts stands as an assertion of his own capacity to see the truth: "He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian."[7] The "true" Christian in this pamphlet thus operates as an essentialized indicator of faithfulness to religious and political obligations. Seen in this light, the potential to misread and misinterpret becomes a crucial factor in testing one's

capacity to be faithful, and as such, censoring institutions that seek to authorize and determine 'right' readings can only be denounced as an artificial imposition of faith—a public construct rather than the virtuous actions of the individual.

The constructive potential of misreading as an opportunity to test true faith becomes particularly evident in the distinction drawn between bad books and bad foods:

> For books are as meats and viands are: some of good, some of evil substance; and yet God in that unapocryphall vision, said, without exception, Rise *Peter*, kill and eat, leaving the choice to each man's discretion. Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomack differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a naughty mind are not unappliable to occasions of evill. Bad meats will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction; *but herein the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious Reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate*. . . that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest. I conceive therefore, that when God did enlarge the universall diet of mans body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dyeting and repasting of our minds; as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his owne leading capacity.[8] (my italics)

The distinction between food and texts revolves around the notion that even so-called "bad books" can be nourishing to careful readers, whereas bad food offers little in the

way of sustenance. Readers who fail to recognize this distinction prove unable to discern the benefits of "bad books." More importantly, though, the distinction between bad books and bad food provides Milton with the grounds to accuse those in support of pre-publication licensing of misreading, specifically by misinterpreting the past. It is by looking to the classical and biblical past—by demonstrating how bad books test faith—that Milton can accuse those who advocate pre-publication licensing of misreading.

Early in *Areopagitica*, Milton announces his effort to recuperate classical virtue from the hands of a monarchic authority that has misinterpreted such principles: "wee are already in good part arriv'd [at civil liberty], and yet from such a steepe disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a Roman recovery."[9] The priority of recovering the past from totalizing (mis)readers is made evident from the very title page of the pamphlet, which includes a quotation from Euripides's *The Suppliant Women* that both articulates the principles embraced throughout the pamphlet and attests to the value of classical precedent in embodying these principles:

> This is true Liberty when free born men
> Having to advise the public may speak free,
> Which he who can, and will, deserv's high praise,
> Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
> What can be juster in a State than this?[10]

Throughout the pamphlet, Milton embraces classical texts that work against both the totalizing potential of humanist exemplarity and the tyrannizing forces of figures such as

Nero and Caesar. In the process, he calls attention to the ways in which the current monarchy has deviated from the ideals of ancient society; in this sense, he is not rejecting exemplarity but instead attempting to recuperate it from the aristocratic regime in whose hands such ideals have been misread. In his attempt to direct Parliament toward classical republican models as a means to repudiate pre-publication licensing, Milton stresses "how much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece then the barbarick pride of a *Hunnish* and *Norwegian* stateliness."[11] Providing readers with the opportunity to exercise their own discretion will ultimately divide the faithful from their adversaries. Thus, Milton argues in *Areopagitica* that the potential for the reader to misread is a crucial factor in identifying the individual's proximity to faith. In the process, Milton stresses the distance of those who have misinterpreted classical and Christian exemplarity (i.e. Charles' monarchy) from 'truth.'

By welcoming the discord between Royalist and republican elements that unregulated print would further, Milton favors "healthfull commotions" over the "grosse conforming stupidity" that characterizes the monarchic order. It is this emphasis on conflict—between individual and state, between republican and Royalist, between sectarian and Presbyterian, and between the terms of subject and citizen—that enables Milton to resuscitate classical eloquence in the face of a stagnant aristocratic culture that has 'misread' these principles by way of a narrow and totalizing interpretation of humanist exemplarity.[12]

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If, as I have been suggesting, *Areopagitica* capitalizes upon the reader's judiciousness and discretion as a mark of faith, *Eikonoklastes* (written five years later, following the execution of King Charles in 1649) seeks to demonstrate just how far the king had deviated from true faith through flawed reading practices. Milton's chapter-by-chapter refutation of Charles's *Eikon Basilike* (1644) provides readers with a model for proper interpretation (i.e. Milton's reading of Charles's text). It also offers a warning regarding the consequences of misreading, arguing that both the monarchy as an institution and Charles in particular are frequently guilty of such practices.

As David Loewenstein has suggested, Milton's *Eikonoklastes* stands as "an attempt to free history from the King's image." The specific significance of 'image' here of course is twofold, comprising both the image of the king as depicted throughout the text of *Eikon Basilike*, and as literally depicted in the frontispiece of that work, in William Marshall's famous engraving of Charles as a Christ-like martyr (Figure Six). But if, as Loewenstein has demonstrated, Milton's iconoclastic gesture of abolishing the king's image involves a recasting of that image in a new light, then what are we to make of this apparent contradiction between Milton's rejection of the imaginative powers of self-fashioning on one hand and his simultaneous transformation of the self into an alternative icon of the king on the other? I want to suggest that the key distinction here involves questions of reading and interpretive practices. As such, Milton is highly critical of the King's image not so much in its assertion of creative authority, but rather in the attempt to validate this authority through a totalizing engagement with the past. Thus, to

Figure 6: William Marshall, Frontispiece of *Eikon Basilike* (1644)

free history from the king's image is not so much to condemn the process of image making as to criticize the King's specific image as itself a product of misreading.[13]

Throughout *Eikonoklastes*, Milton transforms the king's image from sympathetic martyr-victim to relentless and unmerciful tyrant. In the course of Milton's text, Charles is compared to Nero, Caligula, Agrippa, Caesar, Herod, Nimrod, Uzziah, Lucifer, Pharaoh, Balak, Ahab, and numerous other tyrants from the biblical and classical past. According to Milton and other anti-Royalist critics, such comparisons were warranted by Charles's political actions, particularly his gesture of abolishing Parliament and thus symbolically silencing the commonwealth. But the comparisons also reflect Charles's totalizing reading practices, which lead the king to view history as an immutable and unequivocal monolith. Throughout *Eikonoklastes*, Milton engages closely with examples from the biblical and classical past to underscore Charles's misprision and to model proper interpretive practices for his own readers, a readership that includes the "image-doting rabble" so vulnerable to Charles's efforts to portray himself in a sympathetic light. At numerous points in the work, Milton is careful to distinguish what constitutes proper reading (as well as proper appropriation of texts) by detailing Charles's own distance from such practices.

In *Milton and the Drama of History*, Loewenstein argues that *Eikonoklastes* reveals the king's attempt to define himself in *Eikon Basilike* as a masque-like theatrical spectacle that fashions Charles as a "contemporary saint." Where Loewenstein emphasizes the theatrical language of Milton's critique as a way to call attention to the complex nature of Milton's iconoclasm, I want to focus on the masque as a specific

indicator of what Milton considers Charles's misguided reading practices. In many ways, embracing the masque form as an expression of royal power is consistent with Charles's assertion in *Eikon Basilike* that it is "far better to hold to primitive and uniform antiquity than to comply with divided novelty."[14] Indeed, the driving mechanism behind the Jacobean and Caroline masque involved the recuperation of potentially subversive forces within the realm of a unified and immutable regal authority. That the King and members of his court would witness as well as perform in the theatrical spectacle reiterates this restorative priority. Seen in this light, the king becomes a totalizing exemplary image both within the present and within an atemporal space that attests to the monarch's enduring power and legacy.

While Charles does not invoke the masque form directly in *Eikon Basilike*, Milton does so in his response to that work; his emphasis on the theatricality of Charles's plea suggests the fabricated and vacuous nature of the king's self-fashioning in *Eikon Basilike*. There are numerous references to Charles as an actor throughout Milton's text, and readers are frequently reminded of Charles's inability to fulfill his role even in "play[ing] the king." A more direct reference to masques comes in this response to Charles's insistence that "perturbation and novelty" often overshadow the positive elements of reformation: "On the Scene he thrusts out first an Antimasque of two bugbeares, *Noveltie* and *Perturbation*; that the ill looks and noise of those two, may as long as possible, drive off all endeavors of a Reformation."[15] Treating Charles's concerns as "bugbeares" in this theatrical performance has the effect of deflecting the tragic implications of Charles's pleas within the realm of the satirical masque.

More importantly, the insistence on the distinct theatricality of the masque calls attention to Charles's own narrow assumptions about political and interpretive power. As the subversive forces of the antimasque are silenced and nullified by the recuperative authority of the masque, so too do the range of interpretive possibilities surrounding the masque give way to a singular and unified response within the realm of royal spectacle. Milton's task then is to unveil the equivocal nature of this representational strategy, to demonstrate how "the royal icon and text, like the court masque . . . are equivocal fictions that may conceal, behind their spectacle, an unstable political [and I would add, historical] reality."[16] In other words, by describing Charles's image-making as a masque-like spectacle, Milton at once calls attention to the vacuous nature of Charles's identity as a duplicitous actor playing roles, and argues that Charles's narrow interpretive scope is indeed not unlike the restricted and totalizing mechanism of the court masque. Thus, both the terms 'masque' and 'mask' become central to Milton's critique, since Charles's misguided theatricality imposes a certain degree of blindness regarding the king's political and religious choices. Thus, to examine Milton's specific criticism of Charles as a reader of history is to identify further Charles's totalizing interpretive outlook.

Tyranny is at the heart of Milton's critique, whether reflecting upon Charles's tyrannical political actions or upon his propensity to read the past through a totalizing lens that tends to misconstrue interpretive significance. While Milton argues early on in the preface to *Eikonoklastes* that his project involves "answer[ing] only and refut[ing] the missayings of [the King's] book" rather than "relat[ing] the misdoings of his whole life,"

it becomes apparent that Milton holds the relationship between saying and doing in very high regard. Throughout *Eikonoklastes*, Milton demonstrates how the examples from the biblical and classical past that Charles selects to defend himself are at odds with the king's own actions, thereby underscoring Charles's misinterpretation and his tendency toward error. In one instance, Milton criticizes Charles for wrongly appropriating David's Psalms within *Eikon Basilike*:

> He borrows *Davids* Psalmes, as he charges the *Assembly of Divines* in his twentieth Discourse, *To have set forth Old Catechisms and confessions of faith new drest*. Had he borrow'd *David's* heart, it had bin much the holier theft. For such kind of borrowing as this, if it be not better'd by the borrower, among good Authors is accounted *Plagiarie*.[17] (italics in original)

By failing to follow words with action, Charles ultimately misreads David's prayer. Charles becomes a plagiarist and thief by misappropriating and misapplying the past. As the following examples suggest, this is a frequent criticism in Milton's response.

Charles's use of biblical precedent to describe the Independents and Presbyterians in Parliament as analogous to the twins Jacob and Esau struggling in Rebecca's womb provides another opportunity for the accusation that Charles misinterprets the past:

> He meanes no good to either Independents or Presbyterian, and yet his parable, like that of *Balaam*, is overrul'd to portend them good, farr beside his intention. *Those twins* that strove *enclos'd in the womb of Rebeccah*, were the seed of *Abraham*; the younger undoubtedly gain'd the heav'nly

> birthright; the elder though supplanted in his Simile, shall yet no question find a better portion then Esau found, and farr above his uncircumcis'd Prelats.[18] (italics in original)

By drawing a parallel between the present discord in Parliament and the Genesis story of Jacob and Esau, Charles unwittingly prophecies the victory of the younger Independents (likened to Jacob), and thus appropriates the past to contradict rather than further his very purpose of justifying his own authority.

In a particularly critical instance of Charles's misreading, Milton points to Charles's use of a prayer appropriated from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*:

> [Previous kings] for ought we know, have still pray'd thir own, or at least borrow'd from fitt authors. But this King, not content with that which, although in a thing holy, is no holy theft, to attribute to his own making other mens whole Prayers, hath as it were unhallow'd, and unchristen'd the very duty of prayer it self by borrowing to a Christian use Prayers offer'd to a Heathen God . . . a Prayer stol'n word for word from the mouth of a Heathen fiction praying to a heathen God; and that in no serious Book, but the vain amatorious Poem of Sr Philip Sidneys *Arcadia*; a Book in that kind full of worth and witt, but among religious thoughts, and duties not worthy to be nam'd; nor to be read at any time without good caution; much less in time of trouble and affliction to be a Christians Prayer-Book.[19]

This instance of 'borrowing' from Sidney enables Milton to pinpoint several key criticisms of Charles's reading practices. By describing Charles's appropriation of the passage as an act of theft, Milton distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate uses of textual authority.

That Charles has also strayed from the model of previous kings in his appropriation of an unconventional and starkly inappropriate source only further reiterates the illegitimacy of this borrowing. Above and beyond the fact that Charles takes the prayer "word for word" from Sidney's poem, Charles steals simply because he misuses the passage, taking a wholly inappropriate work (a 'heathen' prayer) from the inappropriate genre of romance. More importantly, as the following quote makes clear, Milton's critique hinges on the notion that Charles's religion has failed him:

> What greater argument of disgrace and ignominy could have bin thrown with cunning upon the whole Clergy, then that the King among all his Preistery, and all those numberless volumes of thir theological distillations, not meeting with one man or book of that coate that could befriend him with a prayer in Captivity, was forc'd to robb Sir Philip and his Captive Sherperdess of thir Heathen orisons, to supply in any fashion his miserable indigence, not of bread, but of a single prayer to God.[20]

In Milton's assessment, selection of textual examples plays a crucial role in defining one's person; in turn, the capacity to read judiciously proves central to the process of confirming one's religious faith and political legitimacy. Misapplying textual examples to present action or failing to reconcile words and deeds transforms the act of literary

borrowing into theft and plagiarism. But Milton's critique also hinges on the assertion that the king's misinterpretation of textual examples announces his close proximity to tyranny and absolutism, which for the sake of Milton's argument registers as a far greater fault.

We have already briefly seen how the king's political choices (particularly his closing of Parliament) confirm analogies between Charles and historical tyrants of the classical and biblical past such as Nero, Caligula, Nimrod, and Ahab. But political action is not the only ground for such comparisons. In addition, tyrannical reading practices damn the king as an unwitting successor to these historical examples. Central to these practices is the assumption that all signs work to authorize and confirm the king's absolute power and the legitimacy of his political choices. Milton calls attention to the king's misguided reading practices as well as his tyrannous assumptions about his own interpretive authority in the following passage:

> No evil can befall the Parlament or Citty, but he positively interprets it a judgement upon them for his sake; as if the very manuscript of Gods judgements had bin delivered to his custody and exposition. But his reading declares it well to be a fals copy which he uses; dispensing oft'n to his own bad deeds and successes of other men, Divine wrath, and vengeance. But to counterfeit the hand of God is the boldest of all Forgery: And he, who without warrant but his own fantastic surmise, takes upon him perpetually to unfold the secret and unsearchable Mysteries of high Providence, is likely for the most part to mistake and slander them;

and approaches to the madness of those reprobate thoughts, that would wrest the Sword of Justice out of Gods own hand, and imploy it more justly in thir own conceit.[21]

Where previous examples take issue with Charles's inability to reconcile words and deeds, here the criticism centers upon the king's overly narrow assumptions about the relationship between words and deeds within the space of divine interpretation.

For a king to assume that God is speaking directly to him is certainly not an uncommon occurrence. However, Charles attributes "divine wrath" to his own "misdeeds," thereby inadvertently implying that the king's actions can be viewed as usurpations of divine authority and thus a misreading of God's own "secret and unsearchable Mysteries." Early on in *Eikonoklastes*, Milton makes clear that these kinds of "counterfet Religious" readings are indicative of tyrants from the classical and biblical past:

> But he who from such a kind of Psalmistry, or any other verbal Devotion, without the pledge and earnest of sutable deeds, can be perswaded of a zeale, and true righteousness in the person, hath much yet to learn; and knows not that the deepest policy of a Tyrant hath bin ever to counterfet Religious. And *Aristotle* in his Politics, hath mentioned that special craft among twelve other tyrannical *Sophisms*. Neither want wee examples. *Andronicus Comnenus* the *Byzantine* Emperor, though a most cruel Tyrant, is reported by Nicetas to have bin a constant reader of Saint *Pauls* Epistles; *and by continual study had so incorporated the phrase and stile*

> *of that transcendant Apostle into all his familiar Letters, that the imitation seemed to vie with the Original. Yet this availd not to deceave people of that Empire; who notwithstanding his Saints vizard, tore him to peeces for his Tyranny.*[22] (my emphasis)

Like Charles, Andronicus Comnenus appropriates and imitates biblical examples to create the illusion of true faith, but this illusion is undercut by a failure to follow words with corresponding actions. By incorporating such examples into his irreverent assessment of Charles's own faith, Milton argues that any attempt on the king's part to circumscribe himself with biblical and classical precedent proves ineffective, given that the king's own actions (and thus his interpretation of exemplary models) stand at odds with the texts in which he attempts to define himself. As a result, Charles can only find company with anti-exemplary models such as Comnenus and other tyrants who similarly attempt to reconcile virtuous texts with less than virtuous actions.

In light of Milton's critique, two potentially conflicting priorities come into play. Given that *Eikonoklastes* presents a strong justification for social and political reformation in its careful defense of the regicide, Milton's emphasis on the need to embrace as well as properly interpret past biblical and classical models would seem to contradict the emphasis on radical social change. However, as I have been arguing, the central emphasis on Charles's flawed reading practices is less a criticism of monarchy as an institution than of a particular construal of regal power that privileges the totalizing authority of the monarchy. That the capacity to misread provides both a test of religio-political faith and a mark of the distance from that faith reiterates the dual status of

misreading as both generative and damning. For Milton, then, reformation involves reclaiming a particular reading of history in the face of a degenerate body of readers (i.e. the Stuart regime). Yet effecting change is still a central concern for those critical of monarchic absolutism. This tension between embracing the past and effecting socio-political change extends beyond non-fictional prose tracts and into the poetry of the period as well.

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Attempts to recuperate the biblical and classical past from the tyrannous reading practices of the Stuart monarchs become particularly compelling in the contested image of regal authority as sunlight. The parallel between the king and the light-bearing omnipresence of the sun has a long precedence in literary and theological traditions. In the seventeenth century, the parallel was frequently employed to describe the Stuart monarchs, often but not always as a means by which to highlight absolutist leanings. But the description could also serve more positive ends, as evidenced by William Harvey's illustration of Charles in his *De Motu Cordis* (1628):

> The *Heart* of creatures is the foundation of life, the Prince of all, the Sun of their Microcosm, on which all vegetation does depend, from whence all vigor and strength does flow. Likewise the King is the foundation of his Kingdoms, the Sun of his Microcosms, the *Heart* of his Common-Wealth, from whence all power and mercy proceeds.[23]

Similarly, Robert Herrick's dedication to Charles in *Hesperides* (1648) invokes the king as "such a light as you," and the ensuing lines suggest how Charles rivals the sun in his

propensity to shed light upon his subjects. As articulated in the poetry and prose writing of many republican defenders, however, the exemplary tradition of equating kings with the illuminating sun (commonplace in biblical and classical as well as early modern representations) is challenged and potentially undercut by the anti-exemplary actions of the monarch. Most significantly, the king's own insistence upon the totalizing function of this association once again registers as a usurpation of God's omnipresent authority.

One such representation of the king as a light-bearing entity comes in Charles's own criticism of his adversaries, whom he blames for casting veils over the king's shining face. In *Eikon Basilike*, Charles describes his critics as threatening to conceal the king's authority (emblematized by his visage) behind black veils, as evident in the following lines: "Nor shall their black veiles be able to hide the shining of My face, while God gives Me a heart frequently and humbly to converse with him, from who alone are al the *Eradications* of true glory and Majesty."[24] Milton's response in *Eikonoklastes* shifts the agency from Charles's critics to the king's own misdeeds: "And those *black vailes* of his own misdeeds he might be sure would ever keep *his face from shining*, til he could refute *evil speaking with wel doing.*"[25] In each case, the notion of the veil as a mask imposing blindness threatens to overshadow Charles's ability to act properly. Milton and other writers harshly critical of royalist efforts to defend and later to restore the absolute authority of the monarchic body frequently destabilize the conventional image equating the king's radiant authority to that of the shining sun. In such instances, the imagery of blindness, shadows, and darkness works as a trope for the king's own inability to see, in

terms of making faulty and damaging political decisions that ultimately center upon an overly confident assurance in the totalizing (sun-like) authority of the regal position.

In addition to the "black veil" passage, Milton elsewhere in *Eikonoklastes* warns readers of the fallacy inherent in making an absolute parallel between monarchic power and the light of the sun:

> But they who by weighing prudently things past forsee things to come, the best divination, may hope rather all good success and happiness by removing the darkness which the mistie cloud of his prerogative made between us and a peaceful Reformation, which is our true sun light, and not he, though he would be taken for our sun it self.[26]

Reading the king as the "sun it self" registers as a misinterpretation of monarchic authority, and this gesture threatens to stifle attempts at Reformation by reiterating rather than challenging the overarching absolutism of the king.

Once again, Milton points out that the king's own insistence upon this authority only leaves him in darkness, both shrouded in black veils and in "the mistie cloud of his prerogative." Milton further challenges the king's right to embrace the exemplary image of monarch as sun by aligning him not with Phoebus but instead with the sun's overzealous offspring, Phaeton:

> Discontenting and alienating his subjects at home; weakening and deserting his confederates abroad, and with them the common cause of religion. So that the whole course of his raign *by an example of his own furnishing* hath resembled *Phaeton* more than *Phoebus*, and forc'd the

> Parlament to drive like *Jehu*; which omen tak'n from his own mouth, God hath not diverted.[27] (my emphasis)

As an example of Charles's own furnishing, this use of exemplary models once again enables Milton to capitalize on Charles's potential misreading of the past. In this case, Milton transforms the conventional image of the monarch as envious of the sun's authority into a confirmation of Charles's ultimately reckless and irresponsible attempts to embrace absolutism at all costs. Similarly, Phaeton's overly ambitious attempt to approach the sun in his father's chariot led to his own violent destruction. In this context, the analogy between monarch and sun is less an affirmation of the king's magisterial right than proof of Charles's identity as a tyrant recklessly appropriating models from the classical and biblical past (including the misappropriation of the Phaeton myth) for his own totalizing aims.

Lucy Hutchinson's "Third Elegy: Another on the Sun Shine" (c. 1664) offers a similar assessment of the unfounded authority of the sun image within the space of the Stuart monarchic regime. In her poem, the image of the sun wavers ambiguously between signifying the natural sun that illuminates the earth and the king, whose self-proclaimed radiance is challenged by the poem's speaker. In both cases, the image of the sun (both natural and regal) ultimately succumbs to the superior, recuperative image of divine light (and the close proximity of this sun to "the Son"). Key to the poem's critical vigor is the notion that the natural sun and its firm connection to the temporal world is complicit in the misdeeds of the monarchic sun.

Given the distinction between divine light and the light emitted by the natural as well as monarchic "sun," it may seem initially problematic that the poem opens with an apparent condemnation of divinely issued light as the speaker awakens to light shining into the room: "Heavens glorious Eie, which all the world surveyes,/This morning through my window shot his rayes/Where with his hatefull and unwelcome beames/He guilt the Surface of afflictions Streames . . ." Perhaps the distinction here is between light in a temporal realm (as embodied by the light cast upon the world) and the light that appears at the end of the poem in the hopeful image of "our King [i.e. God] his Shining host display . . ." Within the temporal space, waking to the sun is a reminder of the oppressive regal "sun" that has persecuted the speaker through inherent corruption, including the usurpation of the divine "sun" as central to monarchic identity. As a result of this intrusive image, shade and shadow provide protection for the speaker, underscoring the adverse and ultimately counterproductive nature of both kinds of light. But as the poem goes on to demonstrate, the restorative authority of God's light will ultimately overshadow both the light cast by the natural sun and by the monarch.

The speaker's chiding of "th'immodest Sun" at line ten marks a turn toward the less ambiguous aligning of the sun image with the destructive legacy of the Stuart monarchy:

> How, Gawdy Masker, darst thou looke on me
> Whose Sable Coverings thy reproaches be?
> Thou to our murtherers thy taper bearest
> Th'oppressive race of men thou warmst and Chearst,

The blood which thou hast Seene pollutes thy light

And renders it more hatefull than the Night.[28]

We have already seen how Milton uses the totalizing theatricality of the masque as an indicator of Charles's politically and ideologically corrupt self-fashioning. In Hutchinson's poem, "Gawdy Masker" similarly aligns the monarchy with the extravagant and ideologically restricting mechanism of the court masque, and this in turn reminds readers of the close proximity of the sun image to the Stuart court.[29] The fact that the potentially innocent moniker of "Gawdy Masker" is surrounded by words such as "murtherers," "oppressive," "blood," "pollutes," and "hatefull" underscores the detrimental consequences of that regime. The light is indeed polluted as a result of the monarch's actions, but more importantly, as a result of embracing the absolute analogy between regal power and sunlight.

Hutchinson makes the destructive impact of this analogy even clearer as she proceeds to implicate the Stuart dynasty directly within her address to the sun: "Thou saw the league of God himselfe dissolvd" could refer to the potential usurping of God's authority by both the natural sun and the monarch as metaphors for the divine light. Yet the language also reflects more timely elements, invoking the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and implicating Charles in its ultimate failure to unite Scotland and England within the context of religious reformation. In another instance, Hutchinson reflects on the more personal consequences of the king's ideological tyranny: "Thou sawst the innocent into exile led/And for all this veildest not thy radiant head."[30] The Hutchinsons themselves were among these exiled innocents, having lost land, titles, and

possessions in the aftermath of the Civil War, following the restoration of another potential tyrant. Perhaps it is in light of these personal ramifications that Hutchinson concludes with such a forceful denunciation of monarchic sunlight as a usurpation of divine authority and thus as a misreading of the image's spiritual significance.

The hopeful image of God's omnipotent authority overshadowing the temporal powers of both the king and the natural sun is made clear toward the end of the poem: "Then shall our King his Shining host display/At whose approach our mist shall fly away/And wee illuminated by his sight/No more shall neede thy everquenched light."[31] The "everquenched" and thus impotent image of temporal authority contrasts sharply with the illuminative powers of the divine monarch, capable of dissolving the mists that overshadow true faith and casting light upon subjects by distinguishing the faithful from those who are blind to true faith. According to the poem, any attempt to usurp the authority of divine light indicates an inability to see properly, just as the king has misinterpreted his own role by embracing the image of the sun as representative of his own authority. Within this context, even the literal sun loses its light-bearing power, since any attempt to acknowledge the natural sun as the ultimate figure of authority is to prioritize temporal over divine supremacy and thus to make the same mistake about temporal authority that the Stuarts apparently have made.

At the same time, it is necessary to notice how the language of monarchic rule is inextricably fused to the description of divine light. As John Rogers points out, Calvinist Protestantism (which Hutchinson herself embraced)

> possessed at its ontological core a theology of arbitrary rule. . . Although the majority of Puritan dissenters were seeking to free church and property from the bonds of the Stuart monarch, the arbitrary God of their religious convictions provided, by the simple logic of the organizational imperative, an unwitting figurative sanction for the absolutist, centralized state championed by their political opponents, the Royalists.[32]

In Hutchinson's poem, the contested image of the sun illustrates this ideological dispute. At once embracing the absolutism of divine light and denouncing earthly representations as usurpations of that power, Hutchinson asserts a seemingly contradictory faith in the authority of the absolute. Nonetheless, David Norbrook explains, Hutchinson's apparent embracing of absolutism in fact distances her from other anti-Royalist factions:

> For Hutchinson, God's unfailing will is not a worrying parallel with absolutism but a source of strength in her criticism of corrupt secular orders. If everything were subject to chance, there would be nowhere to appeal to against tyranny; but she writes with an unshakeable faith in a God whose transcendence can question any secular power.[33]

As such, Hutchinson's poem (like Milton's representations of the king in *Eikonoklastes*) works to recuperate the authoritative image of divine sunlight from the reckless and totalizing appropriations of the Stuart monarchy.

* *

While the image of sunlight provides a useful illustration of the kinds of interpretive re-readings at the heart of the republican agenda, this is only one such

example. Perhaps most relevant to this discussion are the literary representations of humankind's fall from the garden, appearing with some frequency in the republican writings of the Restoration period as attempts to articulate and critique recent English history within the space of Christian spiritual discourse. As evident in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*, and Marvell's "On Reading *Paradise Lost*," the progression of innocence, fall, and redemption underscores the priorities of political agency and reformation following in the wake of the civil war. The interpretive errors made by Adam and Eve resonate with the acts of misreading committed by royalists and other opponents of the republican cause. At the same time, these texts do not simply mirror recent political upheavals, but rather accentuate the interconnections between political and spiritual redemption.

Once again, the reader's propensity to sway from the true path proves central in the determination of proper faith within a religious as well as political context. In addition, this propensity informs the revolutionaries themselves, who in the wake of the Restoration grappled with potentially irreconcilable tensions between passive idealism and aggressive agency that centered upon the realization that political action (and reformation) may in fact be pointless when revolution is ultimately overseen and controlled by divine authority.[34] Thus, the intersection of the political and the religious in these timely readings of the Genesis story attest to the complex and potentially irresolvable dynamics of reformation. It is within this context that Marvellian and even Miltonic irony can be recognized not so much as political hesitancy but rather as a confirmation of the intricacies surrounding political and religious reform.

In *Order and Disorder* (1674), Lucy Hutchinson similarly grapples with proper interpretive practices and the degree to which the potential to misread inadvertently tests readers and defines their proximity to true faith and reformation. In the preface to the poem, Hutchinson seemingly embraces the notion that freedom to read can be potentially damaging and dangerous, leading readers down erroneous and corrupting paths. Condemning her earlier translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* as a distraction from the kinds of devout practices that her current project encourages, Hutchinson states,

> I have for prevention sent forth this essay [i.e. Lucretius]; with a profession that I disclaim all and have experienced it to be a very unsafe and unprofitable thing for those that are young, before their faith be fixed, to exercise themselves in the study of vain, foolish, atheistical poesy. It is a miracle of grace and mercy, if such be not deprived of the light of Truth, who having shut their eyes against that sun, have, instead of looking up to it, hunted glow-worms in ditch bottoms.[35]

Hutchinson's prioritizing of religious texts such as the Genesis story and scripture above potentially distracting and misleading secular works such as Lucretius may seem at odds with Milton's assertion in *Areopagitica* that even bad books can work to define a reader's true faith. However, Hutchinson complicates this position within *Order and Disorder* by illustrating how the story of humankind's fall itself provides an exemplary model for the discerning reader, not only as a didactic tool to ensure godliness but also as a reminder of

the concrete relationship between religious faith and political legitimacy inherent in the poem's underlying critique of monarchic absolutism.

While never presenting the kinds of interpretive challenges faced by readers of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (such as resisting the reading of Satan as a heroic figure), Hutchinson nonetheless emphasizes humankind's misreading of God's authority as an important step along the path to true faith. Thus, she encourages her readers to exercise discretion by recognizing acts of misreading not so much as anti-exemplary threats, but instead as models by which to define and shape their own interpretive priorities. At the same time, Hutchinson's own preoccupation with proper reading and an authentic interpretation of the past requires her to exercise restraint in her interpretations of literary precedent. Throughout the poem, scripture is closely followed and Hutchinson resists the temptation to inject her own speculative imagination into the work. Take, for example, her discussion of the fallen angels in Canto Four, where her unwillingness to speculate on the details surrounding the exile of Satan and his minions contrasts with Milton's imaginative embellishing of the battle between God and the transgressing angels. Hutchinson makes clear that imagination and fancy can potentially deter readers from the path of scripture and thus from authoritative truth: "But circumstances that we cannot know/Of their rebellion and their overthrow/We will not dare t'invent, nor will we take/Guesses from the reports themselves did make . . ."[36] It is particularly interesting to note here how Hutchinson's attitude toward imaginative fancy contrasts with Margaret Cavendish's, as discussed in the previous chapter. While Cavendish's embracing of fancy and the imagination would seem to oppose her orthodox political allegiances,

Hutchinson's tendency to embrace orthodox representational strategies seemingly counters her anti-Royalist position.

Hutchinson reiterates the importance of orthodox adherence to scripture in her earlier work, "On the Principles of the Christian Religion," where she states, "What that sinne was particularly, with other circumstances of their fall, the Scripture doth not properly informe us."[37] As a result of this insistence upon the authority of scripture, *Order and Disorder* often reads more like a compilation of biblical quotes than as an original work of poetic creativity. Ultimately, this insistence on an authoritative reading of the past reiterates the responsibility of readers to recognize how misreadings such as Adam and Eve's misreading of God's will work in accord with other textual examples as a means to test and confirm the judiciousness and true faith of the reader.

In the fifth canto of the poem, Hutchinson articulates the didactic potency inherent in the progression from innocence to fall to redemption that comprises the fall of humankind from Eden: "The evils, so miscalled, that we endure/Are wholesome medicines tending to our cure . . ."[38] Like Milton, Hutchinson here suggests that readers recognize the fall as a reminder that even bad deeds can prove constructive in guiding one on the path to godliness. Much as Milton's Adam and Eve reevaluate the doctrine of divine assurance through the experience of fall and exile (as we will see below), so too does the fallen couple in Hutchinson's poem come to recognize the parameters of faith and free will only by falling.

Specifically, the key lesson to be learned involves the realization that "fond ambition of a God-like height" is itself a dangerous misreading of free will that prioritizes

individual agency above and beyond the humbling limitations of godly devotion. And it is this element that proves crucial for both Hutchinson and Milton in terms of appropriating the Genesis story to reflect on the socio-political circumstances of the civil war aftermath. For the fall resonates with two specific facets of civil war experience, namely the fall of the Stuart regime as a result of their misconstruing of monarchic authority and the fall of the "good old cause" of republicanism following the Restoration. According to critics such as Milton and Hutchinson, both instances of falling parallel the fall of humankind, since human transgressions result in the displacing of the monarch and the subsequent quelling of republican reformation.

By directly voicing concern with abuses of monarchic power, Hutchinson's poem intersects a political critique of monarchic absolutism within the broader realm of godly devotion that the Genesis story encompasses. By tracing monarchic authority back to the legacy of Noah (emphasizing his drunkenness) and the tyrannous descendents of Ham (by way of Nimrod), Hutchinson underscores the abuses of the Stuart court by circumscribing that heritage within the overarching shadow of humankind's fall from Eden. Contrasting Adam's "fall'n sons" with the ideal of proper inward and outward rule epitomized by the prelapsarian state, Hutchinson emphasizes the potential corruption of monarchic authority within the worldly state. Recounting God's decree to Adam concerning proper rule within the prelapsarian context, the distinction between postlapsarian corruption and prelapsarian virtue is made clear:

> Adam, although so highly dignified,
> Was not to spend in idle ease and pride,

Nor supine sleep, drunk with his sensual pleasures,
As now his fall'n sons do, that arrogate
His forfeited dominion and high state;
But God his daily business did ordain
That kings, hence taught, might in their realms maintain
Fair order, serving those whom thy command
As guardians, not as owners of the land,
Not being set there to pluck up and destroy
Those plants whose culture should their cares employ.[39]

The marked distinction between Adam as virtuous ruler in the prelapsarian state and the corrupt nature of monarchy in the wake of (and perhaps as a result of) the fall enables Hutchinson to link human transgression with the contemporary abuses of the Stuart court.

The references to kings as land owners resonates with the current debates over enclosures and the perceived inequity of aristocratic land claims, especially those associated with efforts to recover lands and possessions lost by Royalist supporters during the civil war. While Hutchinson never directly invokes the Stuart regime in her recounting of the Genesis story, the progression toward a fallen state as a result of transgression clearly underscores the offenses of the monarchic body as well as the loss of republican place as a result of the Restoration. Immediately following the fall, the world is described as thrown into a flux of civil war that encompasses the natural world in addition to the inward spheres of Adam and Eve's conscience.

Describing the "various perturbations" arising from the transgression, as evidenced by droughts and other natural calamities as well as the "lust, rage, ravenous appetite" that arose among animals, Hutchinson reflects: "Thus sin the whole Creation did divide/Into th'oppressing and the suffering side./Those, still employing craft and violence/T'ensnare and murder simple innocence,/True emblems were of Satan's craft and power/In daily ambuscado to devour . . ."[40] If a civil war-like state is implied by the descriptions of nature turned upside down as a result of the fall, then such a state is more directly articulated in the depictions of Adam and Eve's interior states:

> But to our parents then, sad was the change
> Which them from peace and safety did estrange,
> Brought universal woe and discord in,
> The never-failing consequents of sin;
> Nor only made all things without them jar
> But in their breasts raised up a civil war.
> Reason and sense maintained a continual fight,
> Which led two different troops of passion out,
> Confounding all in their tumultuous rout.[41]

The military language employed in this description, coupled with the direct reference to civil war, underscores the close proximity between the fall from the garden and the sequences of tumultuous events revolving around Charles's perceived abuses of authority. This is not to suggest that Hutchinson's poem is a direct shadow of the contemporary crisis; however, I do want to emphasize how the Genesis story provides a

framework in which to illustrate key priorities regarding religious and political devotion that are clearly pertinent to Hutchinson's and England's current situation. As Hutchinson makes clear in *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, the losses that the Hutchinson family incurred after the Restoration, as a result of their affiliations with the regicide and the republican cause in general, attest to the tumultuous (indeed fall-like) consequences of the monarchic restoration.

For Hutchinson, as for Milton and other anti-royalist proponents, the Genesis story at once underscores the redemptive promise of reformation while illustrating the devastating implications of the fall. For readers of these poems, the primacy of the will becomes central to the interpretive process; as such, interpretive ambiguity is not so much an encumbrance as a necessity.

* *

In *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton's project of presenting a faithful reading of Protestant devotion in some ways stands in contradistinction to the poet's goal of recounting "things not yet attempted in prose or rhyme." By championing the poem's idiosyncratic nature from the start, Milton offers his poem as a divergent reading of the epic tradition. In doing so, the poem ultimately tests the reader's own ability to remain faithful (and not misread) the Protestant ideals that the poem embraces while nevertheless challenging the reader with elements that would potentially de-rail them from the proper path. This challenge includes Milton's own gesture of reading against epic tradition.

In turn, this interplay between the idea of being faithful and of breaking from tradition in favor of alternative (mis)readings raises the anxieties of readers, as

exemplified by Marvell's response to the poem in his "On Reading Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*" (1674). Marvell's poem opens by directly contrasting his own abilities to see ("I beheld") with those of the "poet blind." Yet, as Marvell goes on to describe the poet's "vast design" in subsequent lines, the notion of the blind poet as seer in the metaphysical sense that Milton himself embraces becomes evident. As such, Milton's "vast design" is likened to God's own and as a result, the poet's blind condition heightens rather than diminishes authority for both the poet and the poem. Despite this, Marvell complicates the poem's authority as he explains his own complex response to Milton's argument: "the argument/Held me a while, misdoubting his intent/That he would ruin (for I saw him strong)/The sacred truths to fables and old songs . . ."[42] The concern here is that Milton's exploration of "things yet unattempted in prose or rhyme" involves breaking from tradition, thereby problematizing the poem's and the poet's allegiance to "sacred truths." In other words, Marvell expresses concern that despite (or perhaps because of) Milton's stated intentions, the poem has the effect of misreading rather than confirming established doctrine.

This concern over Milton's potential misreading gains momentum as Marvell expresses anxiety regarding the "success" of *Paradise Lost*. "Success" here refers to the ability of readers to read the poem correctly and to embrace its doctrinal authority, but this ability hinges upon Milton's own success in making the poetic meaning clear. The perceived gesture of "perplex[ing] things he would explain,/And what was easy he should render vain" is misread by Marvell as a threat to Milton's poetic authority and the authority of the poem as a pedagogical tool to confirm readers' faith. To a certain extent,

Marvell misses the point here, since (as we have already seen in *Areopagitica*) the potential for readers to misread is an essential indicator of true faith, whereby merely mimicking another's words is to mistake "lame faith" for true understanding. But Marvell's own potential misunderstanding of Milton's poem is rectified as the focus shifts to those who attempt to mimic the expansive and complex majesty of *Paradise Lost* (and this deepening reverence for Milton's poem may explain why Marvell abandons Miltonic blank verse in favor of rhymed couplets after line ten).

Given the originality of Milton's blank verse, Marvell resists mimetic representation in his poem by acknowledging his own rhyming verse as inferior to Milton's.[43]

> Well mightst thou scorn thy readers to allure
> With tinkling rhyme, of thine own sense secure;
> While the *Town-Bayes* writes all the while and spells,
> And like a pack-horse tires without his bells.
> Their fancies like our bushy points appear,
> The poets tag them; we for fashion wear.[44]

The notion of rhymed verse as a fashionable "tag" heightens the distinction of Milton's poem, itself prioritizing the "ancient liberty recovered to [the] Heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of Rhyming."[45] By embracing the fashionable and (at least in Milton's estimation) inferior rhymed couplet, Marvell announces the inferiority of his own poem to that of Milton.[46] This gesture in turn enables Marvell to validate his understanding of Milton's poetic intent, which involves breaking from tradition in order

to test readers. As such, Milton's use of blank verse becomes a transcendent feature, at once breaking from tradition and defining an exemplary sense of originality that cannot be imitated. For Marvell to do so in his own commendatory verse would be to misread Milton's poem. In other words, Marvell's formal choices acknowledge his understanding of Milton's poem to the extent that such choices reject slavish imitation, just as *Paradise Lost* itself requires of readers both within and of the poem.

At the same time, Marvell's poem sheds light on Milton's own position as a reader of literary, theological, and political tradition in *Paradise Lost*. As Marvell makes clear (in part by nearly misreading the poem himself), Milton's simultaneous appropriation and rejection of tradition tests the reader's as well as the poem's allegiance to faith. The capacity to rightly read the poem involves recognizing the ways in which the poem itself breaks from tradition in order to avoid similar pitfalls. But working to test the reader's faith, *Paradise Lost* itself embraces misreading as a means of distinguishing true faith from hollow imitation. Thus, *Paradise Lost* and Milton as a reader function less as polemic than as exercises in governing reading responses for readers of the poem.

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While Marvell's commendatory poem sheds light on reading Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a discussion of readers within *Paradise Lost* further illuminates the question of Milton as a reader of literary, political, and theological traditions.[47] In his attempt to "justify the ways of God to men," Milton finds himself in a precarious position. At once a poetic visionary whose literal blindness enables access to "things invisible to mortal sight" and a human encumbered by the limitations of fallen language, Milton frequently

reminds readers of his own position as a fallen misreader. His invocations at the onset of Books One, Three, Seven, and Nine reveal his reliance upon heavenly sources ("Celestial Light," the "Heav'nly Muse" Urania) to aid in his poetic project where mortal language falls short. As the poem turns toward the tragic in Book Nine, for example, Milton seeks the aid of his muse Urania: "If answerable style I can obtain/Of my Celestial Patroness, who deigns/Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,/And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires/Easy my unpremeditated Verse . . ."[48] Along with these invocations, Milton frequently reminds readers of the disparity between human and divine language. This disparity is evident in Raphael's words to Adam in Book Five, where Adam asks Raphael to recount the battle between Satan and the Angels: "How shall I relate/To human sense th'invisible exploits/Of warring spirits." Such statements reflect Milton's own anxieties about the limitations of human language, anxieties that he further attempts to appease by recounting divine events through the angelic narrations of Raphael and Michael. While such techniques aid Milton in "measuring things in Heav'n by things on Earth," appropriating the narratives of angels within the poetic project simultaneously reminds readers of Milton's own human limits.

Milton's position as fallen misreader can also be evidenced in the misattributions of biblical, historical, and theological sources throughout *Paradise Lost*. As Milton invokes Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* by asserting in the opening lines that his poem involves "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," he invites readers to err by drawing a direct parallel between his own biblical epic and Ariosto's comic epic romance. Readers are similarly invited to misread when presented with heroic and sympathetic

descriptions of Satan. The portrayal of Satan's massive shield in Book One, for instance, echoes Homer's depiction of the Achillean shield. And although the subsequent reference to Galileo shifts the allusion from the classical to the contemporary, the grandeur evoked by drawing a parallel between Satan's shield and the moon does nothing to dissuade readers from potentially misinterpreting Satan as a heroic figure. Milton's misattributions also surface in his depiction of Adam and Eve. As Julia Walker explains,

> The poet offers the reader the opportunity to distinguish the actions in the garden from the pattern of Homeric and Virgilian epics when, in Book 5, Eve gathers fruits for Adam and Raphael amid allusions to Nausicaa and Dido. Not only is Eve radically different from these helpful epic women, but neither Adam nor the 'god-like Guest' (5.352) she feeds fits the paradigm of Odysseus or Aneas; if we make the error of easy comparison or simple contrast in the first flush of recognition, we must correct our fallen apprehension and read again.[49]

Whether Milton's errors are intentional or not, they reinforce his own position as a fallen reader. More importantly, misallusions pose challenges for readers. As Walker puts it,

> By forcing us to misread his own text, to reread the source of his allusion, and finally to face the ambiguity generated by a subtext which becomes an antitext, Milton's process of revision places the mind of the individual reader in a position of authority over both the source of the allusion and the poetry of Milton, and thus offers the individual reader a real, not a metaphoric, act of independence.[50]

Instead of simply allowing readers to take intertexual references and allusions at face value, Milton's poem embraces faulty attributions (or antitexts) to test readers.

Seen in this light, Milton's "fit readers though few" suggests an elitism based not so much on socio-political status as on an interpretive discretion capable of avoiding the pitfalls of Milton's misallusions. Readers thus find themselves in a position very much like that of Adam and Eve, free to choose (including the possibility of making wrong choices), but ultimately responsible for taking the right path through careful interpretive discretion.

While critics such as John Leonard suggest that we need to distinguish whether such Miltonic misattributions are subversively ironic or simply unintentional, the distinction seems less important than the recognition that misattributions establish the power of the individual reader over the authority of the text. As antitexts, such misallusions at once attest to Milton's own position as a fallen poet within the postlapsarian world and underscore the active interpretive role required of readers. Once again, misreading becomes less a threat to Milton's art than an opportunity for interpretive freedom.

In addition to Miltonic misreadings, the figures of Eve, Adam, and Satan stand as central 'misreaders' within the text. Satan's misreading is largely self-directed, in the sense that he mistakes the potential authority of his individual identity as a mimetic (and thus equally worthy) reflection of God's own authority. But the alliance between Satan and misreading takes on other dimensions as well.

Critics have long pointed out that Milton's sympathetic portrayal of Satan as a heroic figure tempts readers to deviate from faith, thereby misreading the Christian message of the poem. In addition, the notion of Satan as a potential pitfall for misreading is embodied in semantic challenges posed by specific passages within the poem. For example, Satan's arrival on Earth that opens Book IV contains a potentially ambiguous interpretive challenge: "The tempter ere accuser of mankind,/To wreak innocent frail man his loss/Of that first battle, and his flight to hell."[51] As Stanley Fish has demonstrated, "his loss" can be read as referring to either humankind's fall from Eden or (more correctly) as Satan's loss of his position in heaven. That such interpretive challenges arise within the space of describing Satan highlights the potential interpretive dangers embodied by Satan himself.

In the case of Adam and Eve, misreading stems from the fact that both figures over-estimate the certainty of God's assurance, thereby embracing the notion that God will be unconditionally "faithful" to the human figures in the poem. With this comes the expectation that human action will not alter the authority of assurance. Adam and Eve are "assured of the impossibility of [their] fall, even if this assurance turns out to be a mistaken and short-lived comfort."[52] This assurance is problematic to the extent that one fails to guard against sin when the expectation is that one is already saved. Free-will and the individual's willingness to be accountable for her actions are neglected in favor of inaction predicated upon a reliance on faith. Yet ironically, it is only by falling from Eden that Adam and Eve learn to read properly their relationship to God, thereby rejecting the principle of assurance in favor of their own devout actions. Adam and Eve both recognize

their prelapsarian happiness as a product of security, whereas their true 'happiness' (with the pun on 'hap') arises as a result of their ability to act, including the possibility of falling.[53]

Moreover, the presence of dreams in the poem plays a central role in exploring (and ultimately guiding) interpretive practices. In Book Five, Eve recounts her disturbing dream to Adam, only to be reassured that a clear distinction exists between waking reason and sleeping fancy: "Oft in her [Reason's] absence mimic Fancy wakes/To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,/Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,/Ill matching words and deeds long past or late."[54] Adam's confidence in the disparity between waking and dreaming rests on his misguided faith in the principle of assurance, namely that God's divine authority circumscribes (and safely limits) individual free will. It is with this expectation in mind that Adam dismisses and thus ultimately misreads Eve's dream, hopeful "[t]hat what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,/Waking thou never wilt consent to do." In a sense, it is the casual dismissal of the dream as nothing more than fancy that paves the way for transgression in Book Nine. Although Adam himself recognizes the potential applicability of dreams to life when he recounts his own dream to Raphael in Book Eight, this realization does not lead him to scrutinize the expectation that divine assurance circumscribes free-will. It is only through transgression and through misreading that Eve and (to a lesser extent) Adam come to recognize the true path of divine devotion.

If neglecting free will (both in failing to interpret dreams and in embracing divine assurance) is central to the act of transgression, then how exactly do Adam and Eve come

to recognize the primacy of the will by the end of the poem? For it appears that the events of Books Ten through Twelve only reinforce the omnipotent authority of God. For Adam, all is foretold by the angel Michael and this confirms the unwavering constancy of the divine order. For readers of Milton's poem, all prophecy is in the past, given that the biblical accounts that Michael (and Milton) recount happened long ago. Both cases suggest the inevitability of God's authority, thus working against the notion of willful agency and active devotion.

Key to resolving this potential dilemma is recognizing how Adam and readers of the poem interpret the examples set before them by Michael and the poet himself. When Adam asks Michael why so many diverse laws exist among men (a potential catalyst for sin), Michael explains: "So law appears imperfet, and but giv'n/With purpose to resign them in full time/Up to a better cov'nant, disciplined/From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,/From imposition of strict laws, to free/Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear/To filial, works of law to works of faith."[55] This statement reinforces the notion that transgression can lead to good, since God's covenant embraces laws only so far as these provide a catalyst for faith. Once again, misreading and straying (as laws—not faith—make possible) serves the purpose of testing faith and of dividing true devotion from "those shadowy expiations weak," in order to move "from shadowy types to truth."

When Eve dreams again in Book Twelve, her perception of dreams (and indeed her entire conception of divine faith) has been transformed through the act of falling. Reassuring Adam that "God is also in sleep, and in Dreams advise," Eve highlights the

didactic potential of dreams (a potential tragically unrealized in Book Five). But more important here is the way in which the dream has enabled Eve to articulate her own interpretation of God's covenant. Although Eve's words seem to confirm her guilt and her position as Adam's subordinate ("thou to me art all things under heaven"), the words simultaneously convey a sense of willful agency that is at the heart of religious devotion: "This further consolation yet secure/I carry hence; though all by mee is lost,/By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore."[56] Eve's statement presents a highly humanized and individualized interpretation of God's covenant. Where the prelapsarian Eve took consolation in an erroneously perceived sense of assurance, the fallen Eve fully recognizes (and is comforted by) her willful role as a devout and faithful human.

That Eve's final words in the poem are met with Adam's silence may imply a more cognizant realization of divine truths on Eve's part. Such a distinction would be in keeping with John Leonard's claim that "where Adam stresses his own authority, Eve stresses her autonomy."[57] But the fact that Adam does receive Eve's words "well pleas'd" suggests that both have found an enlightenment that only transgression and misreading could fully realize.

By highlighting Adam and Eve's misreading of devotion within the prelapsarian space and contrasting this with their position in the postlapsarian world, Milton draws a parallel to the political context of Restoration England. As David Quint has argued, Milton criticizes his countrymen for confusing "as does Milton's Eve, their happiness with safety, unwilling to endure any longer in the uncertainty of the Commonwealth and to wait for their true, eschatological King."[58] By embracing the monarchy as a return to

stability and assurance, Milton's former republican compatriots misread their own individual dispositions as necessarily inferior to and reliant upon the central authority of the state.

The emphasis on inward, spiritual choice that comprises Adam and Eve's post-lapsarian realizations (and that provides a critical response to Calvinist assurance) thus can be seen as Milton's own politicized defense of the individual in the face of state authority. Sharon Achinstein succinctly describes this process in *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*:

> By encouraging humans to learn how to read as a first step toward ethical and political improvement, Milton vouches for the exercise of the will. By this logic, just as Adam and Eve's fall in *Paradise Lost* was not proof that God foreordained it, the English Revolution was not divinely fated to fail. Rather, its current leaders, like their prototypes Adam and Eve, freely fell by making bad political choices, by reading history badly or not at all.[59]

As we have already seen in Marvell's commendatory poem, *Paradise Lost* challenges readers to decipher conflicting interpretations, but it is the ambiguity of these choices (fueled by the poet's own break from tradition) that is the true test of the reader's faith. Thus, the poem embraces misreading as a viable option; for the reader of the poem as well as for readers within the poem, the possibility of misreading is ever-present as both a didactic tool and as a reminder that individual action transcends the realm of mimetic authority. To expect otherwise is to make the same errors that Adam and Eve made in embracing assurance and thus neglecting the primacy of free will. That Milton and his

republican compatriots appropriated this notion as a politicized response to the Stuart regime attests to an effort to recuperate exemplary values, to restore the firm bind between words and deeds that centers upon proper interpretive practices while simultaneously acknowledging how misreading proves generative as a test of true faith.[60]

Conclusion

Throughout this project, I have argued that the rise of autonomous individualism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulted not only from humanist ideals about the relationship between self and society but also from idiosyncratic responses to those ideals that in turn revealed the shortcomings and limitations of humanism itself. Within this context, misreading becomes a powerful shaping force. The authority of exemplary models, whether pedagogical, dramatic, geographical, political, or literary, increasingly comes to be negotiated through the interpretive agency of readers at the various stages of textual production, transmission, and consumption. As I have shown, literary genres from plays and poems to travel narratives and utopian fictions increasingly problematize authoritative models of representation and interpretation by capitalizing upon the unstable boundaries between theater and life, between self and other, between mimesis and origin, and between truth and fiction that characterize the distinct literary forms. Yet if misreading can be seen as a productive enterprise, then what accounts for the relatively limited discussion of the topic in academic scholarship and what future avenues for exploration of generative misreading are possible? Both questions can perhaps be answered by shifting attention to the monarchic Restoration and the ascendancy of the new science as a central tenet of political, social, and philosophical ideologies by the end of the seventeenth century.

In closing, I want to suggest briefly that the hegemonic unity of the new science and its emphasis on objective ways of knowing (including statistical certainty) crystallized during the Restoration period as an effort to quell the forces of interpretive

ambiguity that had been proliferating throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and that had culminated at the point of the Civil War (as discussed in the previous chapter). It is the legacy of Baconian empiricism that threatens to nullify the productive impetus of generative misreadings.[1]

Through the objective lens of the new science, misreading once again registers as a destructive threat, an instance of misprision that apparently undermines the integrity of experimental ways of knowing. Insisting on correct (that is empirically verifiable) reading, the new science and its enduring legacy of objectivity vilify acts of misreading and other idiosyncratic gestures, despite the fact that error is often key to scientific discoveries.[2] As Julie Solomon and others have argued, the rise of objectivity and empirical self-distancing was as much the result of socio-political conditions as epistemological ones. Solomon's astute discussion of Baconian science and its attention to monarchic as well as mercantile interests is particularly useful in understanding how the epistemological priorities of self-distancing work to stabilize orthodox ideologies. As Solomon and others have suggested, empiricism provides a framework in which to neutralize the potentially conflicting interests of the monarchic regime and the individual, since the notion of self-distancing prioritized by objectivity seemingly nullifies self-interest altogether.[3] Within this context, error (including the possibility of misreading) registers not only as a threat to scientific progress, but also as a reminder of the idiosyncratic fallibility of the individual subject.[4]

In the dedicatory epistle to his *History of the Royal Society* (1667), Thomas Sprat commends Charles II for his support of the new science, emphasizing how science frees

the individual and the nation from "the bondage of error": "For, to increase the Powers of all Mankind, and to free them from the bondage of Errors, is greater Glory than to enlarge Empire, or to put Chains on the necks of Conquer'd Nations."[5] In the opening poem, Abraham Cowley articulates the distinction between fancy and reason central to the debate between Rationalists and Empiricists:

> No, not from Rubens or Vandike;
> Much less content himself to make it like
> Th' Ideas and the Images which ly
> In his own Fancy, or his Memory.
> No, he before his sight must place
> The Natural and the Living Face:
> The real Object must command
> Each judgment of his eye and motion of his Hand.[6]

In the context of objective science, autonomous agency must be circumscribed within the parameters of empirical fact. Subjective expression, whether based on memory or the imagination, registers as a potential transgression, a dangerous misreading of human existence within the temporal space.

Yet despite the authoritative regimen of empirical discourse, which attempted to confine misreadings to the realm of subversive acts, the productive and generative potential of misreading has endured well beyond the early modern period. The legacy of interpretive instability can be identified, for example, in the rise of the novel. From the form's early stages at the end of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, novels

such as Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-41), and even Behn's shorter novella *Oroonoko* (1688) challenged authoritative distinctions between reality and fiction and embraced the idiosyncratic agency of the individual subject both within the text and at the level of authorship. As Bakhtin has argued following Hegel, the novel is a form perpetually concerned with the present, and this characterizes both the unfixity of subjectivies within novels and the continuing development and re-definition of the form itself.[7]

The productive potential of misreading is similarly evident in the enduring enterprise of national expansion to the extent that misreading validates territorial claims and other assertions of cultural legitimacy. In countless instances, willful or erroneous misreadings of boundaries, of ethnic or national distinctions, of interpretations of right (whether divinely ordained or politically granted) have played key roles in the negotiation of territory and in the enterprise of colonization. In his *Discovery of Guiana*, for example, Sir Walter Raleigh mistakes "Inga" for "Inca" in recounting that the "Inga" have been prophesized as inheritors of South America. That the misheard "Inga" suggests both the "English" and the "ingot" legitimizes the English presence on two counts.[8] In numerous exploration narratives, the mistaking of native peoples for godless 'devils'—especially as a result of cannibal practices—similarly justifies persecution as well as the colonial presence. An even more striking example is Sir Francis Drake's interpretation of signs and gestures by the native Miwok people. Drakes' potentially misguided assumption that "they supposed us to be gods" is reinforced as the narrative confidently describes the natives' gestures as signs of resignation to their conquerors:

> They made signs to our general to sit down, to whom the king, and divers others made supplications, that he would take their province into his hands, and become their king, making signs that they would resign unto him their right and title of the whole island and become his subjects.[9]

Once again, interpretive certainty is embraced in the interest of validating colonial right, despite the possibility that the gestures and signs of the native peoples have been misread.

Even in the foundation of national ideologies, where for instance the misreading inherent in "liberty and justice for all" proves central to the foundation of an independent United States, interpretive instability plays a productive role. In his *Common Sense* (1776), Thomas Paine voices a doctrine of freedom at odds with the realities of slavery, gender inequality, and racial persecution in the newly forming United States:

> let each of us, hold out to his neighbour the hearty hand of friendship, and unite in drawing a line, which, like an act of oblivion, shall bury in forgetfulness every former dissention. Let the names of Whig and Tory be extinct; and let none other be heard among us, than those of a good citizen, an open and resolute friend, and a virtuous supporter of the RIGHTS of MANKIND and of the FREE AND INDEPENDANT STATES OF AMERICA.[10]

That Paine's proclamations about equality were at odds with the realities of the newly founded United States suggests how these documents were themselves misread. While such misreadings certainly prove detrimental to the extent that

claims about equality work to conceal a legacy of racial persecution and suffering, the misinterpretation of "equality for all" also proves generative in shaping a distinct national identity.

To substantiate cultural and institutional legitimacy, enterprises such as colonialism and nation formation must distance themselves from the idea of misreading, even in its capacity as a generative and potentially volatile force. While acts of misreading such as interpreting territorial colonization as a political and divine right prove generative to the extent that geographic expansion and national identity are furthered, such acts are also detrimental given their potentially destructive consequences. As a result, the legacy of Baconian empiricism and its rejection of interpretive idiosyncrasy become central to claims of cultural and national authority as protective measures. Within the context of these powerful priorities, misreading can only be viewed as a dangerous threat to cultural stability. As my study has demonstrated, however, misreading is not merely a detrimental force. Attending to misreading in terms of its generative potential elucidates the complex shaping processes of intellectual, epistemological, and individual subjectivities that define cultural and artistic expression in the early modern period and beyond.

End Notes

Introduction

[1] Much has been written about the historical ramifications of these developments. On the rise of literacy, see especially David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). On the growth of print, see Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) and Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). On mercantile expansion, see Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975) and Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
[2] Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), x.
[3] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb "misread" first appeared in the early nineteenth century and the noun forms "misreader" and "misreading" appeared by the mid-nineteenth century.
[4] All of these terms existed by the seventeenth century. "Miswrite" dates to late Old English and "Misprision" to the medieval period (*OED*).
[5] See especially Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982). Ong explores the enduring legacy of oral culture and practices within the emerging contexts of print. "Well after printing was developed, auditory processing continued for some time to dominate the visible, printed text, though it was eventually eroded away by print. . . Evidently, in processing text for meaning, the sixteenth century was concentrating less on the sight of the word and more on its sound than we do" (121).
[6] The mispronunciation of English words in III.iv of *Henry V* exemplifies this kind of misreading, whereby Alice's pronunciation of "foot" and "gown" signifies mistakenly for Katherine as the vulgar French words "foutre" (to fuck) and "con" (cunt). Katherine's subsequent objection confirms this mishearing: "O Seigner Dieu, ils sont les mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user. Je ne voudrais prononcer ces mots devant les seigneurs de France pour tout le monde" (III.iv.46-51).
[7] Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: Printed by Adam Islip An. Dom. 1602).
[8] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 113.
[9] Wolfgang Iser, *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 7.
[10] See Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
[11] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 94 .
[12] Ibid, 95.
[13] See Roland Barthes' classic essay "The Death of the Author" reprinted in K. M. Newton, *Twentieth Century Literary Theory: A Reader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 120-23. See also Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113-138.
[14] Here Holland appropriates the terminology of classical reception theory, but where proponents of that theory such as Iser and Jauss prioritize the signifying text as the catalyst for the interpretive response, Holland privileges the reader's distinct position outside (and often prior to) the textual encounter as the key catalyst.
[15] Norman Holland, *The Critical I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 101.
[16] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 11.
[17] Ibid, 3.
[18] Terrence Cave, "The Mimesis of Reading," in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* ed. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols Jr. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), 163.
[19] Ibid, 159.
[20] Cave's assessment is also useful here for recognizing the limitations of classical reception theory. While critics such as Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser identify the reader's culturally coded

response to literary texts as central to interpretive meaning (given that the effects of the text on the reader determine the text's identity), I want to build on Cave's discussion by suggesting that individual readers do not merely receive texts but instead stand as agents in shaping textual meaning.

[21] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 2.

[22] Ibid, 4.

[23] Ibid, 9.

[24] For a useful discussion of sixteenth century reading practices, see Eugene Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1996). According to Kintgen, Tudor readers had essentially one model of reading available to them, namely the utilitarian model of humanist pedagogy. Kintgen thus likens early modern reading to modern day arithmetic, since each offers only one method for a particular skill. While Kintgen's discussion is useful in terms of exploring the notion of exemplary reading practices, his argument centers upon the assumption that variant or alternative practices can only be recognized as subversive responses to official ones.

[25] Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603) reprinted in *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. P. Wilson, 1925. 4.

[26] Thomas More, *The Utopia* (1516) trans. Clarence Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 4.

[27] Ibid, 7.

[28] John Taylor, *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-Poet* (1630) facsimile edition (New York: Scolar Press, 1971), 3.

[29] Although reading an illustration can pose interpretive challenges distinct from reading a text, the fact that a frontispiece such as Coryat's circumscribes images within the space of text (both within the frontispiece itself and in the accompanying expositions) renders distinctions between reading images and reading texts less pronounced.

[30] Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities* (1611) reprinted in 2 volumes (Glasgow, MacLehose, 1905), xv.

[31] See Michael Riffaterre, "Undecidability as a Hermeneutic Constraint," in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 109-124. Riffaterre argues for "undecidability" as an inextricable component of textual meaning. While "undecidability" suggests a sense of indeterminacy that often exceeds the interpretive parameters inherent in a misreading, Riffaterre's discussion is nonetheless useful to the extent that it underscores how textual ambiguity and instability ultimately shapes rather than threatens interpretive meaning. See also Paul De Man's emphasis on the indispensability of misreading (particularly in terms of shaping authorial identities) in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

1 "Well-Woven Garlands": The Legacy of Humanist Exemplarity

[1] See for example Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 23.

[2] Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 111.

[3] Early modern literacy rates are difficult to quantify given the range of definitions of "literate" (capable of reading, capable of writing, capable of reading and writing, capable of signing one's name, etc.). David Cressy and other scholars have suggested that by the mid-1600s, 78% of male Londoners were fully literate while only about 30% of adult males in rural England could sign their names. Measuring female literacy rates is particularly difficult, since women were typically taught to read but not to write and most measurements of literacy rates are based on the ability to sign one's name. Despite these factors, the increasing availability of education and printed materials during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggest significant growth in literacy rates during this time.

[4] See especially Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), and Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[5] Quoted in Anne Moss, *Printed Commonplace Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 12.

[6] Critics such as G. W. Pigman and Thomas M. Greene have carefully specified distinct categories of imitation and emulation in the Renaissance. Central among these are the following types: 1) *Dissimulative*, in which the relationship between text and model is concealed or disguised, 2) *Transformative*, in which the model is transformed into an autonomous work without losing complete sight of the originary version and 3) *Eristic*, in which there is "an open struggle with the model for

preeminence" (Pigman, "Versions of Imitation," 4). The latter category is more often referred to as emulation than imitation. For discussion of these categories (as well as their limitations), see especially G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 1-32; Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); David Quint, *Origin and Originality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); and Marian Rothstein, "Etymology, Genealogy, and the Immutability of Origins," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43.2 (1990): 332-47.

[7] Quoted in Moss, 13.

[8] Daniel Kinney, "Erasmus' *Adagia*: Midwife to the Rebirth of Language," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 11.2 (1981): 177.

[9] Quoted in Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19.

[10] Some scholars, notably Mary Thomas Crane, have argued that during the sixteenth century, humanism and the aristocracy can be distinguished as two distinct cultures with their own values and priorities. As Crane explains, members of the aristocracy embraced pastimes such as hunting, gaming, and dancing at the expense of book learning in order to signify their elite status. At the same time, humanists studied exemplary models from the classical past to shape proper speech and conduct. Crane argues that it is only in the late sixteenth century that the two worlds of humanism and the aristocracy began to collide and distinctions began to blur. She attributes the change to the growing role of humanist pedagogues as advisors to monarchs and other rulers. In this role, the cultural capital that defines the process of gathering and framing exemplary texts intersects with the process of monetary exchange and preferment so central to the aristocratic identity. While I agree with Crane that these kinds of interactions between humanist advisors and courtier culture raise interesting problems concerning the motivation behind humanist learning, I disagree that the categories of humanist and aristocrat can be so clearly delineated and distinguished at any time during the Renaissance. Clearly, most humanists were distinguished from the aristocracy in terms of their inferior socio-economic positions. But it is highly problematic to assume that the priorities of the two groups can be so clearly distinguished in terms of aristocratic leisurely pastimes as opposed to humanist pursuit of intellectual learning. Thus, while I recognize some distinctions between the aristocracy and humanism within my discussion, my argument revolves around the notion that an overarching emphasis on proper conduct and decorum links the two groups and problematizes clear-cut distinctions between them.

[11] Quoted in Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege*, 29.

[12] Ibid, 122.

[13] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 12. For a useful discussion regarding notions of linguistic authority among scholastics and humanists, see Martin Elsky, *Authorizing Words* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). On the growing awareness of anachronism in Renaissance culture, see F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1967).

[14] Thomas Greene points to Petrarch as the catalyst for re-thinking Medieval notions of history in favor of an awareness of anachronism in the modern sense: "Petrarch precipitated his own personal creative crisis because he made a series of simultaneous discoveries that had been made only fragmentarily before him. It was he who first understood how radically classical antiquity differed from the Christian era; he also saw more clearly than his predecessors how the individual traits of a given society at a given moment form a distinctive constellation; he understood more clearly the philological meaning of anachronism." (Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 29-30).

[15] Quoted in Greene, 34. Note that Erasmus's critique of Ciceronianism does not reveal a reluctance toward imitation in all forms, but instead suggests the kinds of limitations concerning narrow imitation of a single author for which the commonplace and apophthegm traditions worked to compensate. Erasmus's position thus contrasts with that of Scaliger and other Ciceronians, who voiced an unwavering confidence in the applicability of classical authority to present-day discourse. On the decline of the authoritative status of the Ciceronian position, see Antoine Compagnon, who traces a shift in the sixteenth century from the citing (*allegation* or glossing) of authorities to free quotation (where the ancient text is integrated into a new context authorized by the writer).

[16] Some writers avoided the problem of exemplary models altogether by searching out new genres. Historians including John Seldon, Sir Robert Cotton, and Sir Simon D'Ewes, sought to avoid the shadow of Livy and Tacitus by turning to antiquarianism, for which there was no surviving classical

example. Bacon and Montaigne 'invented' the essay genre to complicate and question the authority of past examples.

[17] Hampton, *Writing from History*, 36. Although the earlier scholastic tradition similarly embraced the authority of classical models, scholasticism prioritized the metaphysical implications of those models while humanists emphasized the applicability of the past to their own socio-cultural contexts. See Martin Elsky, *Authorizing Words*, 1989 for an in-depth discussion of these distinctions.

[18] Quoted in Hampton, *Writing from History*, 42.

[19] Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Gouernour* (1531) reprint edition (Menston: Scholar Press, 1970), 6.

[20] Elyot, *Of the Knowledge whiche maketh a wise man* (1533), "The Proheme."

[21] Elyot, *The Boke Named the Gouernour*, 44-45.

[22] Ibid, 46.

[23] Ibid, 41.

[24] Note here the pun on prision/prison, where the early Middle English "prisun" (to imprison, take captive) and the Old French "presion" (to seize, apprehend) suggest a root derivation that joins the two terms. Indeed, this relationship informs the wordplay here, since both "misprision" and being confined to "prison" potentially restrict and limit individual action.

[25] Julie Robin Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 144.

[26] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570), On-Line Edition (University of Virginia, 2000). http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/modeng/modengA.browse.html

[27] Ibid, 270.

[28] Deriving from the 'dangerous' lure of the Sirens in Homer's *Odyssey*, the association of "Siren's songs" with bad advice became a humanist common-place—see for example Queen Elizabeth's famous warning to James VI of Scotland to ward off "Siren's songs."

[29] Ascham, *The Scholemaster Book I*, 220.

[30] *The Scholemaster, Book II*, 245.

[31] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions* (1581) ed. Richard DeMolen (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971), 40.

[32] Ibid, 41.

[33] Ibid, 49.

[34] See Elsky, *Authorizing Words*.

[35] Ascham, *The Scholemaster, Book II*, 284.

[36] For a useful introduction to attitudes toward the "mother tongue" and the place of English in early modern England, see Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953).

[37] Quoted in Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language*, 18.

[38] Quoted in Greene, *The Light of Troy*, 33.

[39] Ascham, *The Scholemaster, Book II*, 292.

[40] Mulcaster, 28-29.

2 Playing the Jest: The Limits of Proper Reading

[1] Richard Helgerson has argued convincingly for the ways in which language (and literary forms) played key roles in shaping notions of Englishness and nation in early modern England. See his *Forms of Nationhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[2] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (1595) ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: T. Nelson, 1965), 802

[3] John Taylor, *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-poet*. Lines 5-10.

[4] Ibid, lines 20-26.

[5] Ibid, lines 29-33.

[6] The discussion of word play here is indebted to William Carroll's influential study, *The Great Feast of Language in* Love's Labour's Lost (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[7] Carroll, *The Great Feast of Language*, 39.

[8] Note the contrast between the translation of Mantuan's first eclogue: "Faustus, since all your flock are chewing the cud in the cool shade, I pray you" and Holofernes' blunder: "easily, I pray, since you are getting everything into a mess under the cool shade."

[9] In *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Patricia Parker identifies a wide range of "preposterous" inversions in the play. In addition to word-play and rhetorical reversals that upset relationships between "what should follow and what should come before," Parker identifies reversals of class and gender roles (most notably centered upon the ambiguity of the transvestite theater) as central to the play's inversions. The disrupting of sequence is indeed central to the play's critique of humanist exemplarity, as evidenced by the numerous instances in which *imitatio* (acts of following) are reversed or confounded in the play.

[10] It is here instructive to identify Berowne's motive for depicting study in this manner—i.e. to emphasize the connection between finding light in the stars and finding light in a lover's eyes, thereby justifying the broader definition of study that includes the pursuit of passion.

[11] Carroll, *The Great Feast of Language*, 34.

[12] For a detailed look at such word play throughout Shakespeare's plays, see Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins*.

[13] Abel Boyer, *The Wise and Ingenious Companion* (1700) in Zall, *A Nest of Ninnies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 252.

[14] Zall, *A Nest of Ninnies*, xiii.

[15] Although Paul Zall's collections of jest books published in the 1960s and 70s remain the most accessible modern editions, recent studies on the topic of jest books and jesting suggest a renewed interest in the topic. See for example Chris Holcombe's *Mirth Making: the Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England* (2001), Beatrice Otto's *Fools are Everywhere* (2001), and the on-line edition of *Gratiae Ludentes* (1638) recently edited by William Barker (see note below).

[16] Zall, 7.

[17] All excerpts from *Gratiae Ludentes* (1638) have been taken from the on-line edition prepared and annotated by graduate students in the department of English at the Memorial University of Newfoundland under the supervision of William Barker. The edition is available on-line at http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~wbarker/gratint.html.

[18] Zall, 169-70.

[19] *Gratiae Ludentes*, 1638.

[20] Zall, 252.

[21] Ibid, 252.

[22] Ibid, 76-77.

[23] Of course, the instability and irregularities of early modern spelling, based largely on the material limitations of moveable type printing contributed to the potential for punning and wordplay. Much work has yet to be done on this fruitful and fascinating topic.

[24] Taylor, John. *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-Poet* (1630), 176-77.

[25] Ibid, 177.

[26] Ibid, 177.

[27] Ibid, 178.

[28] Ibid, 178.

[29] Ibid, 188-89.

[30] Ibid, 186.

3 Anti-theatricality and the Dramatizing of Misreading

[1] For a useful discussion of the physical location of the theaters in relation to notions of authority and representation, see Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michagan Press, 1988).

[2] White, Thomas. *"A Sermon preached at Paul's Cross . . . in the time of the plague"* (November 3, 1577).

[3] White's assertion of course has a long tradition, stemming from Plato's critique of theatrical mimesis in book ten of *The Republic* and extending to Tertullian's equating of theatrical display with the physical

and moral sickness of society. Augustine, in *The City of God* and in *On Christian Doctrine* similarly equates plays with sickness, but unlike Tertullian, he sees the theater as an agent rather than as an underlying cause of moral disease. In part, the distinction stems from Augustine's willingness to see in dramatic representation the potential for moral virtue when alligned with religious doctrine. Plato, on the other hand, sees this potential as only existing in a far-distant past. For more on the history of anti-theatrical views, see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[4] Stubbes, Philip. *The Anatomy of Abuses*, 1583. For provocative discussions of this passage (and the anti-theatrical debate more generally) in terms of representations of gender and sexuality, see especially Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996); Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries*, ch. 4 "The Transvestite Stage" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[5] Anthony Munday, *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait*, in *The English Drama and Stage* (1580) ed. William Hazlitt, (London: Roxburghe Library, 1869), 148.

[6] Assumptions about the productive mimetic authority of dramatic representation date back at least as far as Aristotle's *Poetics* in the fourth century BCE (and contrast with Plato's views of mimesis as socially and psychologically destructive). What unifies plays spanning from ancient Greece to the Medieval period is the proximity of the drama to ritual, particularly in terms of the enacting of religious ritual as part of the theatrical experience. As I will be arguing, the Reformation and other socio-cultural factors that came into play by the mid-1600s function to problematize mimetic and exemplary authority within the dramatic space.

[7] For useful discussions of the parameters and limitations of authority in early modern culture, see John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) and Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Weimann's suggestion that "there is a link (which, I suspect, is of unique cultural potency) between the decline of given, unitary locations of authority and an unprecedented expansion of representational discourse" (*Authority and Representation*, 8) is a central building block of my own discussion. In this case, the notion of "expansion" extends to the expanding potential of early modern plays in their embracing of elements that problematize the authority of dramatic representation.

[8] Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, 25.

[9] Robert Knapp, *Shakespeare—The Theater and the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 47.

[10] While "playfellow" did not necessarily directly signify in relation to dramatic performance during the medieval period, the notion of "player" as dramatic actor was widely recognized by the 15th century and thus the possibility of a double meaning here is suggestive.

[11] See for example David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[12] Knapp, *Shakespeare—The Theater and the Book*, 50.

[13] See, for example, masques by Ben Jonson such as *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), *Oberon, the Fairie King* (1600), and *The Masque of Queens* (1609). In each case, conventional notions of order and authority are recuperated within the course of the dramatic action. While it can be argued that masques do provide a space of ambiguity in, for example, the relationship between masque and anti-masque, or (in the case of *Oberon*) the confusion between king and heir, the fact that both audiences watching the masques and actors participating in them were members of the ruling elite reinforces the overtly allegorical nature of these performances. As such, performative elements work against the capacity for ambiguity, ultimately confirming rather than questioning the authority of the status quo.

[14] Arthur Kinney, "Humanist Poetics and Elizabethan Fiction," *Renaissance* Papers (1978): 32.

[15] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.

[16] For an in-depth discussion of the presence of metaphorical writing and reading on stage, see Frederick Kiefer, *Writing on the Renaissance Stage* (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 1996).

[17] This is made even more complex in this case given that Duncan's assertion itself can be read in several ways, either expressing the face's inability to signify one's interior disposition or calling attention to the face as itself a complex signifier.

[18] See, among others, Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege* (1984) for an in-depth discussion of the ways in which courtier culture played important roles in shaping notions of early modern subjectivity.

[19] In *Censorship and Interpretation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), Annabel Patterson argues that these kinds of ambiguities serve protective purposes for dramatists and their works, allowing playwrights to display potentially seditious material on stage under the thin veil of dramatic fictions. While this argument suggests how dramatic works simultaneously embrace and dismiss the socially-situated implications of their meanings, the problem is that Patterson's point works on the assumption that there is a stable and singular relationship between a literary work and a totalizing institution of state power that attempts to keep literary works in check through the mechanism of censorship. More recently, Lindsay Kaplan has offered an alternative model of early modern censorship in *The Culture of Slander* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), underlining notions of contestation over those of regulation. For Kaplan, the concept of slander stands as a useful model of contestation, highlighting "the material consequences linguistic instability has for the social order" (Kaplan, 9) since the question of what constitutes "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" speech is constantly contested by both artists and the state. While the present discussion is not directly concerned with censorship and slander, Kaplan's argument is useful nevertheless in terms of characterizing the relationship between dramatic representation and socio-cultural context as a highly contested and unstable one.

[20] While it would seem that a distinction might be drawn between the presence of written documents in comedies and tragedies, I would argue that the functions of dramatized misreadings are similar across generic distinctions. In tragedies and comedies (and indeed in other dramatic modes), misreading written texts works to shape action and to define autonomous identities in the play. In his article "Letters and Readers in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Twelfth Night*," *Philological Quarterly* 69.1 (1990): 31-53, Mark Taylor makes the opposite point: namely that letters in tragedy and comedy reinforce differences between the two genres. As my discussion of *Twelfth Night* suggests however, Malvolio's misreading of the letter does not necessarily have 'comic' results.

[21] Thomas Wilson, *The Rule of Reason* (1553) ed. Richard Sprague (Northridge: San Fernando Valley State College Press, 1972), 166.

[22] The speech-act theories of John Austin, John Searle, and Richard Ohmann are particularly pertinent here, providing theories of "language as action" which highlight the performative aspects of the text. See for example Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), Searle, *Speech-Acts: An Essay on the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), and Ohmann, "Speech, Action, and Style" in *Literary Style: A Symposium*, ed. Seymour Chatman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). As Keir Elam suggests in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Routledge, 1980), "the proairetic (or 'action') dynamic of the play is carried, above all, by the intersubjective force of discourse." In other words, speech-act theories call attention to the dramatic speech-event (the reciting of lines) as "the chief form of interaction in the drama" and speaking assumes an importance equal to a fight between characters or a character's departure from the stage.

[23] Elizabeth Pittenger, "To Serve the Queere': Nicholas Udall, Master of the Revels," 174.

[24] The use of language to govern viewer response would be particularly relevant to Udall by virtue of his proximity to instructional school drama as a headmaster and teacher (at Eton and later Westminster). The young audiences would be responsive to the need to use correct grammar and also to the emphasis on reading correctly. Early in the twentieth century, F. S. Boas highlights this capacity with regard to the letter in *Ralph Roister Doister* : "What a capital way of impressing on boys the importance of correct punctuation!" Udall's highly successful instructional text, *Floures for Latine Spekynge* (1534) reinforces the didactic purpose of the theatrical performance, focusing on the plays of Terence as a means to elucidate proper Latin grammar and oration skills. For more on Udall's connections to school drama, see T. H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London: Longman, 1929) and William Edgerton, *Nicholas Udall* (New York: Twayne, 1965).

[25] See Patricia Parker's discussion of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Pres, 1996) 83-115.

[26] In similar ways, Viola's transvestite disguise as the page Cesario can be said to regulate gender distinctions within the course of the play.

[27] Quoted in Gail K. Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 32.
[28] Elizabeth Freund, "*Twelfth Night* and the Tyranny of Interpretation," *ELH* 53.3 (1986): 481.
[29] In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault emphasizes the constructed nature of human identity within the framework of interpretation: "If interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations" (151-52). Malvolio seems to clearly articulate this process through his gesture of imposing meaning on "M. O. A. I" in order to read himself into the letter and thus achieve social mobility.
[30] For an extensive study of sumptuary laws, see Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege*, chapter 5.
[31] As Jean MacIntyre points out in *Costumes and Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), Malvolio's cross-garters and yellow stockings would have been out-dated by more than fifteen years by the time *Twelfth Night* appeared on the stage. In her discussion, MacIntyre examines several other plays that highlight the dated nature of that fashion: "In *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, the young gentlemen ridicule Nicholas's cross-garters, implying that by 1600 they were no more than an affection of rustic servants" (189).
[32] See for example Norman Rabkin's introduction to the play in *Drama of the English Renaissance II: The Stuart Period* (1976).
[33] Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. Gordon Campbell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xv.
[34] Many scholars have attempted to explain Jonson's inconsistent attitude toward popular drama, at times supporting it and at times defiantly criticizing it (in his move from popular dramatist to the author of masques and poems). I would argue that Jonson's inconsistency stems from the larger notion of dramatic ambiguity that we have been tracing. By problematizing the relationship between theater as exemplar and theater as subversive 'play' (including the resistance of dramatic representation to real-life applicability), Jonson is able to evade any singular definition in terms of his attitude toward the popular stage.
[35] See also Martin Butler, *Theater and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Butler argues that the play dramatizes the effects of acting (by way of the playlets) as "disruptive, mischievious, and down-right subversive" (159).
[36] Martin White, *Renaissance Drama in Action* (London: Routledge, 1998), 108.
[37] David Reinheimer makes a similar argument in his essay "The Roman Actor, Censorship, and Dramatic Autonomy," *SEL* 38.2 (1998): 317-32, by suggesting that Massinger's play stands as a response to both popular and royal censorship. For each of the inset plays within the drama, Reinheimer demonstrates how the censorship of Domitia and Domitian in their expectations about the totalizing function of dramatic meaning "cancels the didactic efforts of the play." While I agree that the play dramatizes the detrimental consequences that stem from totalizing readings, I would argue that the play itself works to problematize any singular sense of didactic purpose by unmasking this expectation as another form of totalizing (and tyrannical) reading.
[38] Thomas Heywood, *Apology for Actors* (1612) ed. Arthur Freeman (New York: Garland, 1973), E3.
[39] Heywood frequently reiterates how plays can model virtues and warn against vice for viewers; yet he also goes a step further by showing how mistaking theater for real life can be beneficial as well. Take for example the following anecdote from Heywood's *Apology*:

> As strange an accident happened to a company of the same quality some 12 yeares ago, or not so much, who playing late in the night at a place called *Perin* in *Cornwall*, certaine *Spaniards* were landed the same night unsuspected, and undiscovered, with intent to take in the towne, spoyle and burne it, when suddenly, even upon their entrance, the players (ignorant as the townes-men of any such attempt) presenting a battle on the stage with their drum and trumpets strooke up a lowd alarme: which the enemy hearing, and fearing they were discovered, amazedly retired, made some few idle shot in the bravado, and so in a hurly-burly fled disorderly to their boats. At the report of this tumult, the townes-men were immediately armed, and pursued them to the sea, praysing God for their happy deliverance from so great a danger, who by his providence made these strangers the instrument and secondary meanes of their escape from such imminent mischief, and the tyranny of so remorceless an enemy. (G2)

[40] Ibid, F3.

4 Paper Boats in a Sea of Fancy: Willful Misreadings of Geographic Place

[1] Richard Carew, *The Excellencie of the English Tongue* (1614), ed. Ian Lancashire (*Rep. Criticism On-Line*, 1996) 13.
[2] Ibid, 19.
[3] For an interesting instance of this ambiguity concerning categories of native and foreign, see Mary Carleton's pamphlet *The Case of Mary Carleton* (1663). At the heart of her duplicitous identity as a suspected criminal is the discrepancy between her own assertion that she is an aristocratic German princess and her competing identity as the modest daughter of a Canterbury fiddler. In her writing, Carleton refuses to embrace an authentic identity, much as the travelers that Carew describes confound rather than confirm any singular identity based on geographic place.
[4] See especially Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (1952) for the argument that English became increasingly recognized as a viable and legimate language in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For more recent discussions on this topic, see Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), particularly Chapter 5, *Tradition and Sovereignty*.
[5] John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.
[6] Ibid, 7.
[7] For a perceptive discussion of this concept, see Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7.
[8] Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries*, ed. Jack Beeching (New York: Penguin, 1972), 35.
[9] In *An Empire Nowhere* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), Jeffrey Knapp argues that England's perceived "immateriality" in the global picture is negotiated within literary spaces as "an otherworldly English potentiality" that at once asserts English imperial power as "invested" in its literary transactions and recognizes "England's immaterial value to be a literary no-place that helps the English reader see the limitations of a material investment in little England alone" (7). Knapp's argument is provocative in terms of identifying the complex parameters of English self-representation and self-fashioning. Yet, representations of England as inconsequential trifle speak less to historical reality than to the notion that English self-definition was in the process of taking shape within the literary and political imagination.
[10] Gillies, 36.
[11] This kind of examination in many ways parallels Kevin Sharpe's recent work on Sir William Drake, an aristocrat whose recently discovered reading notes and commonplace book reveal reading practices that diverge sharply from those of official power. Embracing adages from Machiavelli, Sejanus, and other anti-exemplary figures, Drake thus complicates his own position within the courtier culture of early modern England. See especially Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
[12] Michel De Certeau, *Heterologies*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 67.
[13] Richard Carew's chorographic project of describing Cornwall in his *Survey of Cornwall* similarly unsettles notions of difference and familiarity, whereby Cornwall is at once distinguished for its difference from other shires and central in defining "the body of all England." See Helgerson's discussion of Carew in *Forms of Nationhood.*
[14] As a "Last Voyage," the account is aptly mistitled, given that Taylor went on to write annual travel accounts until his death in 1653.
[15] Quoted in John Chandler (ed), *Travels Through Stuart Britain* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 134-35.
[16] While Taylor did attend grammar school, he nevertheless playfully acknowledges his identity as a common water-man (an unlearned "sculler") throughout much of his writing.
[17] Taylor, *All the Works*, 74.

[18] For more on Taylor's biography and literary output, see B. S. Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). For a useful introduction to the travel writings, see Warren Wooden, "The Peculiar Peregrinations of John Taylor the Water-Poet: A Study in Seventeenth-Century British Travel Literature," *Prose Studies* 6.1 (1983): 3-20.

[19] While many subscribers followed through on their promise, many more did not, and in fact it is believed that Taylor met his starvation death in 1653 as a result of unscrupulous patrons.

[20] *All the Works*, 58.

[21] Ibid, 59.

[22] Ibid, 59 [sic].

[23] See Victor Skretkowicz, "Poems of Discovery: John Taylor's Barbarian, Utopian and Barmooda Tongues," *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 3-4 (1992 Sept-Dec): 391-99.

[24] In addition to the elegies and other literary rebuttals to Coryat, Taylor incorporates letters and documents published by Coryat into his own text. Among these are a letter written by Coryat to his mother as well as a copy of the speech that Coryat presented to the Great Mogull in Persian. The presence of these texts in Taylor's *All the Works of John Taylor the Water-Poet* is somewhat enigmatic, given the nature of the feud between the two writers. Yet the fact that Taylor pays tribute to Coryat by publishing his rival's work suggests another way in which Taylor's writing works to complicate rather than confirm boundaries of difference.

[25] *All the Works*, 124.

[26] Ibid, 127.

[27] Ibid, 129.

[28] Ibid, 9.

[29] Ibid, 9.

[30] Although English, the inhabitants of the village of Gotham were mythologized during this period as a distinctly uncivil and wild people.

[31] *All the Works*, 10.

[32] Ibid, 9.

[33] Ibid, 22.

[34] Quoted in Chandler, 284-85. The theme of shunning foreign travel in the interest of knowing one's own country is revisited by Celia Fiennes later in the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. Like John Taylor, Fiennes traveled around England, chronicling her solo travels through all of England's counties in her *Journeys* (1685-1712).

[35] Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (1666), ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 1992), 124.

[36] Ibid, 124.

[37] Ibid, 121.

[38] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary*, 30 May, 1667. ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 242-43.

[39] *Blazing World*, 145.

[40] For an insightful discussion of the interplay between utopian fiction and biographical representation, see Amy Boesky's chapter on Cavendish entitled " 'No Subjects to the Commonwealth': Nation and Imagination in Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*" in *Founding Fictions* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

[41] *Blazing World*, 190.

[42] Ibid, 190.

[43] See Rosemary Kegl, " 'The world I have made': Margaret Cavendish, feminism, and the *Blazing-World*." In *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Ed. Valerie Traub et al, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[44] *Blazing World*, 210.

[45] Ibid, 181.

[46] Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in 17th Century England," *Genders* 1(1988): 24-39.

[47] See Rachel Trubowitz, "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchic Self: Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11 (1992): 229-46.

5 A Crisis of Misreading: the English Civil War and Republican Responses

[1] Timothy Hampton's seminal study on the status of exemplarity and interpretation in early modern Europe provides a foundation for the present study of Milton and his contemporaries. Particularly instructive is the following claim: "[t]ransformations of humanist culture in the late sixteenth century bring with them a crisis in the reading of the heroic body. And this crisis in turn helps to generate new modes of understanding and representing the self in time" (*Writing from History*, 30). By challenging the interpretive practices of the monarchic body, Milton and his contemporary republican writers undermine the totality and stability of cultural orthodoxy.

[2] Especially useful here is Francis Barker's distinction between pre-Miltonic preemptive control and the Miltonic state in which the individual subject is essentially free to be tested. According to Barker, "[c]onscience, assisted by that private reason, deliberation, and judgement with which *Areopagitica* invests the bourgeois citizen, enters in the text into an essentially single battle with temptation (amongst whose 'objects of lust' (2:527), as Pepys discovered, are certain books) and in doing so interiorizes conflicts and dynamics which are newly encoded as belonging to subjectivity rather than to the social exterior." See Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body* (London: Methuen, 1984), 47.

[3] David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120.

[4] CPW II, 502-03.

[5] Ibid, 565.

[6] Stanley Fish, "Driving the Letter" in *Re-membering Milton*, ed. Margaret Ferguson and Mary Nyquist, (New York: Methuen, 1987), 238.

[7] CPW II, 515. In subsequent editions of the tract, "wayfaring" became "warfaring," underscoring the increasingly militaristic urgency of the anti-Royalist agenda.

[8] Ibid, 512-13.

[9] Ibid, 487.

[10] Ibid, 485.

[11] Ibid, 489.

[12] According to David Loewenstein, Milton in *Areopagitica* treats history as "a complex, dynamic process where vigorous ideological conflict and opposition within a revolutionary society generate radical reform" (35). Any totalizing notion of authority (embodied specifically here by the Stuart monarchy) threatens this climate of discord and reform.

[13] For an insightful discussion of iconoclasm in Milton's prose, see Lana Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric: Milton's Iconoclasm and the Poetics of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). In an earlier essay, Cable states, "To break an old icon is to create an affective vacuum into which new meanings and responses the more readily may enter; to create a new icon is to lay claim to affective responses hitherto elicited by a different icon. See Cable, "Milton's Iconoclastic Truth," in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, ed. David Loewenstein and James G. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 138. For Milton, these "new meanings" involve recuperating history from the totalizing authority of the King's image.

[14] *Eikon Basilike*, 111.

[15] CPW III, 533.

[16] David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 60.

[17] CPW III, 547.

[18] Ibid, 562.

[19] Ibid, 362-63.

[20] Ibid, 366.

[21] Ibid, 564.

[22] Ibid, 361.

[23] William Harvey, *De Motu Cordis* (1628), vii.

[24] CPW III, 49.

[25] Ibid, 502.

[26] CPW II, 455.

[27] Ibid, 463.

[28] Hutchinson, "Third Elegy," 10-16.
[29] In numerous court masques from the period, the monarch is directly aligned with the image of the sun. See for example Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*.
[30] Hutchinson, "Third Elegy," 33-34.
[31] Ibid, 50-54.
[32] John Rogers, *Milton and the Matter of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6.
[33] David Norbrook, *Order and Disorder* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), Introduction, xxxvi.
[34] On the impact of the republican defeat upon the literary imagination, see Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984).
[35] Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 4.
[36] *Order and Disorder*, 4.43-46.
[37] Hutchinson, "On the Principles of the Christian Religion," 33.
[38] *Order and Disorder*, 5.633-34.
[39] Ibid, 3. 626-40.
[40] Ibid, 5.535-58.
[41] Ibid, 5.369-378.
[42] Marvell, "On Reading Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*," 5-8.
[43] Dryden famously asked Milton for permission to abandon blank verse in favor of standard rhyme in his operatic imitation of the poem, in order to keep up with the fashions of his day.
[44] Marvell, 45-50.
[45] Quoted in Orgel and Goldberg, *John Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Introduction, x.
[46] By invoking *The State of Innocence* (1679), John Dryden's operatic imitation of *Paradise Lost*, Marvell further underscores the perceived inferiority of rhymed verse. According to Marvell, such attempts to mimic Milton's "vast design" only confirm those authors' "ignorance or theft."
[47] As David Quint and others have argued, the tendency to recognize Milton's late poems as a "turning away from the public spirit of [his] controversialist prose" is undermined by "the persistence of anti-Royalist sentiment in [*Paradise Lost*]" (Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 269) and in the powerful image of resistance that concludes *Samson Agonistes*.
[48] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard (New York: Penguin, 1998), IX. 20-24.
[49] Julia M. Walker, "The Poetics of Antitext and the Politics of Milton's Allusions," *SEL* 37 (1997): 151-52.
[50] Ibid, 151.
[51] *Paradise Lost*, IV. 10-12.
[52] Quint, *Epic and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 187.
[53] Christopher Hill puts it this way in *The Experience of Defeat* (1984): "Milton stressed in the *De Doctrina Christiana* 'that God made no absolute decrees about anything which he left in the power of men, for men have freedom of action.' God's decrees are frequently contingent. Human history as revealed to Adam in Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost* looks like an unending series of defeats. Rather it is a series of examples which challenge us in the present." (313)
[54] *Paradise Lost*, V. 110-14.
[55] Ibid, XII. 300-305.
[56] Ibid, XII. 620-622.
[57] John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 41.
[58] Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 302.
[59] Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208.
[60] Mary Ann Radzinowicz has argued convincingly for Milton's mediating position as both a spokesman for the experience of defeat and as republican defiant. This seemingly contradictory identity is particularly useful to the present argument as it prioritizes revolutionary discord over the coercive stagnancy of fixed meanings and singular interpretations. In his recent *Milton and the Rabbis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Jeffrey Shoulson provocatively builds upon the complexity of Milton's at once orthodox and heretical identity by situating his poetics within intersecting Hellenic, Hebraic, and Christian traditions.

Conclusion

[1] Although the body of work addressing early modern misreading as a productive process is relatively small, recent studies such as Francois Rigolot's forthcoming *L'Erreur de la Renaissance* (2002) promise to expand the topic in provocative directions.
[2] While the notion of productive error stands as an integral part of experimental science to the present day, the fallibility of the individual mind is generally at odds with the stability of objective knowing within the context of empirical discourse.
[3] See also Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).
[4] Bacon's four types of misconception (the "Idols of the Cave," "Idols of the Tribe," "Idols of the Market—place" and "Idols of the Theatre") underscore the detrimental forces of the acting subject. Central to each is *eidolon*, "an image in the mind, a mental fiction," that reiterates the imaginative authority of the individual subject as a dangerous threat.
[5] Thomas Spratt, *History of the Royal Society* (1667), ed. Jackson Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones, (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1958), i.
[6] Ibid, iii.
[7] See especially M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).
[8] Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of the large, rich, and* bewitful Empyre of Guiana (1595) ed. Neil Whitehead, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997). I am indebted to W. Scott Howard for pointing out this instance of misreading.
[9] Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries*, ed. Jack Beeching (New York: Penguin, 1972), 182.
[10] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), On-Line edition (University of Michigan, 1993), http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/p/pd-modeng/pd-modeng-idx?type=header&id=PainTSense.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Joshua Benjamin Fisher
Department of English Box 354330
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-4330
jbfisher@u.washington.edu

EDUCATION

PhD with Honors English, University of Washington, 2002
Dissertation: "Misreading and the Parameters of Exemplarity in Early Modern England"
Directors: Sara van den Berg and Barbara Fuchs (co-chairs)
MA English, University of Washington, 1997
BA English, Reed College, 1994

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND HONORS

Honors Distinction, Doctoral Dissertation (2002)
Honors Distinction, Doctoral Preliminary Examinations (1999)
Travel Grant, University of Washington (1998)
International Travel Grant, University of Washington (1997)
Travel Grant, University of Washington (1997)
Teaching Assistantship, University of Washington (1996-99)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2002-Present Lecturer, Humanities Program, West Virginia University
Introduction to Humanities: Ancient to Medieval (Humanities 101) Fall 2002
Introduction to Humanities: Renaissance to Contemporary (Humanities 102) Spring 2003
2000-2002Visiting Lecturer, Department of English, West Virginia University
Technical Writing (English 305), Spring 2002
Composition and Rhetoric (English 2/102), Fall 2000-Spring 2002
Introduction to Poetry and Drama: Renaissance to Post-Modern (English 35/131), Fall 2000
1999-2000 Visiting Instructor, Department of English, Washington State University
Accessing Information for Research (GenEd 300), Spring 2000
Advanced Rhetoric (English 301), Spring 2000
Composition (English 101), Fall 1999
1996-1999 Teaching Assistant, Department of English, University of Washington
British Literary Culture 1600-1800: the Long Renaissance (English 229), Fall 1998-Spring 1999
Composition and Social Issues (English 121), Spring 1998
Composition and Literary Genres (English 111), Fall 1997-Spring 1998
Expository Writing (English 131), Fall 1996-Spring 1997

PRESENTATIONS

- "Ventriloquism, Mimicry, and Misreading in John Taylor the Water-Poet." Renaissance Society of America Conference, Toronto, Canada, April 2003.
- "Conversion, Translation, Faith, and the Englished Jew." Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies Conference, Tampa, Florida, November 2002.

PRESENTATIONS CONT.

- "Anti-Theatricality and Limits of Exemplary Authority in Early Modern Drama." South-Central Renaissance Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, April 2002
- "Misreadings of Textual and Geographic Place in the Travel Narratives of John Taylor the Water-Poet." Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 2001.
- " 'Strange Yet English Fashions': Re-Defining Ethnographic Boundaries in the Early Modern Wagering Journey Narrative." Sixteenth Century Studies Association, Denver, Colorado, October 2000.
- "Cosmetique Usurpations: Face Painting and Problems of Subjectivity in Webster's *The White Devil*." Sixteenth Century Studies Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 1998.
- " 'To Read Him By His Form': Hermeneutic Ambiguity and the Fashioning of Identity in *Ralph Roister-Doister* and *Twelfth Night*." Sixteenth Century Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, October 1997.
- "Mispointing and Missing the Point: The Duplicitous Letter in Udall's *Ralph Roister-Doister*." Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, Banff, Alberta, Canada, May 1997.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Modern Language Association
- Renaissance Society of America
- Sixteenth Century Studies Association
- South Central Renaissance Association
- Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association
- Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- Assistant Administrative Director, GenEd 300-Accessing Information for Research Program, Washington State University, Spring 2000
- Member, English Graduate Organization, University of Washington, 1995-2002

REFERENCES

- Professor Sara van den Berg, Chair, Department of English, St. Louis University
- Professor Barbara Fuchs, Associate Professor of English, University of Washington
- Professor Fred J. Levy, Professor of History, University of Washington
- Professor Timothy D. Adams, Chair, Department of English, West Virginia University