

# NOCTUA:

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at The W



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Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present the second volume of *Noctua: Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* at The W. This journal provides a forum for Mississippi University for Women students to present their original research on the Middle Ages and Renaissance and is sponsored by the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Minor in the Department of History, Political Science, and Geography. The articles in this journal arise from the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Research Symposium that took place on April 7, 2017 on the campus of The W.

This issue includes five articles, related to both history and literature, examining life, death, power, and love in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. First, Tera Pate, who just graduated with a B.A. in English discusses the use of the word “crown” in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and *I Henry IV*. Second, Lauren Harmon, a rising sophomore in History, compares the power of two queens (Eleanor of Aquitaine and Matilda of Scotland) using letters to and from powerful religious men. Third, Morrigan Hollis, a rising junior in English and History, argues that despite Guinevere’s bad reputation in modern culture, her role in *Le Morte d’Arthur* showed power and agency. Fourth, James O’Loughlin, a Life-Long Learner at The W, who holds two B.A.s from The W in General Studies and English, argues for alternate authorship of Andreas Capellanus’s *Treatise on Love*. Finally, this volume ends with Joshua Herrick, a rising junior in History, who examines both the biblical and classical influences in Dante’s *Inferno*. My heartfelt thanks to the authors for allowing us to publish their work.

Thanks to the Kossen Center for Teaching & Learning, who funded the Research Symposium, and the QEP Faculty Development Committee, who funded the production of the printed copies of this journal through an APIL grant. Thanks, also, to Nick Adams, who designed the cover of the journal and the layout of the print version, and Rich Sobolewski, who created the online version of the journal. Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Gabrielle Lestrade, senior English major and editor of this volume, without whom this project could not have succeeded.

Dr. Kristi DiClemente  
May 2017



## Crown and Character:

### How the Word “Crown” Reveals Character in Richard II and I Henry IV

Tera Pate

William Shakespeare wrote no less than thirty-seven plays during his career as a playwright, of which eleven, nearly a third, are histories. These histories are dark, bloody, and violent affairs. They include ferocious rages towards a throne, which, more often than not, is wrongfully wrested from its true inheritor's hands among other savageries towards royalty that seem commonplace in the grand scale of war. As such, perhaps it is natural that the word “crown” pervades two of these plays, Richard II and I Henry IV, being used no less than thirty times in their combined pages. To say that Shakespeare used this word simply due to its natural status as the crux of these civil conflicts, however, seems to be neglecting the serious role that this word plays in characterization. The two rival claimants to the throne in these plays, Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke (later Henry IV), use the word in strikingly different ways, ways that are inextricably connected to their character as a whole. When “crown” is used by or in reference to the monarch Richard II, the word's definition and setting reveal his metaphysical pretensions as well as his more worldly greed. Conversely, Bolingbroke and his followers use the word in ways that reveal Bolingbroke's subliminal aggression towards the king. However, a look at a later play, I Henry IV, reveals a shift in this definition pattern and begins to reveal exactly how alike these characters actually are. The differing portrayals of the “crowned” monarch are actually not as dissimilar as they first appear.

Richard's characterization as hypocrite and pretender to a holy martyrdom begins almost with the first instance of the word “crown” in the play. In this instance, Thomas Mowbray has just entered the throne room to defend his reputation against the murderous charges leveled at him by Henry Bolingbroke. This episode is a well-known one, recounted in basically every chronicle of this time, as is its protagonist. In the historical accounts, Holinshed's Chronicle and The Mirror for Magistrates, Mowbray is defined as “plot[ting] the Duke of Gloucester's death” in the same way that he is hinted at doing in Shakespeare's play, as the previous quote makes clear (R2 1.1.103). To complicate matters, the Duke of Gloucester (otherwise known as Thomas of Woodstock) was actually an uncle to both Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke. Richard's hypocrisy plays into this scene due to the fact that in all of the tales it is Richard who orders his ambitious Uncle Gloucester's abduction and murder. As acknowledged by the

previous quote (expressed by Bolingbroke), Shakespeare was well aware of this tale and is probably manipulating it throughout this scene.

This prior incident contributes to the irony and duplicity of Mowbray's statement. Mowbray, an all-but-proven traitor at this point, greets Richard by saying he wishes each of the sovereign's days to be better than his last "[u]ntil the heavens, envying earth's good hap, / [a]dd an immortal title to your crown" (23-25). While it may not be obvious at first exactly how this statement adds to the characterization of Richard as hypocrite and a seeker after the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the "crown" as "Christ's crown of thorns," a closer reading of the word and the words surrounding it makes these interpretations all too clear (def. 2b).

Whenever in the play Richard or one of his followers refers to the crown, it is invariably in reference to some aspect of transcendence or of immortality. We see words like "God," "angel," and "beads-man," in conjunction with many of his and his followers' uses of the word (R2 3.2. 61, 62, 119). Clearly from these words used in conjunction with the nominal "crown" then, the reader is led to believe that Richard believes himself to be sacred, higher than those around him and so above their disapproving words about his state. Moreover, when Mowbray says that God may "add" to Richard's crown, it is almost as if he is proclaiming Richard to be beyond holiness (25). His crown is on such an untouchable, divine level that even the heavens can do nothing more than "add" to its prestige (25).

The usage of the word in this scene is no exception to this theme of Richard's pervading holiness. Mowbray seems to define Richard's lifestyle as deserving of a sort of martyrdom or of "an immortal title" (25). Clearly, he is using very formal language here; this section is basically an area for the opponents to flatter the king in order to improve their chances of success in their argument. Even this fact does little to diminish the hypocrisy inherent in Richard accepting this holy definition of his crown from a man who presumably knows exactly how unholy his state actually is. Bolingbroke, Richard's ultimate opponent, does not flatter the king in this way. He simply wishes the king long life, not eternal glory, either due to his lack of appreciation for the king's supposed holiness or his view of the lacking practicality of such a pronouncement (21-22). Of course, Bolingbroke is not as close to Richard as his followers and flatterers are and so does not know the closest way to his supposedly pure heart.

However, the hypocrisy in this scene, in Richard's acceptance of his state as better than that of God's and of his crown as a holy one, is rampant. For one, this

statement in and of itself is mild blasphemy. Richard is basically acknowledging his state as better than that of the heavens and hence himself more holy than the Holy Father himself when he accepts these words. Any casual reader can pick up on the fact that a true figure worthy of martyrdom would not acknowledge his state to be thus or accept his subjects' aggrandizing of his state. On a second note, whereas Bolingbroke wishes Richard long life, Mowbray is here alluding to the king's death, which in Medieval and Early Modern culture would have been punishable in a severe manner. However, despite this fact, Richard says that Mowbray and Bolingbroke both "flatter" him, clearly not seeing the threat behind this for the mere mention of his holiness (26). He treats the statements as equal; the flattery seems to be foremost in his mind. In fact, it seems that he does not consider this definition of his state and crown as hypocritical at all.

This apparent relishing of holiness only continues in Richard's first explicit use of the word "crown." In this later scene, Richard has returned from his campaigns in Ireland only to discover Bolingbroke's invasion of his lands. He scoffs at his advisor's worry (again not seeming to be in touch with the worldly, not metaphysical reality of his situation) and reminds them that for every soldier "[t]o lift shrewd steel against our golden crown / God for his Richard hath in pay / [a] glorious angel" (3.2.60-62). At first glance, Richard's reference to the "golden" detail on his crown seems to infer that this item is simply a physical diadem, an item to be removed and discarded at will. It sounds very much like the gold won by a victor or a conqueror in this description (which is perhaps a subliminal indication of Richard's fears). However, the word is still surrounded by the religious detail that Richard so often favors when categorizing his state. This "crown" is as much a "crown of thorns" as was the previous one found in Richard's flattery (def. 2b).

The first reference to Richard's identification of his "crown" with Christ's crown and, hence, himself with Christ comes through the use of the possessive pronoun before "Richard" (R2 3.2.61). Richard describes himself as belonging to God, as being "his," almost in the same way that people would describe Jesus as God's son (61). Thus, Richard is, in effect, inserting his claim in place of that of Christ's in this scene. However, this reference can never be seen as more than hypocritical when considering also the flattery of the last scene when Richard blatantly accepted, even welcomed Mowbray's flattery about how heaven could only make additions to Richard's crown. Heaven in that scene did not hold any power to actually bequeath a crown to Richard; it only had the

ability to occasionally add to the grandeur of his court (which is interestingly also a form of the “crown” because the court is part of the crownlands). However, the moment Richard’s life becomes cumbersome, less than grand, he is all too ready to assume a veil of humility, a shade of meekness that makes him Christ’s equivalent. As he will say later in the play, “[w]ith mine own tears, I wash away my balm, [w]ith my own hands I give away my crown” (4.1.21-217). This later transformation rings as decidedly untrue as the earlier one, however, because he prefaces this statement with “ay; for I must nothing be,” the hint that he is forced unto this state being never forgotten (4.1.210). His “crown” of martyrdom is decidedly a matter of convenience, subject to Richard’s transformations in mood above all else.

Moreover he only adds to his clear misunderstanding of the divine and its part in the “crown” when he says that God “hath in his pay / [a] glorious angel” (61-62). Richard automatically associates God’s court with his own court when he should be doing the exact opposite, namely, modeling his court upon the holy one, truly seeking to live up to his claims of martyrdom. He cannot comprehend the fact that God would be beyond the corruption that money can bring or that his servants would willingly serve him without payment. It is no coincidence that the word “crown” is used in close association with words referencing both divinity and money in this scene. Richard often cannot differentiate between these two definitions of the word. To Richard, grandeur is holy; money is holy. When Richard imagines the divine court, it is obvious that he sees this court in terms of his own court with the same corruption and glorification of Richard in spite of himself. The unreality here is rife, but Richard truly believes that God would willingly strip the English men and women of their property and their land just as Richard stripped John of Gaunt of “his coffers” in order to fund Richard’s conquest of Ireland (1.4.62). Virtue has no place in Richard’s conception of holiness. He considers his crown holy only due to a blinding level of personal narcissism.

Mark Bayer comments on this scene in a way that adds yet another level of incompatibility to Richard’s self-conception of his “crown” as holy. Bayer says that Shakespeare is using this scene to evoke the mood and temperament of the Crusades, during which time kings did indeed believe (or, at least, ostensibly believe) that their fight was a holy one (141). The warriors that the kings lead into battle during these conflicts were, of course, offered forgiveness for all of their sins, or, in other words, an automatic ascent into heaven without the token purification in purgatory. When Richard is referencing the fact that God is

on his side, he is invoking the medieval dream in which “subjects continue to equate their monarch with the Christian soldier” (141). The problem with this equation is that Richard is striving to regain his crownlands, not the Holy Land. He is trying to retake a throne that he lost through his own greed, through the usurping of lands not rightfully his, not regain a land that has been taken by the infidel. If anything, Bolingbroke is the “Christian soldier” seeking to free the land from tyranny and the deadly sin of greed (which perhaps accords well with the medieval notion of the invading Turk) while Richard is the infidel attempting to plunge the land into a darkness of the damned (141). Then, in any interpretation, Richard’s conception of his “crown” as one earned through the trials and tribulations, the meekness and subservience of Jesus Christ, fails entirely, revealing only his shortcomings as a Christian ruler.

The close association of the word “crown” with words connected to money in this scene only predicts a later scene in the play when the true nature of Richard’s court is actually revealed. Naturally, this nature is revealed in Richard’s absence by one of the flatterers that he so often listened to in the past. After all, these flatterers had to know Richard’s effusions well in order to reap the utmost advantage under his seeming tutelage. In this scene, the courtiers are speaking of who in the court should be exiled or put in prison for their connections to Richard’s regime. An accusation comes up against Aumerle, Bolingbroke’s cousin. Bagot, the former “caterpillar” of the realm, says that Aumerle “had rather refuse / [t]he offer of an hundred thousand crowns / [t]han Bolingbroke’s return to England” (R2 3.2.170, 4.1.16-18). A clearer reference to a member of Richard’s grandiose regime being highly concerned with crowns in their definition as “[a] coin (when last minted) of Great Britain of the value of five shillings” cannot be found more clearly elsewhere in the text (“Crown” def. 8b). To put the sheer enormity of wealth expressed in this statement into further perspective, in Shakespeare’s day there were twenty shillings to a pound, meaning that Aumerle is casually (and this statement in context truly sounds as if he believes this money is readily accessible to him) gambling with twenty-five thousand pounds (Emsley et al. par. 1). To put this into still further relief, a carpenter’s wage for one day of work in the year 1700 was only slightly over two shillings (par. 11). While it could be argued that Aumerle chooses this huge amount in a spirit of hyperbole, considering the grandiosity of Richard’s court (he sees no problem in seizing an entire Duke’s estates into his hands without cause) the reverse – that he considers gambling with this amount normal – seems likelier.

From this speech late in the text, Richard's greed is now clear. Aumerle is, from the earliest sections of the text, a consummate follower of the failing monarch. If he has ingrained the definition of the crown as a definition indelibly links to money, then it can be conjectured that the entirety of Richard's court, including Richard himself, have become one with this definition as well. The crown to them is a source of power, fashion, and grand occasions. It has little to no significance or recognition of the true state of English politics as seen in the fact that it cannot comprehend why seizing the rightful lands of a powerful lord in exile may not be a fine idea. Richard's metaphysical pretension may blind him, but his worldly greed, the greed circulating around his court, blinds him no less.

Shakespeare introduces these concepts about Richard much more skillfully than do other playwrights of this time period. These playwrights seem to worry about the obviousness of their statement and about the audience's ability to determine the fact that Richard is indeed a hypocrite on more than one level. For example, the anonymous play *Jack Straw* has Richard say that he will "fweare by all the Honour of his "Crowne" that the rebels taking part in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 will have "pardon all," when the author knows that his entire audience remembers Richard's oath breaking to the commons during this event (*Life and Death* 3.1.69, 70) <sup>1</sup>. The audience knows that Richard will shatter a crucial commandment here and diminish the supposed "honour" of his "crown" (the story of Richard's reign and overthrow were still conventional knowledge in Shakespeare's time due to the chronicles), yet the author, lacking Shakespeare's subtlety, seems to need to make this upcoming betrayal clearer through words (69).

An alternative example of this seeming necessity to emphasize comes in the anonymous play sometimes attributed to Shakespeare, *Thomas of Woodstock*. In this play, Richard not only farms his realm in order to begin a new fashion of court, but he also constantly says "I'll wage my crown" when any event in the slightest gives him hope or amazes him (*Corbin and Sage* 2.2.29). It is as though the author must constantly push the point to the audience that this is a king who gambles with his crown as though it were money. In both of these instances, Richard is clearly greedy, clearly hypocritical. However, in neither instance does the definition of the crown progress away from the actual,

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1 Due to the original play's lack of act and scene numbers, these numbers for *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* have been modernized based on the edition of the play published by The Groundling Press and edited by Christopher Hapka, though the quotes are from the facsimile of the original.

physical crown. There is no hidden symbolism behind the word like we find in Shakespeare (whether it was intentional or not). Moreover, there is no effort to gradually reveal Richard's character in the masterful ways that Shakespeare does. In short, the bard outsmarts them all in terms of symbolism and characterization.

Nor does he stop this masterful process with Richard. Bolingbroke's and his followers' references to the word "crown" are just as masterful as are the pretentious soon-to-be ex-monarch's. These references begin from the moment that Richard wrongfully seizes John of Gaunt's (and, hence, Bolingbroke's) property into his own hands. This immediately disgruntles some of the dukes that are in his train, particularly the duke of Northumberland who overhears the Duke of York's speech about Richard's knowing destruction of the chain of being. In the speech, York says, "[l]et not tomorrow then ensue today...for how art thou a king / [b]ut by fair sequence and succession" (R2 2.1.206-208). Clearly, the Duke of York, Bolingbroke's uncle, feels as much as Bolingbroke how this action breaks the code of justice in the land. The king has become the worst offender against his own state because of his greed.

As though responding to this unspoken sentiment with a patriotic zeal, Northumberland says to the lords that linger after Richard's absence that he feels that they must "[i]mp out our drooping country's broken wing" and "[r]edeem from broking pawn the blemished crown" (303, 304). When Northumberland speaks these words, it should be noted how many verbs accompany his thoughts about the crown. He says they should "imp out" their nation's "wing" as though the nation is a bird, perhaps even a falcon in a contest of falconer (303). It is as though the country and the crown are particularly spectacular birds that could be made to win more often and remain stronger through the hands of a more expert falconer. On the other hand when he says that they must redeem from "broking pawn the blemished crown," the first image that comes to mind is a metal, perhaps on a piece of armor or even on a trophy, that has become spotted, "blemished" from misuse and lack of proper cleaning (304). Even the detail about the crown being in "broking pawn" seems to evoke images of armor sold from the failing house of a rich man, the honor of his family flowing away due to his own greed. Whether the crown is a sort of trophy or a suit of armor in this scene, though, the sense is that it is an item that would have brought glory to its wearer in some sort of competition during their youth, perhaps in the jousts or some other royal enterprise. Either interpretation, then, reveals

that Northumberland considers the crown as most closely fitting the definition of “the wreath with which the victor was crowned in the ancient Grecian and Roman games” (“Crown” def. 1b). The crown is an item to be won and maintained through superior skill.

Now, these words of conspiracy are first uttered in the play by Northumberland and would seem to say little about Bolingbroke’s motivations at this point in the play if not for the fact that apparently Northumberland has been in contact with this future king. Before he ever makes these promises of war in terms of games, he says to his coconspirators that he has received word that Henry Bolingbroke is “making hither with all due expedience” (R2 2.1.298). In other words, these words might have been the plots of Northumberland if Shakespeare had not given us this critical piece of information directly prior to the plot’s disclosure. Instead, we see what is probably a very Machiavellian ploy on Bolingbroke’s part.

Bolingbroke is not a polished giver of speeches as is Richard or an expert timer of political mood as is Northumberland. Indeed, as Dermot Cavanagh has noted, when Bolingbroke takes the crown from Richard, it is as though this seizure “represents the surrender of a sacramental language to a utilitarian one” (134). In other words, Richard speaks with the utterly ceremonious and lengthy quotations of the old era regime, whereas Bolingbroke parses his words, speaking only when his words have a direct purpose. However, that does not mean that he does not recognize the value of words or the value of representing to the populace that his regime will honor the exact rules that Richard has “broken” (R2 2.1.304). Despite the fact that he himself speaks little, he acknowledges the need for the language of the old crown in order to legitimate his new one. Luckily for him, he has Northumberland who, though as practical and “utilitarian” as Bolingbroke, can still speak in the old manner (Cavanagh 134).

This recognition of another’s usefulness in forging the way to a crown makes Bolingbroke seem distinctly Machiavellian, as Irving Ribner points out. When Bolingbroke resists from speaking the words that constitute treason towards the crown, he is, in effect, “follow[ing] closely the formula set down by Machiavelli” (Ribner 178). A truly Machiavellian monarch would speak little against the old rule. Instead, he would let his followers do the dirty work: speak the argument that will lead to a king’s murder. In doing this, he can later accuse these followers of hostility towards the crown and “get rid of the ‘ladder wherewithal he mounts the throne’” (180). To a Machiavellian like Bolingbroke, the entire process of

obtaining the crown is a game; all of his followers merely pawns through which he can forward his goals without bearing the blunt of the blame.

This manipulation of a sort of game of crowns is subliminal to the extent that any sentiment in a play can be subliminal. Obviously in the structure of a play, the audience has very little access to the character's thoughts other than those that the characters choose to articulate. Then again, Bolingbroke's patent use of Machiavellian tactics in order to obtain the crown opens the door for a certain level of subliminal interpretation in and of itself. This is because the truly Machiavellian monarch will always refrain from saying what he truly thinks, instead manipulating his followers into speaking his opinion for him, which is what occurs in this scene.<sup>2</sup> Bolingbroke constantly denounces the idea that he should seize the crown during the play. However, Northumberland constantly speaks these words and is not driven from Bolingbroke's company. Then, it can be safely conjectured that Bolingbroke's true thoughts are issuing from Northumberland's mouth.

Bolingbroke's definition of the crown as an item to be won has interesting implications about his own character because his definition cannot be fully actualized without the help of his archrival ("Crown" 1b). Quite simply, in order for a crown to be won, there must be someone to beat. The statement that perhaps best personifies this point of Bolingbroke's characterization is found in the Deposition Scene. When Bolingbroke has all but seized the crown, he still for some reason feels the need to ask Richard, "[a]re you contented to resign the crown?" (R2 4.1. 209). What is the logic here? Why does Bolingbroke feel the need to ask Richard "to resign" in a contest that he has already won (209)? The answer to this question returns to the idea of the crown as an item to be won in a martial game. A game, after all, is truly not complete until your victor concedes defeat, until he must watch you take the trophy that was originally his in good grace and silence. Much of the power of the crown rests in its possessor's ability to humiliate and shame his predecessor into submission. Therefore, Bolingbroke's definition of "crown" requires Richard to do, at first, unnoticeable extent.

Similarly, Richard's definition of the word as "Christ's crown of thorns" can also not be made a reality without Bolingbroke ("Crown" def. 2b). After all, martyrs cannot truly martyr themselves; Jesus required a "Judas" to earn his immortal title (R2 4.1. 179). It is even more interesting, though, that Richard's

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2 This is an argument perhaps most fully propounded by Niccolo Machiavelli in chapter XVIII of *The Prince*.

chooses to acknowledge (and openly) his own requirement of Bolingbroke in the same scene that Bolingbroke (less openly) acknowledges his need of Richard: again, the Deposition Scene. In this scene, Richard describes the crown as:

...a deep well

That owes two buckets, filling one another,

The emptier ever dancing in the air,

The other down, unseen, and full of water.

That bucket down and full of tears am I,

Drinking my grief whilst you mount up on high. (193-198)

Richard summarizes the mutual obligation of Richard to Bolingbroke and Bolingbroke to Richard perfectly in these lines. If the current crown is a “bucket” “ever dancing in the air,” then there must be an object at the base of its line to insure that its own weight does not pull it down (R2 197, 195). In other words, Richard has become the base for Bolingbroke’s crown, the justification for his rule. Without the weight of Richard’s crimes- which are the true “water,” not his “tears”- it would be too simple a matter for a new hand to add a new bucket to the rope and gradually sink Bolingbroke’s crown as well (196, 197).

Richard, the constant performer, probably believes at this point that the court will pity him for his state. In any case, martyrs are usually made through the heartbroken “tears” of a few at their untimely deaths (197). He perhaps even counts on these few souls that must pity the martyr to come to his aid because he seems to want to make it clear that he is not truly “contented to resign the crown” (209). This intention is prevalent during this scene when he offers Bolingbroke the crown only to jerk it back all the while saying, “[h]ere, cousin, seize the crown” (190). However, if Richard is planning on inciting pity in the onlookers through demonstrating Bolingbroke’s aggression towards him, he has played his hand too obviously, making himself seem more of a villain than ever. The court has become disillusioned with his attempts to play Christ, and Bolingbroke has killed the flatterers of Richard who openly endorsed his hypocrisy. Despite this fact, Richard has yet to realize that when openly playing the betrayed monarch to its most grandiose scale “someone probably more coldly efficient than you are and still further away from an ethically adequate object” will seize your crown (Greenblatt par. 17). In short, Richard needed those “thousand flatterers” that sat “within” his “crown” just as Bolingbroke needs

Northumberland and his other flatterers whom he can manipulate without their knowledge (R2 2.1.106). Ironically, however, the two monarchs, one former, one present, need each other even more. The two are not as different as they first appear.

It is worth noting that the level of characterization and the complexity of metaphors related to the crown in this scene are completely of Shakespeare's making. Though his historical reference material for this scene does use the word "crown" and mentions the subsequent uncrowning of Richard and the nature of his deposition, it does not attempt to portray the nature of Richard's reluctance to relinquish the crown or Bolingbroke's need to humiliate Richard while dethroning him. The *Mirror for Magistrates* says simply that Bolingbroke "[h]ad tane the king, & that which touched him here / [e]mprisoned him, with other of his foen, / [a]nd made hym yelde hym vp hes crowne and throne" (Campbell 99-201). Even the word crown is no key to characterization here. It seems to be a material object indelibly connected to the "throne" (201). Shakespeare is the one who takes this definition and these characters and makes them vital in a way that allows them to take a single word and define themselves by it. He makes this one word both the split in political theology and the base of similarity for Richard II and Bolingbroke.

Perhaps due to the sort of undying vitality found in Shakespeare's characters, this similarity in characterization between Bolingbroke and Richard cannot simply be forgotten. It only continues in the next play of the major tetralogy, *I Henry IV* because Bolingbroke cannot forget the force of nature that was King Richard II. In this play, Richard is, of course, dead, killed by the previously mentioned Machiavellian tactics of Bolingbroke. However, even if the former monarch is dead in body, he is not quite dead in the mind of Henry Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV of England. In fact, it seems as if, perhaps subconsciously, Henry IV has become the epitome of the monarch he once despised.

In the third act of the play, Henry calls his "low," "lewd," and "mean" son to account for his partying and "vile participation" with his underlings (1H4 3.3.12, 13, 87). When doing this, though, Henry does something interesting: he seems to endorse Richard's definition of what holding the crown entails over his own previous description. He tells Prince Hal that the "[o]pinion, that did help me to the crown" was earned, not through communion with and understanding of his people, but through keeping himself absent from these followers, "[m]y presence like a robe pontifical" (42, 56). In other words, he kept in his presence only those

followers of his that actually contributed to his success in capturing the crown; the other commoners he kept away from his person. Just Richard kept separate from his people (including flatterers like Mowbray who Richard desperately needed to retain) in order to build his persona of a sort of martyred or perhaps even “pontifical” state, so has Henry IV kept his person concealed, instead functioning to secure his crown through his advisors who are, of course, easily terminated. Henry now clearly considers his crown as sacrosanct as Richard’s. The prize that he worked so hard to win has obtained a sort of religiosity in his mind.

Then, with the word “crown” as a starting point for examination, the characterizations of Richard II and Henry IV throughout the major tetralogy are not as different as they might appear. Richard II may have dreams of martyrdom ruined by greed and Bolingbroke a Machiavellian attitude tinted by a notable note of aggression towards the king, but both monarchs owe their definitions and, hence, characterizations to the other. Throughout the major and minor tetralogy, Shakespeare manipulates the differing definitions of “crown,” and it is perhaps not too much to say that he did this purposefully considering that the crown, who held it, and who deserved it were central concerns of Shakespeare’s British history plays. Whenever the word appears, it provides some insight into the character who speaks it while also providing insight into the character they are describing in conjunction with the word. This level of characterization, even when it is only examined in connection with one word, was unbeknownst before Shakespeare’s writings. Neither the *Mirror for Magistrates*, Jack Straw, nor Thomas of Woodstock comes near this level of insight into the motives and thought of a character. How does Shakespeare create this level of complexity within the almost two-dimensional setting of the written play? Steve Longstaffe once wrote that “Shakespeare’s contribution to historiography” was “perspectivism,” or the ability to show one conflict from many angles while at the same time tying these differing perspectives into a tightly knit whole (par. 23). This “perspectivism” is the key to Shakespeare’s complexity. Nowhere is Longstaffe’s proposal truer than in the ideas surrounding the correct definition of “crown” in Richard II and I Henry IV. What constitutes the “crown” is all a matter of perspective.

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## “His Most Humble Handmaid”:

### The Influence of Matilda of Scotland and Eleanor of Aquitaine

Lauren Harmon

Few women in the Middle Ages held as much influence as Matilda of Scotland and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Matilda of Scotland, who was married to Henry I of England, was the most influential women of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> During her eighteen-year marriage, Matilda was embroiled in a religious controversy between her husband and Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Her close relationships with these men led her to act as an intercessor with great influence.<sup>2</sup> Eleanor of Aquitaine also held substantial power because she was queen twice: she was married to both Louis VII of France and Henry II of England.<sup>3</sup> After her son, Richard I, was captured by Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor, Eleanor wrote to Pope Celestine III for help. Her letters did little to gather support for Richard’s return so she raised the ransom for her son herself.<sup>4</sup> Although Eleanor of Aquitaine is thought of as the more powerful of the two, through an examination of the letters regarding these events, Matilda of Scotland had more influence over the actions of the religious men with whom they were in correspondence; between the two, Eleanor held a more threatening and demanding tone, while Matilda was more submissive and persuasive.

Eleanor of Aquitaine, though she held a substantial amount of power, did not hold enough influence and persuasion over Pope Celestine III to have him intercede in saving her son, Richard, from his German imprisonment. During the Third Crusade, Richard I was “a man of bold action” who was quite daring as he was, “...placing himself in personal danger without a thought, always eager to take part in any clash of arms.”<sup>5</sup> When he was returning from this crusade he was captured by Duke Leopold V of Austria, who gave Richard to Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor. For Richard’s release, Henry VI asked for a ransom of 150,000 marks, which the English crown could not pay. Over Eleanor’s

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1 Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2003), 1.

2 Huneycutt, 75.

3 Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4.

4 Rachel F. Stapleton, “Motherly Devotion and Fatherly Obligation: Eleanor of Aquitaine’s Letters to Pope Celestine III,” *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 48, no. 1 (2012): 97, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol48/iss1/3>.

5 Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 82.

three letters, she begged for papal intervention and as her letters continued to be ignored, she grew more demanding.<sup>6</sup> Celestine hesitated to involve himself in this political situation, so Eleanor used her power to collect the ransom for Richard's release herself.<sup>7</sup> Though Eleanor did end Richard's captivity, she did not do this by having influence over Celestine III.

Throughout her letters, Eleanor spoke of her motherly grief and her disapproval of the pope's lack of action, as she had always been good to him.<sup>8</sup> Her tone in these letters was unlike those seen before.<sup>9</sup> In early letters to Pope Alexander III, her tone was one of devotion, as she stated she would be "a humble and faithful minister" to him.<sup>10</sup> Though in her first letter to Celestine, she threatened him, "For it is written: Who scorns you, scorns me. Therefore, if you do not wish injury to yourself or the Roman church, you should not hide the shame to Peter nor the injury to Christ".<sup>11</sup> She explained that he had been slothful, cruel, and had abandoned her son. She exclaimed, "...why, therefore, do you delay so long, so negligently, indeed so cruelly to free my son".<sup>12</sup> The authority of her voice can be linked to her grief, but her harsh demands did little to influence or scare the pope into action.<sup>13</sup>

There was no real conflict between Eleanor and Celestine, but Eleanor believed that his lack of action was unacceptable.<sup>14</sup> She stated he, "...is silent to so many injuries of Christ, let God rise up and judge our cause and look on the face of his anointed".<sup>15</sup> As Celestine did not negotiate with Henry VI, it took Eleanor to find the ransom with help of Walter of Coutances, a bishop sent by Richard to help his mother. They took money through a levy on moveable goods,

6 Stapleton, 97.

7 Stapleton, 98.

8 "A Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/140.html>.

9 Stapleton, 98.

10 "A Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/137.html>.

11 "A Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/139.html>.

12 "A Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/141.html>.

13 Stapleton, 110.

14 Stapleton, 116.

15 Eleanor (1193), 139.

claimed the gold and silver from churches, and cut the fees of knights to raise the initial 70,000 marks. They also returned hostages as payment. In February 1194, Eleanor and Walter were summoned to bring the ransom to Germany and Richard was released.<sup>16</sup> Though Eleanor had called for the help of the pope, she was not influential enough to get him involved. Her negative attitude in her letters did not influence the pope like she would have thought, as her threats may have impacted the pope's feelings toward the situation causing him not to get involved.

Before Eleanor of Aquitaine freed her son, Matilda of Scotland was involved in the Norman Investiture controversy, which reached its climax under Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, and King Henry I of England. Before their conflict, the archbishop was exiled after his relationship with William Rufus, Henry's elder brother, led to Anselm's loss of support by English bishops, who remained loyal to the king that had invested them.<sup>17</sup> Anselm, however, refused to choose between the king and pope, so his allegiance remained neutral.<sup>18</sup> This angered William and soon, Anselm fled to Rome as a result of his weakness and lack of support.<sup>19</sup> During his exile, Anselm turned against the concept of lay investiture, which influenced his future relationship with Henry I.<sup>20</sup> He had obtained this belief at the Roman synod of 1099, where he saw the papal condemnation of lay investiture.<sup>21</sup> As Anselm waited in exile, Henry illegitimately took the throne from Richard of Normandy, his older brother, after the death of William. In their early letters, Henry showed great respect towards Anselm and was apologetic for being consecrated and crowned without his presence. This pleased Anselm, as Henry pleaded for his return to England, however, this pleasant relationship did not last. <sup>22</sup> When Anselm returned, Henry quickly demanded respect and requested Anselm to receive the archbishopric by his hands, but he refused. The king threatened bodily harm and exile.<sup>23</sup> Also, when Henry sought to invest bishops, Anselm denied support, as Henry would have

16 Wheeler, 85.

17 Michael J.S. Bruno, "The Investiture Contest in Norman England: A Struggle Between St. Anselm of Canterbury and the Norman Kings: Part II," *American Benedictine Review* 61, no. 3 (September 2010): 311, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed February 23, 2017).

18 Bruno, 309.

19 Bruno, 311.

20 Bruno, 315.

21 C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 376.

22 Bruno, 316.

23 Bruno, 317.

to receive support from the pope. Believing investiture to be his hereditary right, Henry saw it as an evasion of his power and privilege.<sup>24</sup> Initially, the relationship was respectful, but both William and Henry shared the same determination to uphold the royal customs they had inherited.<sup>25</sup> Soon, Anselm left for Rome to see Pope Paschal to discuss the bishops, but Henry consecrated them anyway.<sup>26</sup> Paschal II sided with the archbishop and Henry's bishops were excommunicated.<sup>27</sup> After months of disagreement, the pope negotiated a truce between them.<sup>28</sup> This controversy was, essentially, the struggle between the defense of royal custom and the belief that truth was above custom.<sup>29</sup>

Matilda held an important role in this investiture conflict, as she maintained close relationships with both Henry and Anselm. During Anselm's second exile, she acted as an intermediary between the king, pope, and archbishop. This allowed her to negotiate and persuade them. Her constant correspondence with Anselm showed their deep friendship and affection towards one another.<sup>30</sup> In early letters, she worried about his health stating, "...it is greatly to be feared by many people as well as by myself that the body of such a father may waste away".<sup>31</sup> He replied that her love for him had urged him to be strong.<sup>32</sup> Initially, Matilda asked for personal guidance and wished for Anselm's return, but over time, as she attempted to rebuild his relationship with Henry, her letters turned more political in nature.<sup>33</sup>

Though her letters turned political, Matilda's personal relationship with the church and Anselm were genuine. Since childhood, her mother, St. Margaret, had been devoted to teaching her children about the Christian faith.<sup>34</sup> Matilda was educated among nuns in monasteries with her siblings until the time of

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24 Bruno, 318.

25 Hollister, 374.

26 Bruno, 320.

27 Bruno, 321.

28 Bruno, 322.

29 Hollister, 376.

30 Huneycutt, 75.

31 "A Letter from Matilda of Scotland, Queen of the English (1102-03)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/392.html>.

32 "A Letter from Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1102-03)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/399.html>.

33 Huneycutt, 76.

34 Huneycutt, 16.

her marriage.<sup>35</sup> Her influence over the Anglo-Norman church was profound and she had great personal piety.<sup>36</sup> Her piety was well received by Anselm, as he advised, "...that your piety should strive for the peace and tranquility of the churches in England".<sup>37</sup> This personal piety and close relationship with Anselm allowed her to have more influence over him.

As the letters turned political, Matilda started to mention Anselm's relationship with Henry and her hope for a compromise. She said with her suggestions and God's help, Henry may be more welcoming towards Anselm. Though the men held a distaste for one another, Matilda begged Anselm not to turn away from Henry as, "...having excluded the rancor of human bitterness... you may not turn away the sweetness of your love from him".<sup>38</sup> Also, in 1104, Matilda told Anselm that Henry would give them more access to their revenues, which he had seized from the church, but Anselm told her that he was not in exile over money but for God's justice. Matilda failed to convince Anselm to compromise, but she entered a political conversation that was not initially common in their relationship.<sup>39</sup>

In her correspondence with Anselm, Matilda's respect for him was evident even in her salutations. She referred to Anselm as a respected father and herself as "his most humble handmaid"—his servant.<sup>40</sup> Her language throughout the letters was of great love and devotion. She begged for his return to England, even stating she would give up the crown for him, "...putting aside my royal dignity, giving up my insignia, putting off my honors, spurning my crown, I will trample the purple and the linen and will come to you...".<sup>41</sup> Without his return, she would have no joy, hope, nor refuge. He was her happiness in the "land of

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35 Huneycutt, 18.

36 Huneycutt, 103.

37 "A Letter from Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (6/ or 7/1103)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/401.html>.

38 "A Letter from Matilda of Scotland, Queen of the English (1104)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/394.html>.

39 "A Letter from Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1104)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/403.html>.

40 Eleanor (1102-03), 392.

41 "A Letter from Matilda of Scotland, Queen of the English (1104)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/393.html>.

the living”.<sup>42</sup> Though she turned away from the crown to be wholly devoted to Anselm, the queen continued to support Henry, as he was only on the wrong path, and she hoped she could convince Anselm to believe the same.

Anselm’s responses were always kind in nature, but he was firm in his belief that Henry had done wrong in the eyes of God. Matilda told the archbishop how to understand Henry’s actions and deal with them.<sup>43</sup> Anselm approved of her intercessions and wrote that through her good intentions the king may turn away from evil and use the counsel of God.<sup>44</sup> Over time, Anselm understood Matilda’s influence over Henry and told Paschal II.<sup>45</sup> The pope wrote to Matilda and told her of his disappointment in Henry’s provocation of the Lord. He stated that Henry had made a promise to the Lord upon his acceptance of the crown and that, “We do not believe that you are unaware of what this husband of yours promised.”<sup>46</sup> He told her to watch over him and turn his heart towards God so he would not, “...continue provoking God’s fury so greatly against himself”.<sup>47</sup> Though Matilda was not the main reason for the end of the conflict, her correspondence and intercessions held influence that was welcomed by the religious men embroiled within it. She maintained close relationships with all three men and her persuasion and suggestions influenced them towards a truce. The result of which safeguarded Anselm’s return to England and gave him authority to negotiate with Henry, as well as lifted the excommunication of Henry’s bishops.<sup>48</sup>

In comparison, the outcomes of the Norman Investiture conflict proved that Matilda held more influence over religious men compared to her later counterpart, Eleanor. Both women held power unknown to most women of their time, as their high social ranks allowed them to bare many responsibilities and have a stronger influence on society.<sup>49</sup> It would be unfair to compare these

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42 Eleanor (1104), 393.

43 Huneycutt, 76.

44 “A Letter from Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1102),” *Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/791.html>.

45 Huneycutt, 77.

46 “A Letter from Paschal II, Pope (1/ or 2/ 1105),” *Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Latin Letters*, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/409.html>.

47 Pascal II (1/ or 2/ 1105), 409.

48 Bruno, 322.

49 David Herlihy, “Women In Medieval Society” (Lecture, The Smith History Lecture, University of St. Thomas, Houston, 1971), 8.

two women without the context of these events, as throughout their lives, they both held considerable influence over religious authority. Their lives had many similarities, including their marriages to kings and their powerful influence over them, but it was the language of their letters that determined their influence in these situations. The reason Eleanor held less influence, in this case, was because she used an arrogant and threatening tone.<sup>50</sup> While, Matilda had a humble and compassionate tone in her letters that showed her great respect towards the recipient, Anselm.

Through the exploration of their exact phrasing, the salutations of Eleanor and Matilda's letters held the most importance, as it set the tone for the remainder of the correspondence. As Eleanor wrote for the freedom of her son, her grief and anger painted a bold picture to Celestine. She started her letters calling herself "wretched and to be pitied", which would not have held a negative connotation if the phrase "if only she were" did not follow.<sup>51</sup> This would have been disrespectful to write to Pope Celestine, even if she was angered by his neglect.<sup>52</sup> Even her initial letter held an arrogant tone as she stated she was writing "in the wrath of God".<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Matilda always submitted to Anselm and often referred to herself as the "lowliest handmaid of his holiness".<sup>54</sup> She wrote, "To her piously esteemed father and devoutly revered Lord, archbishop Anselm...".<sup>55</sup> This submission may have led Anselm to have more empathy for Matilda's feelings, while Celestine's apprehension towards involvement with Eleanor could have been alleviated if she had been more cordial.

The situations they faced seem quite different, but both women faced a great loss if their persuasion failed—Eleanor her son and Matilda her husband. Both attempted to persuade their reader through various tactics; Matilda used blatant flattery, while Eleanor threatened the pope's position. In her admonishment of Anselm's fasting, Matilda wrote that she feared for his outcome if he did not cease his daily fasting.<sup>56</sup> She stated:

You are such a brave athlete of God, a vanquisher of human nature, a man by whose untiring vigour [sic] the peace of the kingdom and the dignity of the

- 50 Stapleton, 109.
- 51 Eleanor (1193), 141.
- 52 Eleanor (1193), 141.
- 53 Eleanor (1193), 139.
- 54 Matilda (1104), 394.
- 55 Matilda (1104), 394.
- 56 Matilda (1102-03), 392.

priesthood have been strengthened and defended; such a faithful and prudent steward of God, by whose blessing I was sanctified in legitimate matrimony, by whose consecration I was raised to the dignity of earthly royalty and by whose prayers I shall be crowned, God granting, in heavenly glory.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, Eleanor did not take the same approach of flattery. In her eyes, the pope had neglected the true meaning of his position. God had told him to “bind the souls” on Earth, but he had yet to acknowledge the souls that held her son because they were human—she thought he was afraid of humans even with God’s power.<sup>58</sup> If God could overcome human fear, Eleanor stated he could, “Give my son back to me, man of God, if you are a man of God and not a man of blood, if you are sluggish in the freeing of my son, may the Highest exact his blood from your hand.”<sup>59</sup> She threatened his position as pope because he was afraid to be involved in human matters even though he was supposed to be a fearless warrior of God. Matilda and Eleanor’s persuasive tactics were different and this contrast showed that Matilda made a more favorable argument. This comparison does not argue that Matilda held more influence because of her religious viewpoint, but it considers these women’s writings and their outcomes

Through an examination of the personal letters of Matilda of Scotland and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Matilda’s correspondence with religious men held more influence in accomplishing her objective. Though she was not the main reason for the compromise between Henry I and the church, religious figures, such as Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Pope Paschal II, believed her interventions were beneficial in leading to a truce. Whereas Eleanor’s letters to Pope Celestine III went unnoticed as she was too demanding. She personally raised the money for her son’s release. In comparing their tones, Eleanor was threatening to religious power, while Matilda was more submissive and persuasive. Though historians believe Eleanor of Aquitaine held more power, by examining the outcomes of the Norman Investiture conflict and the ransom of King Richard I, it was Matilda of Scotland that held more influence over religious men. She was not more powerful because she brought an end to the conflict, but she used her influence over religious men to aid in its outcome—a truce.

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57 Matilda (1102-03), 392.

58 Eleanor (1193), 141.

59 Eleanor (1193), 141.

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## In Defense of Guinevere

Morrigan Hollis

Out of all the tales that have survived till modern times from the Middle Ages, the tale of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table is perhaps one of the most enduring. Ingrained into our culture through movies such as Disney Animation Studio's *The Sword in the Stone* or less well-known films like Twentieth Century Fox's *Quest for Camelot*, the story of the legendary king and his court is a staple in many children's libraries, and mentions of Arthur have been found in documents dating back to as early as the sixth century. One notable manuscript of the Arthurian tales is *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The stories within originate from an English knight by the name of Sir Thomas Malory, and were published in 1485 in a compiled edition put together by William Caxton. These tales can be used to explore the values medieval society held, and how women were portrayed in popular literature of the time. The most notable example of a woman within the text is Guinevere, the bride of King Arthur and the central figure around whom much of the plot is driven. Throughout the events of the book, Guinevere consistently demonstrates her own personal agency and defies standards for women of the time, taking charge of her life through her affair with Sir Lancelot du Lac and her dealings with the men surrounding her.

Guinevere is first brought up in Book III, when Arthur asks Merlin whether he should marry her. Introducing her as the "... most valiant and fairest lady that I know living, or yet that ever I could find," Arthur offers high praise for his would-be wife, and refuses to listen even when Merlin warns him little good will come of their union (Malory 75). Though this is merely Arthur's first impression of Guinevere, it marks a decidedly positive trend in his view of her that continues throughout the book. According to Malory, "... ever after [Arthur] loved her," showing that his love lasted even through the later trials of their marriage, including her affair with Sir Lancelot. Through her actions as both Arthur's wife and Lancelot's lover, Guinevere takes charge of her life in a way few medieval women could, affording herself the opportunity to be with both men whom she loved. Few noble women could marry for love during the medieval period, as they were usually married off as political pawns and bargaining chips. The idea of doing one's duty to their husband, in fact, was one that permeated most every aspect of medieval culture. *Le Ménagier de Paris*, a guide for young brides in fifteenth century France, states that the driving

principle for women in a medieval marriage was devotion to their husband (Le Ménagier 94). Though Guinevere defies this through her sexual association with Lancelot, she remains faithful to Arthur in matters of the heart.

It seems that Guinevere loved both Arthur and Lancelot, as is shown in her interactions with Arthur throughout the text. When, in Book V, Arthur prepares to sail off on a campaign against Rome, and announces his departure, “. . . the Queen Guenever made great sorrow for the departing of her lord and other. . . (Malory 144). Guinevere’s affections for both Lancelot and Arthur are the driving force behind her actions, but they do not constrict her, and neither do the roles of women within marriage. About bearing children, per John Carmi Parsons, author of *Medieval Queenship*: “Scrutiny was not inspired merely by prurient curiosity: obsessive attention focused on the birth of heirs, a guarantee of the integrity and community of the realm” (Parsons, 4). Though the main duty of a wife was to bear heirs for her husband, no mention of children between the two is ever made within the text. There are, however, mentions of children sired by Arthur out of wedlock. Early in the text, Arthur comes across a young woman by the name of Lionors, and he “set his love greatly upon her, and so did she upon him, and the king had ado with her, and gat on her a child” (Malory 31). His other, more famous child, is Mordred, the son he was tricked into siring on his half-sister, Morgan le Fay. Nevertheless, the fact that there are no children between Guinevere and Arthur is never truly addressed, and whether Guinevere is barren or not is a question that is impossible to answer with the given information. It is, however, surprising to see so important a female figure childless, especially when the Arthurian tales were so popular - during a period when a woman’s worth as a wife and person was based on her ability to bear children, no less. Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay, authors of *Sex Before Sexuality: A Premodern History*, have this to say on the matter:

While premarital sex was largely condemned for both men and women, adultery was usually only punished when perpetrated by a woman. Female adultery was feared because of its impact on patriarchal lineages, and was punishable by death. These were societies that valued kinship groups and child-bearing highly (*Sex Before Sexuality*, 29).

Though Guinevere fails to fulfill her duties as Arthur’s wife, her faithfulness and qualities are never brought into question until the scandal of her affair arises. Though in the end she plays the villain, she also has a notable role within the story and is the major female character within the book’s narrative. The freedom

she exercises in her own fate, and in her actions regarding the two men she loves, shows a woman who can exercise some level of agency and choice despite her relatively powerless position and her expected duties as Arthur's wife.

Even King Arthur recognizes Guinevere's personal agency. For example, when Arthur, Guinevere, and three knights must flee while their host is beset by five traitorous kings, he gives Guinevere the choice of crossing a treacherous river or waiting to be captured. "It were me lever, said the queen, to die in the water than to fall in your enemies' hands and there be slain" (Malory 99). This choice would likely not be afforded to most women, and especially so since they were often seen as little more than valued possessions. The fact that Arthur even gives Guinevere the choice demonstrates a respect that was often little expected in medieval marriages. Though a small detail, to medieval audiences, and especially women, this could be another way in which Guinevere has personal agency, even if it must be granted to her. Though it is often the case that her authority is granted by her husband, it is still odd to find that she is given any authority at all when so much effort usually went into suppressing powerful women outside of the church. Guinevere, however, often finds herself in these granted positions of power.

There are other, more subtle ways in which Guinevere exercises her power as well. Though she is often used as a plot device to further other characters' stories, there are times when even her weaknesses – the way she is constantly at risk of being captured, for instance – can be flipped to show her strengths. One of the more famous instances in which she is captured, for instance, is when Sir Maleagant, known as Sir Meliagrance in Malory's text, takes Guinevere captive while she is out celebrating May Day with her Queen's Knights, who are dressed only in green tunics and are armed only with swords. When Maleagant comes upon her with a party of eight fully-armed men, she is forced to surrender to him or see her knights slain. In this instance, Malory depicts Guinevere as being strong despite her fear, having her chastise Maleagant:

Traitor knight, said Queen Guenever, what cast thou for to do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a king's son, and knight of the Table Round, and thou to be about to dishonour the noble king that made thee knight; thou shamest all knighthood and thyself, and me, I let thee wit, shalt thou never shame, for I had liefer cut mine own throat in twain rather than thou shouldest dishonour me (Malory, 756).

Throughout Malory's text, whenever her life is in danger, Guinevere holds

her head high despite her fear. Her interactions with Maleagant exhibit this same pattern, and his cowardliness sharply contrasts her own bravery. Through an unfortunate series of events, including the episode which leads to Lancelot becoming known as the Knight of the Cart, Maleagant comes to accuse Guinevere of infidelity to her husband and king, and by extension, to be guilty of treason. In the end, Lancelot, as always, comes forward to defend her honor in a duel, but rather than allow himself to be slain honorably, Maleagant begs Lancelot for his life in another show of cowardice. Malory has Lancelot look to Guinevere to make the decision in the end:

“Sir Launcelot looked up to the Queen Guenever, if he might espy by any sign or countenance what she would have done. And then the queen wagged her head upon Sir Launcelot, as though she would say: Slay him” (Malory, 769).

Maleagant’s slight against Guinevere is greater than the slight suffered by Lancelot when Maleagant tricks him and traps him in his dungeon, and even though Lancelot is rightfully angry with the cowardly knight, he still looks to Guinevere before slaying him. The kill is in her name and by her order, sharply contrasting the famous imagery of the persecuted maiden, or damsel in distress, in that though Guinevere must be rescued, she defends her own honor by making the killing call. In this case, she is the executioner and Lancelot the axe. Though Guinevere needs rescuing by Lancelot, in the end it is her simple nod that sends Sir Maleagant to his death. This is another prime example of Guinevere’s influence in the lives of the residents of Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table, and the subtle ways in which she displays her influence and personal agency in the tales of King Arthur’s court.

No matter how virtuous Guinevere is portrayed, of course, there is also the matter of how her sins are brought to light in the text. Guinevere’s most obvious vice was lust, for which she is and was vilified, but she also fell victim to wrath quite often. Wrath is an example of one of the seven deadly sins. Though these may not be so well-known in modern times, they were a basic tenet at the heart of moral conduct in the middle ages. These “cardinal sins” were easy to fall victim to, and were the heart of all other sins (Le Ménagier 60-85). An example of Guinevere’s wrath would be when Lancelot is tricked into siring a son, Sir Galahad, on Dame Elaine by King Pelles, her father. He comes to her under the cover of darkness, believing her to be Guinevere, and sleeps with her without ever realizing she is not Guinevere. Lancelot is horrified when Dame Elaine’s deception is revealed, but Guinevere is the one who is truly furious at

his betrayal. Her anger is so fierce, it drives him from the court of Camelot in madness for a time. Another example would be when Lancelot wears the token of the Lady of Astolat, Lady Elaine, to disguise himself at a tourney. When she finds out, Guinevere is again furious, and demands that he never wear anyone's favor but her own from then on. And later, though Guinevere is angry with Lancelot for betraying her by wearing the token, she is even more offended when he remains faithful and refuses Lady Elaine's love, causing the young lady to waste away out of love for him. She rebukes him, saying he could have shown her enough gentleness to at least preserve her life (Malory 742). Despite all of these instances of her quick temper, she is still respected and well-loved among her husband's knights and people. And though Guinevere often takes rumor to heart in stories of her lover; anger and love are felt in equal measure when it comes to Lancelot. The most obvious theme in her story is that of lust, but Guinevere can often be looked to as an example of wrath as well. Though these emotions are negative and violent, her anger and fiery spirit actually positively contribute to her portrayal as a woman who will not lie down and take abuse without a fight, and further the strength of her agency.

There are many instances in which Guinevere exhibits her positive traits, but her character is forever marred by the ruin that her actions bring about. No matter what may be said of her positive aspects, the fact that she is an adulterer is an inescapable aspect of the story, and is the book's driving plot point. The events surrounding the reveal of her and Sir Lancelot's affair are dramatic; when they are found out, a party of twelve knights threatens to beat down their door so that they can kill Lancelot. When Lancelot tells her that she should go with whomever he sends for her should he die, she refuses. "Nay, Launcelot, said the queen, wit thou well I will never live after thy days, but an thou be slain I will take my death as meekly for Jesu Christ's sake as any Christian queen" (Malory, 783). Despite her obvious wrongdoing, Guinevere stands ready to take responsibility for her actions even though she knows she will burn at the stake for her crimes. This is another example of her resilience and courage in the face of danger, and another instance in which she holds the power in choosing what path her life will take. By refusing his offer, Guinevere stands by her convictions and her love for him, saying she would rather die than live without him. Her choice leads to her prosecution by Arthur's court, and by the time Lancelot returns for her and rescues her, slaying many knights and other innocents in the process, Guinevere is bound to the stake and about to burn. At this point in the book, Guinevere's influence has waned to the point where it appears that she is a

mere pawn to be fought for by the men surrounding her.

Regardless of her circumstances, however, Guinevere continues to exhibit the qualities that make her much more than any man's possession. This is shown most vividly in her actions when fending off Sir Mordred, who is both her nephew and her step-son through Morgan le Fay's trickery. When Arthur and his host are off fighting Sir Lancelot's forces in France, he leaves Guinevere in Sir Mordred's custody, and Mordred seizes the opportunity to steal the throne as well as Arthur's wife. Rather than meekly go along with the man's orders, as would perhaps be expected of a good and obedient woman, Guinevere instead exhibits her cunning. When Mordred tries to take her as his wife, she pretends to accept her fate until the opportunity arises to seize the Tower of London and refuse him. She manages to remain within the protection of its walls and "would never for fair speech nor for foul, would never trust to come in his hands again" (Malory 821). In this way, Guinevere shows that she is not merely a political pawn, and instead takes her fate into her own hands. She defies Mordred despite her relatively weak position as a woman and a dethroned queen, and instead chooses to remain faithful to Arthur once more.

Though Guinevere does not follow the standards set for female readers of the Middle Ages, she is nevertheless portrayed in a positive light in the eyes of many of the male characters for much of the book, at least until the reveal of her and Lancelot's betrayal. Many women are portrayed in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, both fair and foul, but none have so prominent a role as Queen Guinevere. Throughout each of her dealings in a largely male-dominated world, Guinevere defies gender expectations of medieval women and casts aside the burdens of male decision-making, setting a strong and multi-faceted example of female agency in a piece of popular literature from the Middle Ages.

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# Capellanus Unmasked

James O'Loughlin

Andreas the Chaplain wrote the *Treatise on Love*, c. 1180, for Marie, the Countess of Champagne at Troyes according to the translator, John J. Parry.<sup>1</sup> From 1180 CE until circa 1883, historians accepted Andreas Capellanus who was a chaplain in the court of Phillip II Augustus of France as the acknowledged author of the *Treatise on Love*.<sup>2</sup> However, as medieval historians in the 18th and 19th century started to translate the Latin text of the treatise into their vernacular, doubts began to surface as to the authenticity of Andreas as the author.<sup>3</sup> A close reading of the text indicated that the point of view of the dialogues came from a female perspective rather than that of a male. Despite their best efforts to affirm Capellanus as sole author of the *Treatise on Love*, no one has determined it.<sup>4</sup> This paper argues that a woman's perspective is so self-evident in the composition of the *Treatise on Love*, that it is quite possible that a woman or a collaboration of women authored it, while Capellanus penned the copies. The term "courtly love," used liberally in present-day textbooks, was not in use in the 12th century, when the term was credited to Gaston Paris in 1883.

Why write a book on love? John Parry states in the Introduction of *Treatise on Love* that the interaction between male members of the nobility with women of various ranks, before its publication, resulted in rough encounters where the male, unskilled in rhetoric and manners, approached the woman of his desires, used explicit language, and if his advances were rebuffed, attempted to force his will on her.<sup>5</sup> There are no records to note how many times this may have occurred. However, this treatise was made available to members of the nobility and designed to allow the male suitor to meet with women in a non-threatening manner, justify his position on love, expound on the effects the woman had on him, how the love-making would affect them, and what he would be willing to offer her in remuneration.<sup>6</sup> It encouraged verbal interaction and presented

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1 Andreas Capellanus. *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John J. Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), Intro., p. 17.

2 Ibid., Intro., 17

3 Ibid., Intro, 3

4 Ibid., Intro., 17, Intro., 21

5 Ibid., 30

6 Andreas Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 30.

“trial runs,” situations. The text offered ways for a couple to meet and then the give-and-take of each dialogue would illustrate how the suitor should act in the presence of this lady.<sup>7</sup> Parry adds that the author “brings us closer to the actual life of the time than does Chrétien” de Troyes and that “to the student of medieval manners such a picture is especially valuable.”<sup>8</sup> Chrétien de Troyes was a celebrity French scholar due to his authorship of the poems, *Erec and Enide* and *Knight of the Cart* with the assistance of Countess Marie of Champagne.<sup>9</sup> Parry’s remarks are to give assurance that, if the treatise is followed, instant success will follow.

Countess Marie of Champagne and other women in her retinue may have collaborated on the treatise with some or no help from Capellanus, according to Parry.<sup>10</sup> He says “The other features of the book [the dialogues], including the exposition of courtly love, are, I am sure, due to Countess Marie and her associates.”<sup>11</sup> When Parry states that Capellanus is the “writer,” he means that he penned the edition and may not have authored it. The actual text discussed degrees of love together with rules for lovers to follow.<sup>12</sup> The reader might be skeptical of a chaplain who is cognizant of the degrees of love? Countess Marie and her followers, admittedly “women of the world” would know.<sup>13</sup> The Introduction “portrayed conditions at Queen Eleanor’s court at Poitiers that had a Garden of Love similar to one at Troyes.”<sup>14</sup>

The treatise includes a series of eight dialogues, in the first three a man of the middle class speaks with three women: a woman of the same class, a woman of the nobility, and a woman of the higher nobility. In the second set of two, a nobleman speaks with a woman of the middle class, and a noblewoman. In the last set of dialogues, a man of higher nobility speaks with a woman of the middle class, a woman of the simple nobility, and a woman of the same class.<sup>15</sup> It was a compendium for all situations that arise in the give-and take discussions

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7 Ibid., Intro., 5.

8 Ibid., Intro. 3.

9 Ibid., Intro., 14.

10 Ibid., Intro., 20.

11 Ibid., Intro., 19.

12 Ibid., Intro., 6, Intro., 17.

13 Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, Intro., 23.

14 Ibid., Intro., 21.

15 Ibid., Preface, vii, viii.

concerning sex among the members of the middle class, the simple nobility and the upper nobility.

In the First Dialogue, it discusses “Four distinct stages [that] have been established in love: the first consists in the giving of hope, the second in the granting of a kiss, the third in the enjoyment of an embrace, and the fourth culminates in the yielding of the whole person.”<sup>16</sup> This quote by Capellanus, or whoever authored the treatise, lays the oft-stated belief that actual love-making was not a part of “courtly love” to rest. To this end, only a woman would use Aesop’s fable of the “Tortoise and the Hare” to make her case in that a man wanted instant gratification while a woman wished for incremental advances before acceding to his wishes.

To support the love-making theory, it is in the Fifth Dialogue in the *Treatise on Love*, which illustrates the quest of a young noble who hails a castle, asking admittance from a woman of the same social class, requesting overnight lodging in a castle bereft of the head of the householder who is absent. He heard some lays from a wandering troubadour that piqued his interest of a woman who is beautiful and wise and who suffers from loneliness. After a ride of long duration, he comes equipped to relieve her sufferings. In his preparations, he reads that he must not initiate his discourse by speaking of love. “All lovers,” the discourse begins, “must realize that after the salutation they should not immediately begin talking about love, for it is only with the concubines that men begin in that way.”<sup>17</sup> This quotation indicates that concubines exist and that it is acceptable to seek immediate gratification from these women. The author adds, “First you should say things that have nothing to do with your subject—make her laugh at something, or else praise her home, or her family, or herself.”<sup>18</sup> Remembering his text and the words of the troubadour who has penned him sketches of the castle’s interior, the young nobleman then requests admission to the castle’s sumptuous Garden of Love.

Once access is granted, he leads the discussion by saying, “When the Divine Being made you, there was nothing left undone.”<sup>19</sup> He then praises her good sense. He is acting on the woman’s vanity. Most men would agree that this discourse constitutes a good beginning and will result in a harmonious ending.

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16 *Ibid.*, 42.

17 Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 36.

18 *Ibid.*, 37.

19 *Ibid.*, 37.

Unfortunately, the reply to the young noble is that she is ordinary in figure and she lacks the “ornament of wisdom.”<sup>20</sup> Is she implying that she will not make a satisfactory mate?

The lover appears not to be distressed with this maiden turned wench when, in fact, he is. She has already given him a bed to sleep in, but he wants more, so he tries once again to establish his role as the dominator and ascertain whether or not she wishes to sleep in that particular bed with him. He attempts to hasten a positive outcome.

“Your first concern,” he says, “should be whether I lacked refined manners, and if you find my status higher than you would naturally expect, you ought not to deprive me of the hope of your love.”<sup>21</sup> Both are aware that they are from the same social class. In the 12th century, a maiden would not accept being treated as if she were from the low nobility.

“Oh my,” she replies, “You may deserve praise for your great excellence, but I am rather young, and I shudder at the thought of receiving solaces [relief from sexual frustration] from old men.”<sup>22</sup> There is nothing in what he said that makes him appear an old man, only long in experience of the sexual nature. She has set a trap for him to see if he will swallow the bait, while at the same time, she takes away his dominance. How far will he be willing to go to prove his inclination to engage in sexual combat?

Taking the offensive, he says, “I, a new recruit in Love’s service and awkward in love, ask you to be my teacher and to train me more fully by your instruction.”<sup>23</sup> It seems as though the suitor is willing to abandon his dominance and play on the maiden’s vanity or to just become a beggar asking for her succor.

The maiden ignored his plea and replies, “I absolutely refuse the task, because it seems to me that I ought to choose a lover who is already trained rather than one whom I must go to the trouble of training.”<sup>24</sup> If the women of the court did compose dialogue of this nature, they must have laughed heartily while penning the words. How much pressure can be applied by the maiden to the

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20 Ibid., 37.

21 Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 38.

22 Ibid., 39.

23 Ibid., 41.

24 Ibid.

suitor before he receives his reward, if he does receive one? If a male authorized the treatise, he would succeed each time.

The nobleman changes his tactics. “As for your remark about preferring to save trouble by selecting a lover who has been trained rather than one you must go to the trouble of training, that deserves a good reprimand, for anyone ought to find that fruit taken from his own plantation tastes sweeter than what he gets from his neighbor’s tree.”<sup>25</sup> Begging for instant gratification and then reprimanding the noblewoman who gave him a bed for the night seems to be incomprehensible. Once again, only a woman composing this treatise would want a man to throw caution to the wind.

Before the young man can continue and acknowledging that he wishes to steal the fruit from his neighbor’s tree, she answers, “Lovers who live together can cure each other of the torments that come from love, can help each other in their common sufferings, and can nourish their love by mutual exchanges and efforts; those however, who are far apart cannot perceive each other’s pains, but each one has to relieve his own trouble and cure his own torments.”<sup>26</sup> This exchange can only be from the point of view of a woman. As their dialogue concludes, the noblewoman is dominant and the nobleman is on the verge of being served bread and water and relegated to a cot in the stable.

Is the author, Andreas Capellanus, or any of the women mentioned above, using romantic irony? If so it would change the tone of the treatise. Romantic irony was popular in Germany in the 12th century. Another question asked by critics: was Capellanus influenced by the works of Chrétien de Troyes. Romantic irony understates the obvious. It makes fun of a serious situation. If so, then the figure of speech being used extensively throughout the treatise would undercut the effect. The author of the text may have been aware of Chrétien de Troyes, but there is no way to measure how it would affect the treatise.

In his book, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, & the Courtly Tradition*, Don A. Monson, delves into the issue of romantic irony in his chapter on “The Problem of Irony.” He asks, “Is the *De amore* to be taken as a serious, straightforward treatment of its subject, or should it be interpreted, in whole or in part, as humorous or ironic?”<sup>27</sup> He offers extensive evidence to show why the

<sup>25</sup> Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, & the Courtly Tradition*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 133.

treatise would more than likely have been written in Paris at the Court of Phillip II Augustus, and, if so, would be treated scholastically rather than ironically.<sup>28</sup> The date when the treatise was penned into Latin has never been established. In addition, there are three of eight copies of the manuscript that still exist that are penned “Andrew, chaplain of the King of France.”<sup>29</sup> The other five are penned “Andreas the Chaplain.” Also, according to Monson, Book Three did not contain the irony used in Book One and Book Two.<sup>30</sup> Monson’s proof is not really proof at all. The location of the document at a future date does not solve the problem of when the components of the treatise were completed. To conclude then that the scholasticism of a royal court that issues legal documents in prose over the use of poetic irony if used at Countess Marie’s court at Champagne, is feckless. Monson concludes that “De amore cannot be interpreted as though it were a product of the courtly circles at the court of Champagne, that it should be seen as a clerical reaction to and condemnation of contemporary secular love literature, rather than an attempt to promote that literature.”<sup>31</sup> There is nothing in the Introduction to the Treatise of Love to state an intention other than to help lovers converse.

The Introduction to the Treatise on Love tells of women who meet regularly in the Garden of Love inside the walls of a castle. To illustrate what comprises one, Rod Barnett in an article in *Landscape Journal* entitled “Serpent of Pleasure: Emergence and Difference in the Medieval Garden of Eden” offers what the Garden of Love would look like in the 12th century. He says, “The enclosing element is often a high brick or stone wall, sometimes a wicker fence or a wooden trellis.”<sup>32</sup> Paintings of these pleasure gardens depicted a fountain, the site where in ancient time depicting Cupid with making his arrows. Scented plants and flowers together with manicured lawns abounded there. When one enters a Garden of Love, all his and her worldly inhibitions were left behind. The painting, *The Garden of Pleasure, 1490-1500 CE*, that hangs in the British Library in London, England, give a visual aspect to a Garden of Love.<sup>33</sup> This

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 133.

32 Rod Barnett, “Serpent of Pleasure: Emergence and Difference in the Medieval Garden of Eden,” 140.

33 Porter, *Courtly Love in Medieval Manuscripts*, (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2003), 8.

enclosure would provide the perfect setting for members of the upper nobility to discuss openly their views on love and sex without the temptations or distractions of the outer “real” world.

To bolster the belief that a woman or women had a role in the composition of the treatise, Joan M. Ferrante, in her article, “Male fantasy and female reality in courtly literature,” says that “Courtly literature of the twelfth century is the first secular medieval literature in which women play an important role, not as personifications of abstract qualities but as human actors.”<sup>34</sup> She adds that the male speaker “deceives himself in his attempt to deceive the lady, and contradicts himself to accommodate her.”<sup>35</sup> The author seeks to find a “woman who is able to see through the man’s pretenses and to confront him with the truth about himself.”<sup>36</sup> Ferrante is convinced that this treatise brought about a change in attitudes that men felt about women. In the 12th century, women were treated as children, especially women in the middle and lower classes. The *Treatise on Love* exalts the middle class woman as having intelligence and wit. Would a male wish to be confronted by a female? A 12th century man of the middle class, a nobleman, and a man of the upper nobility would not wish to read that he cannot have his own way with women.

In order to give credence to the authorship of Countess Marie, Queen Eleanor, and other women, Robert Miller in his article, “The Wounded Heart: Courtly love and the medial antifeminist tradition,” he states that “Marie de Champagne, held court at Troyes and gave the *matière* or subject matter to Chrétien de Troyes for the story of Lancelot’s adulterous passion for Guenevere, the wife of his Overlord.”<sup>37</sup> Chrétien de Troyes used this material as proof that the grist of what would be published as the *Treatise on Love* was available at that location. This is reaffirmed in the book, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* by Amy Kelly who says that Marie de Champagne “sat at the elbow of the genial cleric Andreas Capellanus editing his manuscript.”<sup>38</sup> Anyone who can edit a

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34 Joan M. Ferrante, “Male fantasy and female reality in courtly literature,” *Women Studies* 11, no. 1 [1984]: 67.

35 *Ibid.*, 79.

36 *Ibid.*, 84.

37 Robert P. Miller, “The Wounded Heart: Courtly love and the medieval antifeminist tradition,” 337.

38 Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 163.

manuscript for the celebrated poet, Chrétien de Troyes, while also providing material for him, is more than capable of writing a treatise.

Parry in the Introduction of his translation of *Treatise on Love* also says that the poet, Bernart de Ventadorn “helped her [Eleanor of Aquitaine] introduce her ideas on love into the north.”<sup>39</sup> It is not clear what are Queen Eleanor’s ideas on love but that aspect of her life could be researched. Eleanor came north to Paris, France upon her marriage to Louis VII together with her holdings. If Eleanor or her daughter, Marie, were providing ideas of love to those whom they met, then they could have come to a decision to publish this material in the forms of a treatise. Since Eleanor was the wife of two kings: Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, documentation must exist at some location that would reveal her participation in the composition of the treatise. In addition, Queen Eleanor’s two daughters, Marie, Countess of Champagne and Alix of Blois may have left behind correspondence to establish not only the dates at London, Paris, Aquitaine, Troyes and other sites of residence but also what happened at those locations.

In the *Treatise on Love*, would it be possible that a man speaks to women from all levels of society while he presents himself as a woman to respond to his own assertions? This would be true if Andreas Capellanus were the sole author of the treatise. A close reading shows that the male discourse could be from the perspective of a male but seen through the eyes of a female who is critical of the motives of the suitor. It seems highly unlikely that the female in the discourse could be from the mind of Andreas Capellanus.

In the *Garden of Love* on the estate of Count Henry of Champagne at Troyes, there assembled noble women and troubadours, who discussed the difference in status between the sexes of the nobility, the upper nobility, and the middle class. Anyone below middle class is ignored, ordered about, and not spoken to or spoken with. They would also discuss the inequalities that exist between men and women, offering the remedies available. As an entertaining diversion, possibly based on the result of these discussions, the women made a collaborate effort to compose a treatise of the desired relationship of what women want juxtaposed with the actual realities of what actually exists between men and women. They enlist a clerk to transcribe their inklings into Latin. To reward him for his efforts in penning multiple copies of the document, his name was placed at the top of the manuscript. If anyone outside their circle should

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<sup>39</sup> Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 13.

read it and find fault, they could contact Andreas the Chaplain.

If the theory to have any credence that many women put their thoughts together, it stands to reason that the manuscript was composed from “brainstorming” sessions by the ladies within Marie’s circle of confederates in an enclosure called the Garden of Love.<sup>40</sup> There would be little to no need to interview men and women from all aspects of society, since they controlled the flow of information. All that was required was listening skills. The troubadours would be a wealth of information since their songs reflected what they had seen and heard. If Capellanus were involved, he might grill the troubadours on the meaning of some ambiguous lyrics. The troubadours as well as those from the lower classes were readily available on a daily basis cleaning the estates and preparing the meals. Since the hired help were used to being ignored, they readily spoke to each other of their trial and tribulations.

With the text of *Treatise on Love* being shown to be witty, it should be viewed by modern readers as showing “real” life from the perspective of a male in the 12th century, while also seeing the possibilities of life that might or should be possible from the perspective of a female. There is more than enough evidence that further research would be required to support my premise. A thorough reading of the *Treatise on Love* would confirm that seen through the eyes of a man and woman from the high nobility, a woman’s perspective is so self-evident in the composition of the *Treatise on Love*, that it is quite possible that a woman or a collaboration of women authored it, and that Capellanus penned the copies. In addition, since the authorship of Andreas Capellanus has been questioned, the contributions of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter, Countess Marie of Champagne should be researched in detail. In circa 1181, it was Eleanor or Marie or both who had the means, motive and opportunity to write of courtly love discussed daily in their Garden of Love and they plays some role in the composition of the *Treatise on Love*.

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40 Capellanus, *Treatise on Love*, 19-20.

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## Classical Literary Influence Upon Dante's Conceptualization of the Christian Hell

Josh Herrick

Dante Alighieri created a literary work of art that shaped public and ecclesiastical comprehension of Hell by turning an abstract concept into a nightmarish reality. His *Inferno* describes the Christian Hell as a destination for sinners to be tortured in grotesque punishment until the Final Judgment. Hell was given depth in this fictitious labor, and his portrayal of a final destination for doomed souls would last for centuries. In addition, Dante's expulsion from Florence served as a catalyst for the creation of his masterpiece. Some characters Dante included in this conceptualization were famous Greek mythological figures, partly because of his classical education and their significance to the medieval era. Their roles as authoritative demons tasked with judgment, punishment, and guardianship demonstrate a need for a hierarchy even in the afterlife. Dante's *Inferno* drew little inspiration from the Holy Bible, although he was not shy of the possible use of the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. This apocryphal document was not recognized by the Catholic Church as a reliable source because it described Jesus's descent into Hell. Fears about whether Jesus was corrupted lead to the omission of the text from the canon, but the Gospel of Nicodemus coupled with canonical books tell a story where Jesus actually saves the souls of saints and redeemable sinners. Even with this potential biblical inspiration, Dante relied more on Greek and Roman literary sources to inspire what he believed to be the true definition of Hell and created a massive multi-leveled underworld where a person's sins decided his or her destination within the torturous abyss. Moreover, he conveys the vast array of punishments via a hierarchical system where authoritarian power originated from an unlikely source, and questions the idea of free will being the sole cause of a person's sin, even going so far as to implant himself into the story to argue in favor of coercion being an exception from sin.

Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* shaped many contemporary and modern day concepts of Hell, and what it meant to be punished according to one's sin. In this famous work, Dante created a Hell unlike anything else the Western world had ever imagined in one complete picture, however aspects of previously existing concepts of an underworld were present and Dante utilized these sources to fuel his imagination. This new harsh afterlife described Hell not as a pit vacant of God's holy light where fallen angels, and human souls alike, were tethered to

the earth; but, a form of life after death that was named Hell. 1 Within this idea of Hell, a person could believe that they were absent from God, the one being they once clung to in life. Hell was meant to be a place of punishment, but the Bible lacks many details pertaining to this important aspect of the faith. Before his *Inferno*, many only believed in what the book of Revelations described as a single pit buried beneath the earth where a lake of boiling fire and brimstone awaited sinners. 2 A punishing afterlife sure, but not one that was particularly personal to each sinner. True punishment had to hurt on not just the physical level, but the emotional and mental, too. Dante utilized both concepts of Hell as a solid foundation for his story; one where Hell did not consist of one singular punishment (i.e., shambling around in eternal darkness or burning in a lake of fire for all eternity). He added on to these ideas and created a hell where each individual soul was assigned a location according to the sins they committed in life within the Circles of the underworld. In total there are nine circles of Hell described as homes for the punished souls, each with a particular punishment. The most heinous of sinners are designated to Satan's frigid home, the "bonus" level at the very center.

The further down one descended into Hell, the more biblical the references became. Along the upper levels of Hell, Dante described figures of mostly Greek, and a few Roman, fictional characters from the classical works of Homer. Dante saved the more heinous sins for biblical characters for the lower circles of Hell, but that does not mean that the Greek mythological characters were minor. At the central point of the underworld Satan resided in a frozen lake, gnawing on the body of Judas.<sup>3</sup> By placing Satan, the most grievous sinner in Christianity, in the center Dante is essentially stating that all sins gravitate around Satan. This demonstrates Dante's insistence on funneling the most heinous sins against the church into Satan's domain in order to invoke fear among not only the layman, but also priests. Because of this, Dante was able to establish a visual example of what would happen to sinners, thus creating a moral statue for Christians to uphold: forgoing temptations that violate the morals of the faith and, moreover, the church. Dante's creation of this nightmarish afterlife provided many Christians of his time with a clear yet startling portrayal of what he imagined Hell to be: the terrifying, torturous destination for sinners to receive adequate punishment for their atrocities no matter how minor the crime is perceived by

1 Psalms 9:17.

2 Rev. 2:4.

3 Dante, "Inferno," 160.

the damned soul.

Within this new Hell, Dante was able to incorporate notable figures from his favorite Greek stories to carry out specific jobs in the various Circles: Minos, Cerberus, Chiron, and the Minotaur. All of which retain similar duties they possessed in their respective legends. For instance, Minos judged the souls of sinners and designated them to their respective locations in Hell, a similar occupation to one he held in Greek myth: judging souls with complicated sins against humanity.<sup>4</sup> This choice is fitting because deeming what is wrong in life and the heavy consequences it could possess in the afterlife makes sense for such a character. Cerberus, the three headed dog who protected the entrance to Hades from fleeing souls or mortals seeking passage to a restricted area for the living<sup>5</sup>, guarded the gluttonous souls of the Third Circle from escaping their eternal punishment.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Chiron, a centaur, culled the violent spirits escaping from the river of boiling blood, or the Phlegethon, in the Seventh Circle.<sup>7</sup> However, Chiron's traditional attributes of healing and music were overshadowed with the hunt,<sup>8</sup> a single aspect of his identity. Finally, the infamous Minotaur, a bull headed monster who consumed human flesh,<sup>9</sup> guarded the Seventh Circle from fleeing souls who tread upon his domain. The Minotaur's role is similar to Chiron's, but it is slightly more passive. Chiron actively punishes souls whereas the Minotaur is preventing souls from wandering about. With these characters Dante infused his version of Hell with a handful of his favorite characters from his education in classical history. Essentially these characters occupy major roles within Dante's revised model of Hell in order to establish a twisted form of order in the underworld with guardians of Circles and jailers of immoral miscreants.

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4 Barbara Gardner, "Minos," in *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*. Marshall Cavendish Digital (2012).

5 Alexander Stuart Murray, *Manual of Mythology: Greek and Roman, Norse and Old German, Hindoo and Egyptian Mythology*, ed. by H. Altemus (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Co., 1897), 60.

6 Dante, "Inferno," 41.

7 Dante, "Inferno," 67.

8 Emmanouil Magiorkinis, Aristidis Diamantis, and George Androutious, "Gods and Heroes of Medicine in Greek Mythology," *Archives: The International Journal of Medicine* 1, no. 3 (2008).

9 Gardner, "Minos."

Dante created this hierarchy in Hell by placing his favorite Greek mythological characters in authoritative and specific duties to perform the tasks presented to them by a higher ranking demon. Minos in *Inferno* is the de facto judge of sins in Dante's version of Hell. This is unique when compared to the Christian church's belief that God was the only entity who could judge a person's past crimes. Because Dante used this notorious Greek character in his imagining of Hell, he empowered a demon with God's role as judge<sup>10</sup>; thus, Dante established a new concept that many Christians never imagined before: a demon administering punishment for sins, rather than God.

By empowering Minos with authority to condemn sinners to gruesome punishments equivalent to their crimes against God and humanity itself, Dante essentially constructed a hierarchy in Hell, and inadvertently extracted God's divine power of judgment. In the text God grants Minos the authority to place sinners in their respective circles, while other demons – such as Cerberus and Plutus – carry out guardianship of souls or inflict pain<sup>11</sup>. Dante's creation of this bureaucracy symbolizes the need for a chain of command within in the spiritual world that reflects the current belief in the natural world, the plane of existence where humans reside, because someone or something has to ensure punishments are being carried out. After all, one person, or even a demon gifted with incredible mystical power, cannot possibly have complete control over such a large, complex system. It simply is not practical. Thus, this chain of power Dante created reflected his understanding of the complexity of efficient administration that existed in his own world, which is reflected in his *Inferno*.

Dante's *Inferno* created a diverse, horrifying hellish landscape for the sinners of the natural world in which to reside until the Final Judgment. This new conceptualization of the Christian underworld provided a clear image of how Hell could look in both appearance and the punishments for those who committed sins in life. By providing this version of Hell, Dante made an abstract concept into a grim reality for many. In doing so, he possibly coerced many of his contemporaries to relinquish their sinful lives, or more accurately, allowed priests to spread this reality through their sermons to the commoners because of the visual afterlife he created. A part of his success in creating Hell was that he changed a vague concept as a dark pit buried beneath the earth with a lake

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10 "Dante, "Inferno," 101. Many of the non-Christian characters presented in the book are described as demons, not as actual people or gods.

11 Dante, "Inferno," 46.

of fire and brimstone into a multi-leveled appalling prison for damned souls in which specific punishments were administered to reflect their sinful lives. But it must be noted that many religions have a specific location for less desirable souls. This destination is sometimes beneath the earth and it may entail an eternal life of gruesome punishment carried out by demons according to the respective religion. Also, with the hierarchy Dante established in Hell, he created a power dynamic that is not present in the Bible; thus provoking an interesting concept where humans lose what little power they possessed in life. In Hell, only demons drawn from famous characters in Greek mythology claim power, which originated from God. In the end, Dante paved the way for many possible interpretations of Hell by creating his own grotesque work of art that fueled many sermons for centuries.

One important consideration is the difference between the two terms “Hell” and “Hades,” which have proved troublesome in translating sources. Part of covering this is to describe why Dante would use the term “Hell” over “Hades”. Both words are now, in the modern era, interchangeable for the modern understanding of Hell, but there have been arguments to oppose this. It is also worth noting the term “Hades” itself because of its relation to Greek mythology and culture. Hades was the land of the dead in Greek mythology where both the riotous and wicked resided. Stories of descending into the underworld come from both Greek and Roman sources, which carried over into Christianity<sup>12</sup>; a primary example being the Harrowing of Hell. During the 15th century, Hades was defined as an in between place for lost souls, which these souls were not necessarily evil nor did they commit atrocities in life, but were waiting for their judgment by God in the Second Coming.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the term “Hell” was associated with a place of fire and eternal damnation. Dante’s use of this term shows that for his *Inferno* that he was focused on describing a hellish realm of punishment and not a purgatory, a plane of existence which he reimagines later in his life.

Before Dante’s description of Hell in his *Inferno*, the underworld was depicted as an inky black abyss filled with wandering, hopeless souls. This does display an incredibly punishing or undesirable location for those who have sinned in the

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12 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20.

13 John Anthony Harding, “Coleridge, the Afterlife, and the Meaning of ‘Hades,’” *Studies in Philology* 96, no. 2 (1999): 213.

face of God. Part of Jesus's mission in Hell, if following the theory of Dante's inspiration of this biblical event, was to also create an actual realm of personal and everlasting punishment: "...And they were judged every one according to their works."<sup>14</sup> This idea would have created more anxiety within the people, both the laymen and clerics of the time period. Thus, Dante created an idea of Hell, possibly with the aid of a non-canonical gospel that described Jesus's descent into Hell (the infamous Harrowing of Hell told in the Gospel of Nicodemus) was denied by many intellectuals to have ever transpired after his death, such as Saint Augustine, while others believed the gospel to be historically accurate.

The Harrowing of Hell may have contributed a large portion of influence to Dante during his writing of his *Inferno*. The core concept that Dante could have worked with is filling in the gaps of what transpired in Hell while Jesus was recruiting lost pagan souls to Christianity. According to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Jesus Christ descended into Hell, the dark and unforgiving land of sinners. There are many arguments against this gospel as it is not considered canonical with the Holy Bible according to the Catholic Church. Some counter arguments against this story are rather convoluted, as biblical text refers to Jesus's descent into Hell multiple times: "And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell."<sup>15</sup> And, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer the Holy One to see corruption."<sup>16</sup> These verses show indisputable evidence of Jesus's descent into Hell, whether or not the Gospel of Nicodemus is considered canonical or not. Moreover, the central goal for vacating the land of the living to Hell was to convince lost pagan souls who tragically died before his birth to join the faith: "...He preached to those spirits that were in prison."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Jesus descended into Hell and preached his sermon in order to recruit the souls of those who could be redeemed and worship a singular, true God. However, this harrowing of Hell opened a window of opportunity for Dante to siphon inspiration of this narration of Jesus's departure from the land of the living to the home of the lost. With Jesus exploring Hell and locating redeemable souls, he was acting as an administrator with God's authority.

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14 Rev. 20:13.

15 Luke 10:15.

16 Acts 2:27.

17 1 Peter 3:19.

Saint Augustine may have also been a valuable source for Dante during his writing of *Inferno*. St Augustine studied the Gospel of Nicodemus, formerly known as the Acts of Pilates, and had valuable insight on the apocryphal scripture. However, Augustine did not wish for the document to be taught to the masses. Augustine's argument against educating laymen about this biblical story "raises the possibility that men could gain eternal happiness without belief in Christ."<sup>18</sup> Dante could have looked to this source while being educated as a possible idea to implant in his future literary works. What this inspiration shows is that Dante adapted Augustine's theological concept and applied it to a Hell where not one soul could be redeemed by Christ, even after the harrowing of hell.

Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century Italian saint, possibly acted as valuable source for Dante's creation of a punishing Hell. Aquinas was known for his writings on angels and theology as a whole.<sup>19</sup> In a discussion about one of his writings Aquinas concentrated on the idea of humans and free will, a gift granted by God to humanity, and specifically on why God would punish humankind for acting against God when the deity armed humanity with this potential weapon.<sup>20</sup> This line of questions on God's creation of Hell could have been a tempting source for Dante to tap into, because it would allow Dante to create a Hell where humans are the sole cause for their sins, not God. It also ushers in an idea that God punishes God's creations even though the deity may not particularly desire to do so, but it was required in order to demonstrate the importance of moral obedience to one's creator. Considering his background in theology, Dante would be familiar with Aquinas's multiple writings on theology, especially one as inquisitive and thought provoking as this. Moreover, Dante even demonstrates this in his *Inferno*. In "Aquinas on the Possibility of Hell," Justin Noia discusses Aquinas's argument on free will and determining if a souls is to be banished to Hell. If, according to Noia, someone were to be coerced by an outside source and not the person them self in any way that goes against God, then that person is not to blame for the sin. Keeping this in mind, in *Inferno* Dante was lead to Hell by Virgil, a Roman poet, without having much say in the matter. Dante is coerced by a spirit to tread on forbidden ground. That in

18 Turner, "Descendit Ad Infernos," 175.

19 "History of Saint Thomas Aquinas," Aquinas Center of Theology, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.aquinas.emory.edu/>.

20 Justin Noia, "Aquinas on the Possibility of Hell," *Saint Anselm Journal* 12, no. 1 (2016): p. 25.

itself is a sin, but while they were exploring the colossal city Dis in Hell, an angel unlocked the gate preventing Dante and Virgil from descending further into the underworld.<sup>21</sup> This is an example of divine intervention where Dante is coerced by not only God via an angel, and Virgil, a spirit of the afterlife. These two examples demonstrate Dante's understanding of Aquinas's writing by implanting himself into his own story and being tempted by the divine in order to carry out an unknown mission. Thus, showing that Dante did not see himself guilty of exploring a realm of existence barred from the living because God essentially forced him to commit that very sin.

What Dante showed through his writing was possible theological inspirations for creating his highly influential *Inferno*. He questioned the idea of free will being a weapon used against his creator and how God actually forced Dante, in the story, to descend into the forbidden land of the punishable dead. Moreover, Dante could have potentially drew inspiration from a non-canonical source to create a hell not composed of a singular, bleak punishment, but one of diverse and personal punishment for each individual soul to experience because of the atrocities committed in life. Thus, Dante potentially utilized the works of learned, legendary theologians while writing his *Inferno* and birthed a new idea of what Hell could be that would be used for many generations of authors, and eventually changing the modern understanding of Hell.

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21 Dante, "Inferno," 55.

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