ABSTRACT

Title of Document: CONTEXT MATTERS: INTERTEXTUALITY AND VOICE IN THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH CONTROVERSY ABOUT WOMEN

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This dissertation examines three clusters of works from the early modern English controversy about women—the debate about the merits and flaws of womankind—in order to argue that authors in the controversy took advantage of the malleability of women's voices to address issues beyond the worth of women. I depart from standard treatments of the controversy by giving priority to the intertextual contexts among works that engage with one another. Attending to the intertextual elements of this genre reveals the metapoetic concerns of the authors and the way such authors fashion their feminine apologists as discursive agents in order to express those concerns. Chapter 1 examines Edward Gosynhyll's sixteenth-century works in tandem with Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," arguing that Gosynhyll's revisions of Chaucer—revisions embodied by the feminine apologists in the

texts—are integral to his project of establishing the controversy genre as multivalent and dialectical. The resulting metacommentary examines in a new light the age-old rhetorical tradition of exemplarity, a persuasive tool used in diverse literary genres. Chapter 2 considers the way the anonymous play *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* uses cross-voicing and cross-dressing to establish the performative nature of controversy conventions. In doing so, the play argues for the social benefits of abandoning essentialist logic in favor of gender performance, as such performance makes the role of apologist available to men and women alike. This cluster reconsiders the very processes by which a person—male or female—can be known to others. Finally, I trace John Taylor's use of the marginal woman in his controversy works in order to demonstrate the extent to which Taylor makes these women instrumental in establishing his own poetic and social identity. This project contributes to studies on the English controversy as well as to the field of early modern women and women's writing by arguing that authors found the genre generally and the woman's voice specifically to be fit vehicles for articulating poetic agendas beyond the immediate task of debating the nature of womankind.

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By

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Dedication

To Jason, my greatest defender.

> “La nostra volontà quïeta
>
> virtù di carità, che fa volerne
>
> sol quel ch’avemo, e d’altro non ci asseta.”
>
> —Dante, *Paradiso*, 3.70-72

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At the University of Maryland, I encountered teachers and scholars whose richness of imagination, depth of knowledge, and undaunted work ethic made it impossible to envision a more appropriate place to grow as a scholar. Gerard Passannante's early encouragement of my interest in the oddities of a medieval fabliau and Thomas Moser's passionate introduction to Chaucer confirmed my sense of belonging in the department. Sandy Mack provided pedagogical mentoring above and beyond his duties, and I aspire to his candidness, compassion, and intelligence. Kim Coles pushed my comfort zones of knowledge and has been an invaluable resource, and Kellie Robertson offered crucial feedback on this project while also proving an encouraging and resourceful mentor during the job search. Kandice Chuh was a paradigm of grace and intellect, reminding students why we do this work in the first place. To Jane Donawerth, I owe my gratitude for introducing me to a breadth of writing by Renaissance women, inspiring both my first publication and this current work. Her diligent and swift feedback, capacious knowledge of the period, and endless enthusiasm throughout the dissertation process made this project rich in ways I could not have imagined. Finally, Theresa Coletti has supported me as student, scholar, teacher, and person at every step of the way with candor, a sense of humor, patience, and incredibly keen insights to both her own field and the academy at large. I look forward to a lifetime of saying that I was once her student.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In the face of the rampant misogyny that marks early modern works attacking the virtues of women, it is not surprising to find a defender of women who asks, as does the apologist Long Meg of *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* (1640), "what have we women done / that any one who was a mother's sonne / should thus affront our sex?"[1] Meg invokes universal motherhood—all men, even misogynists, have mothers— to suggest the sheer depravity of men who speak ill of women. As impassioned as *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* is, many of its topics in defense of women's merits are equally conventional. In the same pamphlet, the apologists Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home remind women haters of the natural, mutual affection between men and women, of the erroneous argument that claims all women are vile because of the errors of a few, and of the benevolent martyrs who were women. The supporting arguments in the apologists' defense are diverse, pulled from high and low sources alike, and they reflect largely the commonplaces of the debate about women.

Amid these conventional declarations of women's goodness, however, are surprising articulations of concerns beyond the merits and flaws of women. Perplexingly, Long Meg argues for women's goodness by reminding her male readers of her own violent, martial prowess and her refusal to adhere to cultural

[1] Citations refer to signatures from Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home, *The womens sharpe revenge: or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober that writ those railing pamphelets called the Juniper and Crabtree lectures, &c. Being a sound reply and a full confutation of those bookes: with an apology in this case for the defence of us women. Performed by Mary Tattle-well, and Joane Hit-him-home, spinsters* (London: 1640), STC (2nd ed.), 23706, sig. A8^{v}.

standards of femininity. In this rhetorical move, one that seems out of place in a defense of women, readers can hear hints of Long Meg's revision of traditional gender roles. Similarly, Tattle-well and Hit-him-home align the work of misogyny in pamphlets such as *Divers Crabtree Lectures* (1639) with sedition; signaling the political stakes of men's behaviors, they even claim that men limit women's education because it benefits them to make women "weak by Nurture."[2] These comments, and Long Meg's, gesture towards concerns such as the function of a well-ordered society and the exploitation of marginalized individuals (women) for the sake of those in power (men). This phenomenon—feminine apologists using their position as defenders of women to articulate concerns aside from debating women's worth—occurs throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England.

The English debate about the merits and flaws of women—a genre I will refer to as the controversy—expresses itself formally and informally throughout the medieval and early modern periods. The genre is rooted in continental debates about women, inaugurated by Christine de Pisan 's engagement with the *Roman de la Rose*; the debate about women also has roots in ancient and medieval discourses about women's virtue, and the misogynist perspective behind attacks on women's virtue occurs in works from other genres.[3] For example, R. Howard

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[2] Tattle-well and Hit-him-home, *Sharpe Revenge*, C9^{v}.

[3] For an exceptional overview of the various classical and patristic traditions informing texts about women in the Middle Ages, see Alcuin Blamires's introduction to his edition *Woman Defamed and Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992). For a similar overview specifically targeted towards early modern Europe, see Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr.,

Bloch reminds modern scholars of the endemic medieval misogyny that both traces its roots backwards and also marches forward into new genres and centuries: "the ritual denunciation of women constitutes something on the order of a cultural constant, reaching back to the Old Testament as well as to Ancient Greece and extending through the fifteenth century." Many of the terms that still govern discourses about men and women derive from this older tradition.[4] Elaine Beilin notes that the "woman question" drew attention from "the most eminent writers—Agrippa, Juan [Luis] Vives, Thomas Elyot—as well as the most scurrilous pamphleteers," allowing for a wide spectrum of form, content, and even audience with respect to the genre.[5] Formally, works in the controversy use classical rhetorical strategies of argumentation such as judicial oration or argument from commonplaces to persuade readers of their position.[6] Informally,

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introduction to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe Series*. Available online only, accessed April 13, 2014, http://www.othervoiceineme.com/index.html.

[4] Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy,* ed. R. Howard Bloch and Frances Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1.

[5] Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)*,* xviii.

[6] The most extensive examination of the English controversy about women is Linda Woodbridge's *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984). In this study, which examines primary works from the controversy as well as the influence of those works on more standard items in the English literary canon, Woodbridge forcefully asserts the rhetorical nature of the genre and offers a rubric for defining it. The English controversy, she argues, consists of formal and informal works. Texts belonging to the formal category have the following common features: they foster genuine debate (with an implicit or explicit opponent), use logic and rhetoric to discuss women in general (rather than groups

ballads, poetry, and even drama engage in the question of whether women are virtuous or evil. The genre is responsible for popularizing lively and often conflicted literary figures, such as the absurdly patient wife, the harping shrew, and the formidable Amazon. As centuries pass and authors display their literary erudition and skill in manipulating established examples and themes, the genre provides modern readers with both entertaining punch lines—women leave behind many words the same way geese leave behind many turds[7]—and serious reappraisals of women's worth—to rail against women, Rachel Speght argues, is to display supreme ingratitude towards God Himself.[8]

In this dissertation, I focus on women's voices—voices ventriloquized by male and female authors alike—in the English controversy, exploring how and why the debate about women generally, and the voice of the feminine apologist specifically, are significant vehicles for discourses outside the controversy.[9] The works I examine in each chapter make specific, discrete cases for and against women. But they also, according to my analyses, acutely engage with other

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such as wives or prostitutes), and use exempla and abstractions about women (as opposed to indicting or vindicating a particular woman); see especially pp. 13-15.

[7] Edward Gosynhyll's *Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women: wherin every man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women* (London: 1541), STC (2nd ed.), 12104.5, sig. B4^{v}.

[8] Rachel Speght, *A mouzell for Melastomus, the cynicall bayter of, and foule mouthed barker against Evahs sex. Or an apologeticall answere to that irreligious and illiterate pamphlet made by Jo. Sw. and by him intituled, The arraignement of women* (London: 1616), STC (2nd ed.), 23058, sig. E3^{r}.

[9] Throughout this dissertation, I will follow the established practice of referring to the controversy as a distinct genre, though I recognize that works within the controversy take many forms, including poetry, prose, and drama.

concerns, such as rhetorical method, the conventions of identity, and the creation of poetic authority. My work in this dissertation reveals that ventriloquized feminine voices in the English controversy were literary devices that actively allowed authors (male and female) to explore a wide variety of topics.

Privileging Dialectical Exchange

The debate about women finds expression in diverse forms throughout English literary history, and nearly all works in the genre are crucially dialectical, meaning that they implicitly or explicitly orient themselves against other works. The discoveries of this dissertation are made possible because of my attention to this often-overlooked feature of the controversy. Historically speaking, the genre—both in France and England—involves a tradition that is deeply dialectical and intertextual, marked not by the forward march of an isolated sequence of texts but by flowering clusters of works that relate to and refer to one another.[10] Defenses of women's virtue or works praising women's goodness provoke tirades against women, while attacks on women's nature invite declarations of women's natural merits. The works are intertextual in that they directly quote one another, discuss the same figures or events, use similar rhetorical strategies or argumentative structures, allude to the claims made in a previous text, or mimic the tone or narrative perspective of another work in the controversy. Thus, the genre's intertextuality is a necessary consideration. Attending to the intertextuality of the genre reveals the feminine apologist's role in the dialectical

[10] See Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 64; Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance,* 38.

nature of the genre: she becomes the voice through which an author signals the text's relationship to other controversy works. Even more important for this project, however, I claim that her voice acts within this dialectical exchange to reveal controversy authors' preoccupations with issues outside the controversy about women, enacting their understanding that the controversy genre may be adapted to articulate those preoccupations.

The importance of dialectic to the controversy resonates in the opening of *The Womens Sharpe Revenge.* In response to John Taylor's misogynous *Divers Crabtree Lectures* and *Juniper Lecture* (both 1639), Tattle-well and Hit-him-home promise to provide a "sound reply and full confutation" of Taylor's attacks. Significantly, a dialectical process structures their response: they will rehearse and then refute Taylor's accusations, and "by comparing [the attacks and the rebuttals] together, . . . [they shall] distinguish so betwixt them, that the truth may grow apparent" (B7v). Here, a reader's ability to understand the content and truth-value of the women's defense depends upon the reader's capacity to situate the *Sharpe Revenge* in relation to its instigating texts. Without such a context, the import of the women's "full confutation" would be lost.

Just as Tattle-well and Hit-him-home insist on the necessity of dialectical exchange in their response to Taylor, the metacommentary of the feminine apologists in the works I consider occurs because of the dialectical exchange across texts. For example, Edward Gosynhyll positions his defense of women against his own attack on women, and the points of contact between the two—especially the ways each work uses women's voices and daily experiences—

illuminate Gosynhyll's metacommentary on rhetorical method, as I discuss in Chapter One. There is even dialectical exchange among Gosynhyll's two poems and the medieval poems that seem to have inspired him. When Edward Gosynhyll's Venus, the voice behind his apology for women, demands that women's experience be used as meaningful evidence for women's goodness, she invokes not only Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* but also "The Wife of Bath's Prologue." Both of these medieval works investigate whether the category of experience (as opposed to textual authority) is viable proof in an argument. The *Legend*'s narrator opens the poem with an insistence that "God forbede but men shulde leve / wel more then men han seen with ye!"[11] But Love's later injunction that the dreamer write of various women's experiences with the woes of love, experiences drawn from "thise olde auctours" (575), signifies the complicated relationship between lived experience and textual evidence in the poem about women sufferers in love. Similarly, the Wife of Bath's insistence that experience constitutes effective proof in an argument, even if it is not authoritative proof, makes her prologue an appropriate inspiration for Venus's inquiry into whether textual authorities are amiss in overlooking the ways women's experiences can prove their goodness. My discovery of the authors' manipulation of the voices of the apologists in the controversy is made possible because of my attention to the type of dialectical exchange exemplified by Gosynhyll's relationship to Chaucer.

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[11] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women, The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), ll. 10-11, p. 588. Subsequent citations will be interlinear and refer to line numbers.

Much of the scholarship on the English controversy does not attend explicitly to the intertextual dynamics of the genre. For example, the anthology of controversy texts edited by Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus makes available in modern typeface and spelling a series of excerpts from many of the works of the controversy. Only some of these texts, however, are placed alongside the provoking work(s) or responding work(s). In *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640,* Vol. 4, *Defenses of Women*, defenses of women by Jane Anger, Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda are grouped together in one volume, isolating the defense texts (though, in the case of Anger's cluster, the instigating text is not extant). Similarly, Simon Shepherd's collection of controversy pamphlets isolates those works that purport to be authored by women; and Betty Travitsky's *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* assumes female authorship behind many of the controversy works' pseudonyms, hence informing her choice to include works "by women" isolated from their instigating attack.[12] Among the few critics

[12] Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640,* Vol. 4, *Defenses of Women*, Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen, Gen. Eds. (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1996); Shepherd, *The Women's Sharp Revenge: Five Women's Pamphlets from the Renaissance* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985). Travitsky, *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). In "Defences of Women," Teague and De Hass similarly isolate the works of the controversy; see *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing,* ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 248-63.

attuned to the import of the controversy's intertextuality, Megan Matchinske asserts: "looking at the debate texts in dialogue and noting the ways that they strategically imagine possibilities . . . can offer us an opportunity to resuscitate notions of volition and effect."[13] My project expands Matchinske's claim as I argue that, by attending to texts in dialogue, we can better identify the cultural concerns with which such texts engage.

The dialectical nature of the controversy genre becomes most clear in its intertextual connections, in its works' explicit and implicit allusions and references to one another. Therefore, theories of intertextuality have influenced my approach to this project because these theories encourage a nuanced consideration of relationships among different texts. My use of the term "intertextuality" will raise the eyebrows of those invested in the work of defining the term, as I employ it widely to refer to "the relations between authors and their precursors as well as the relations between texts and the reigning semiotic practices of a given historical moment." [14] As Gregory Machacek points out, this definition departs from meanings of the term as originally imagined by scholars such as Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and Howard Bloom.[15] I use

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[13] "Channeling the Gender Debate: Legitimation and Agency in 17th-Century Tracts and Women's Poetry," *The History of British Women's Writing, 1610-1690*, Vol. 3, ed. Mihoko Suzuki (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 48.

[14] Gregory Machacek, "Allusion," *PMLA* 122.2 (2007): 524.

[15] For a lucid account of the development and polysemous function of the term since the 1960s, see Andrea Bernardelli, ed., "Introduction," *The Concept of Intertextuality Thirty Years on: 1967-1997,* Special Issue *VS Quaderni di studi semiotici* 77/78 (1997): 3-22. In "Against Intertextuality," *Philosophy and Literature* 28.2 (2004): 227-42, William Irwin claims that the term

"intertextuality" to designate, in Machacek's phrase, "a quality disseminated throughout a text"[16] that puts the text in an allusive relationship with other texts, cultural and literary. I choose this term precisely because it has undergone the conceptual expansion that Machacek describes. In the early modern controversy about women, I find no way to employ the term "intertextuality" in Barthes's sense, i.e., in an authorless landscape. Nor am I able consistently to designate the intertextuality among controversy works with more precise terms such as *echo*, *allusion*, or even *reference*, because the phenomena themselves do not always reflect such rigid categories. Despite the difficulties of terminology, paying particular attention to intertextuality is necessary for identifying the innovative use of the feminine apologist's voice in English controversy texts.

Voice: The Feminine Apologist as Discursive Agent

The current state of scholarship on the controversy owes many debts to those who established the field of early modern women's studies in the twentieth century. Francis Lee Utley's index of works pertaining to the argument about women is recognized as having inspired widespread interest in the topic of the

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"intertextuality" "has come to have almost as many meanings as users," and that "at its best, intertextual interpretation is a liberating, empowering tool for social change. At its worst, intertextuality becomes fashionable jargon for traditional notions such as allusion and source study" (227-29). Irwin ultimately reassesses the viability of the term, arguing instead that it should be replaced with "authorial-textual phenomena" (542). For a more positive take on the role of intertextuality studies, see Marko Juvan, "Towards a History of Intertextuality in Literary and Culture Studies," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 10.3 (Sept. 2008), Article 1 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol10/iss3/1>.

[16] Machacek, "Allusion," 524.

controversy, and later authors such as Carroll Camden and Constance Jordan tied some of these works to the political concerns of England and Scotland and to contemporary scientific, philosophical, and religious discourses.[17] Foundational studies by these three scholars identified the import of the controversy as a literary genre and its crucial links to other cultural phenomena. In recent years, scholars have provided nuanced accounts of the genre's relationship to classical, medieval, and French sources while also making primary texts in the controversy newly accessible.[18] From these studies, we now understand the genre's debt to classical rhetorical methods for argumentation, to medieval patristic writings about men and women's God-given natures, and to scientific and medical writings that explore the differences between men and women. Interest in women writers

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[17] Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib: An Analytical Index to the Argument about Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568* (Columbus: The Graduate School of the Ohio State University, 1944); Carroll Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman* (Houston: The Elsevier Press, 1952); Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[18] Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women*; *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance,* ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees (New York: Palgrave 2002); Pamela Joseph Benson, ed., *Texts from The Querelle, 1616-1640. The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*. Series III. Vol. 2 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Anne E. B. Coldiron, *English Printing, Verse Translation and the Battle of the Sexes, 1476-1557* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009). Scholars working on the controversy in the interim include Simon Shepherd, *The Women's Sharp Revenge*; Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Sussex, UK: Harvester Press, 1981); Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*; Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: Misogamous Literature from Juvenal to Chaucer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Pamela Joseph Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1992); Alcuin Blamires, ed. *Woman Defamed and Defended*.

of early modern England has also produced scholarship crucial to contextualizing the woman question, illuminating how the controversy overlaps with other literary forms such as drama and poetry.[19]

In the last decade and a half, scholars have significantly revised and reimagined the literary landscape of women writers and writing about women in early modern England. We now know that "Judith Shakespeare" was alive and well in her time, and that women writers were engaged in poetic, authorial, and political activities similar to those of the many male writers who have previously dominated the canon.[20] Women writers were not so constrained by prohibitions

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[19] See *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); especially useful in this last volume is Hilda Smith's chapter, "Humanist Education and the Renaissance Concept of Woman," pp. 9-29. *Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. James Fitzmaurice and Josephine A. Roberts, et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997); *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990); *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996); *Women Poets of the Renaissance*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Routledge, 1999); *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Pacheco; and *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England 1550-1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); For a fine introduction to the intersection of Renaissance studies and feminist criticism, see *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially Joan Kelly's "Did Women Have a Renaissance" (pp. 21-47) and Natalie Zemon Davis's "Women on Top" (pp. 156-85).

[20] Ulrike Tancke, '*Bethinke Thy Selfe' in Early Modern England: Writing Women's Identities* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010); see especially 1-24.

against reading, writing, and publication that they did not write for themselves and for reading or viewing audiences, and even their forays into more autobiographical genres became avenues of agency for women consciously to articulate their own positions vis-à-vis their "socio-cultural and material circumstances."[21] Literary women, such as women storytellers, have also become a site of productive critical attention, suggesting to modern scholars that "a dual-gender proto-public sphere existed [in early modern England] a century or more before the Habermasian all-male coffeehouse came into being."[22] In other words, considering the import of fictional women on our understanding of actual women has yielded a more nuanced understanding of how women operated in private and public during the Renaissance. Attention to actual women's voices in women's writing and fictional women's voices in literary representations of women has made it possible to correct Virginia Woolf's lament about the absence of writing women in medieval and Renaissance England.

The present study positions itself within this more recent scholarly trajectory, one that replaces concern about women's subjugation with more nuanced accounts of how women—real and fictional—engaged in the world around them. My dissertation provides modern scholarship with one such account regarding the controversy about women. In doing so, I also illuminate an unrecognized phenomena within the genre: the way in which many works of the

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[21] Tancke, '*Bethinke Thy Selfe,*' 8.

[22] Pamela Allen Brown, afterward, *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 210.

controversy explicitly engage in metacommentary about subjects unrelated to the immediate task of praising or blaming women, activating the voice of the feminine apologist to articulate these ulterior concerns. In demonstrating the significance and usefulness of the feminine apologist within the controversy genre, my project reveals that authors in the genre understand women's speech as powerful and effective. Furthermore, the controversy genre, viewed through this role of the apologist, is a crucial tool for social and cultural negotiations.

In his influential study on medieval literary misogyny, Bloch asks, "Does it matter who speaks?"[23] Although Bloch is concerned with how to disentangle misogyny as *topos* from the articulation of misogyny in any given text, his question is central to this project. Emphatically, my work argues that it *does* matter who speaks for and against women, especially when those speaking voices depart from the task of praising or blaming women to engage with other issues and discourses. The works I examine in the following chapters showcase how their authors variously instrumentalize the apologists' voices in order to disrupt the status quo. In so doing, the authors take advantage of the tenuous cultural assessments of women's speech and women's voices by putting these voices to use towards potentially disruptive discursive ends.[24] Bloch contends that medieval misogyny depicts women as "a constant source of anxiety, of

[23] Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," 8.

[24] In this way, we might consider the relationship between these early modern texts and medieval associations of women with rhetoric and the persuasive arts. See Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," 17.

dissatisfaction, . . . of an anxiety expressed . . . within language itself."[25] Because women embody "the spirit of contradiction," they become fit vehicles for authors to explore topics that are equally contradictory or troubling.[26]

My attention to voice in this project privileges the literal sense of the term: I am interested in who speaks, what these voices say, and how these two features confound or confirm cultural expectations for one another. Equally important, my project emphasizes the speaking voice as a figurative product of the author, reflecting his or her own preoccupations. Thus, my project continues historical and theoretical interest in the function of literary voices and in explorations of "voice" as a culturally contingent construct. The controversy's representations of apologists speaking on behalf of women are important both for what they say and for the fact that they most often are speaking women; to invoke Derrida: "speech never gives us the thing itself, but a simulacrum that touches us more profoundly than the truth, 'strikes' us more effectively."[27] The women—and the women's speech—that these authors create are indeed simulacra, but the engagement of these voices and their words with provocative subjects becomes an effective way for early modern authors to engage profoundly with charged topics.

Specifically, this project argues that the ventriloquized feminine apologist is a crucial component of the English controversy about women. Elizabeth D.

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[25] Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," 3.

[26] Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," 18.

[27] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 324.

Harvey's work on ventriloquized female voices informs my thinking about the apologist's role in the controversy texts that I analyze by providing one model for attending to the phenomena of voiced women.[28] Harvey examines explicitly male-authored uses of women's voices by Spenser, Erasmus, and Donne, arguing that such "ventriloquism is an appropriation of the feminine voice, and that it reflects and contributes to a larger cultural silencing of women" (12). In attending to this transvestite ventriloquism, Harvey contends that such representations of women's speech "fostered a vision that tended to reinforce women's silence or to marginalize their voices when they did speak or write" (5). In other words, Harvey claims that the ventriloquized voices she examines reinforce the Renaissance status quo of disempowering women.[29] Thus, while Harvey and I

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[28] Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992). Subsequent references will be interlineal and refer to page numbers.

[29] Martha Slowe's position confirms Harvey's: she argues that the generic conventions of the controversy "figure and position women speakers as subordinate, excessive, and potentially disruptive or transgressive" (4), and the "symbolic figuration that emerges from the formal attacks and defenses on women . . . is that of a powerless, unstable female subject whose speech must be controlled by male regulators" (4). These "male regulators" are akin to Harvey's ventriloquizing authors; see "In Defense of Her Sex: Women Apologists in Early Stuart Letters" (Phd diss., McGill University, 1992). Harvey and Slowe are not unique in claiming that the process of co-opting women's voices contributes to the marginalization of actual women. Coldiron suggests that the interventions made by early English printers diminish the power of the female speaker; see *English Printing,* especially pp. 70-83 and 145. Similarly, in her study of women writers, Beilin finds that "while each group [women writing defenses and women writing mother's advice books] diversifies the voice and style of women's writing, to varying degrees, their subject matter ultimately reinforces traditional definitions of feminine virtue"; see *Redeeming Eve*, xxiv. Pamela Joseph Benson claims that English defenses of women (many of which are *voiced* by women) "celebrate a docile, chaste, conventional ideal"; see *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, 206.

reach different conclusions about the results of such ventriloquized speech, her attention to ventriloquized voices illuminates how prolific and under-analyzed such voicing actually is throughout the literary canon.

The works analyzed in this dissertation demonstrate that ventriloquized voices are not necessarily resigned to function as tools of patriarchy, even though, as Harvey and others suggest, a constellation of oppressive factors marked the lives of early modern women. These factors include the "rigid hierarchization of society, increasingly rigid religious standardization, [and] rigid domestication of women."[30] Although scholarly discoveries about the ways early modern women negotiated such rigid constructs usefully complicate the narrative about women's marginalization, historical evidence suggests that we cannot overturn completely this account of early modern women's lives.[31] Indeed, my aim in this project is not to question evidence for women's cultural silencing or subordination. Rather, I argue that recognizing the marginalization of women in early modern England does not preclude the possibility of contemporary writing that reimagines the powerful capacities of women's speech. In the chapters that follow, I argue that writings from the controversy about women engage in just this sort of reimagination by instrumentalizing women's voices.

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[30] Travitsky, *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, 24. The standard discussion for these constraints remains Suzanne Hull's *Chaste, Silent, & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982).

[31] Beilin's *Redeeming Eve* is a foundational text for those seeking a more nuanced account of women's marginality.

My examination of women's voices shows in the controversy specifically what scholars have noted generally for decades: the category of voice as a point of literary analysis is historically fraught. In the twentieth-century, theorists of language and feminism conducted many of the foundational inquiries into how voices represented in texts operate, what they signify, and how we should read them.[32] What I find especially useful for the present study, though, is the approach to narrative voice pursued by Susan Lanser, whose analysis draws from both narratology and feminist studies. Grounded in the hypothesis that "female voice . . . is a site of ideological tension made visible in textual practices," Lanser compellingly argues that the narrative voices in the texts she analyzes are sites "of crisis, contradiction, or challenge."[33] Lanser explains how voice can be singular or collective, residing in one figure or manifesting itself through "multiple, mutually authorizing voices."[34] Despite the theoretical challenges of analyzing the narrative voice(s) of a given literary work, Lanser argues that voice, as an element of narration, is "ideologically charged and socially variable, sensitive to gender

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[32] See Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology,* trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), especially pp. 60-74; Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977); Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875-93; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). See also J. Claude Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991).

[33] Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 6-7.

[34] Lanser, *Feminist Poetics of Narrative Voice*, 21.

differences in ways that have not been recognized."[35] By turning such a critical eye towards voice in texts within the controversy, my work here offers an opportunity to consider how an already gendered discourse produces such a charged phenomenon as the apologist's voice and how that voice is mobilized by any given author.

In spite of the complicated and still-evolving history of the construct of literary voices, using ventriloquized voices as the main object of analysis within controversy texts makes it possible to sidestep some of the critical pitfalls that mark early scholarship on the controversy about women. For example, instead of searching out a biographical reading of any one controversy work based on assumptions about the author's identity—particularly the author's gender—I am able to analyze the ways that constructions of a gendered narrative voice interact with the content and form of the work.[36] My investigation has led me to share the

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[35] Lanser, *Feminist Poetics of Narrative Voice,* 23.

[36] None of the extant works blaming women are written by actual women or by authors using female pseudonyms. As for works defending women, some appear to be anonymous but reveal the author within, as Gosynhyll's *Mulierum Pean*. Some of the authors' names are obvious pseudonyms, such as Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home, authors of *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*; and some authors' names walk the tenuous line between pseudonymity and reality, as does Jane Anger's, the author of *Jane Anger: Her Protection for Women.* Many works from the genre rely on the rhetorical technique of prosopopoeia in all or part of their texts, making the issue of authorship even more complicated. Barbara Lewalski thinks Constantia Munda and Ester Sowernam are men; see *Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Elizabeth Clarke makes a fascinating case for Anne Southwell as Constantia Munda and suggests that in their time, Munda and Sowernam were probably *not* taken as female writers and their writings were likely understood through the tradition of the mock encomium (49); see "Anne Southwell and the Pamphlet Debate: The Politics of Gender, Class, and Manuscript," *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, ed. Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki

position articulated by Margaret W. Ferguson: "perhaps, we should re-examine the desire to *have* certainty on . . . a question" such as an author's gender.[37] Attention to the dialectical exchange of the genre enables me to examine the interesting ways an author chooses to formulate his or her argument rather than try to decipher an author's "actual" beliefs about women—another pitfall of previous scholarship on the controversy.[38] Finally, analyzing women's fictive

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(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 37-53. Hilda Smith suggests that Jane Anger and Ester Sowernam are not women "because of the proclivity of men to publish on both sides of the issue for financial gain, and internal consistencies that make the works seem products of a male, masquerading as a woman, writing for a male audience" (28, n. 7); see "Humanist Education and the Renaissance Concept of Woman," *Women and Literature in Britain*, 9-29. Henderson and McManus rightly note that there are "no compelling reason[s] to discount [the authors'] claims to be women," given that some women were actually educated enough to be the authors. While I support this position, I am skeptical of their suggestion that "the hypothesis that these treatises were actually written by men is not logical" because men had nothing to gain from such a move. The era's rhetorical training—in which students were encouraged to argue on both sides of a question—combined with the marketability of a female pseudonym on a defense tract convince me that it would have been quite logical for a man to use a female pseudonym. See Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind,* pp. 20ff for a discussion of authorship and gender. Susan Gushee O'Malley argues, regarding Constantia Munda's response to Swetnam, that "the ranting use of language . . . also makes one question Constantia's alleged female gender" (xii); see her introduction to *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Workes*, *Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640*, Vol. 4.

[37] "Renaissance Concepts of the 'Woman Writer,'" *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700,* 152. Among scholars studying the major early works on the controversy, Constance Jordan is most vehement in her refusal to assign authorship based on the use of female pseudonyms, claiming in *Renaissance Feminism,* "there are no clear indications that men and women took uniquely distinct perspectives on feminist questions" (19).

[38] This question of an author's "true" attitudes towards women is distracting largely because the controversy genre is dialectical and rhetorical in nature: it is a genre built on the idea of implicit and explicit allegations requiring response, and these responses are buttressed by strategies of persuasion. Previous scholarship on the genre understands it as one of "play," not reflecting contemporary beliefs

voices bypasses the often dead-end inquiry into the "feminism" of any given work because examining the figurative voices reveals instead particularly contemporary concerns, situating the controversy work in its historical moment.[39] Thus, voice proves an especially fruitful mode of analysis for works in the controversy about women.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter investigates one cluster of controversy texts, specifically analyzing the way the apologist's voice works within and across texts in the cluster to engage with issues other than the value and worth of women.[40] In each

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about women; see Slowe, "In Defense of Her Sex"; Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*; Shepherd, *The Women's Sharp Revenge*; Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*; Teague and De Haas, "Defences of Women," 258. Floyd Gray contends that most French texts in the *querelle* genre "were drafted originally as display pieces" to showcase rhetorical talent; see *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11. Julie Campbell takes a mediating position, viewing the genre as both literary game and resource for social commentary; see *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 5.

[39] The issue of feminism in the controversy is pervasive in early scholarship on the genre. Henderson and McManus note the difficulty in placing these works within feminist thought; see *Half Humankind*, especially pp. 24-31, for their discussion of the "feminism" of the works in their anthology. Travitsky refers to many of the defense works as " 'feminist' tracts" in *The Paradise of Women,* 12. Ekaterina V. Haskins argues that Judith Drake's 1696 defense of women displays early feminist thinking; see "A Woman's Inventive Response to the Seventeenth-Century *Querelle des Femmes*," *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 288-302. Jordan's monograph *Renaissance Feminism* displays the ways in which early scholars use "feminist" as a category of analysis for controversy texts.

[40] In every chapter, I have endeavored to provide a case study of a particular intertextual exchange within that cluster, but in each case there are also works belonging to the cluster that have received little if any attention. Chapter One

instance, the metacommentary voiced by the apologists develops because of this dialectical exchange. The chapters thus become distinct case studies in the ways the feminine apologist's voice offers agency for controversy authors, showing the dynamic nature of the genre and the women's voices within it. The range of metacommentary displayed in these clusters indicates that contemporary authors had a much more active engagement with the controversy genre than we have previously recognized, and the seriousness of this engagement points toward the need for modern scholars to reassess the relevance of the debate about women to traditionally canonical texts and texts written for a more learned audience. This metacommentary also recasts the controversy as a historically contingent rather than as a transhistorical phenomenon.

The English controversy about women officially takes root in mid-sixteenth-century England. This nascent moment is marked by fizzle and fire: Thomas Elyot, the first recorded contributor to the genre after Chaucer, offers a timid Socratic dialogue in defense of women in 1540. But Elyot's work fails to start any sort of blaze around the controversy genre. Rather, as I argue in Chapter One, Edward Gosynhyll's pamphlets attacking and praising women (*The*

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considers Edward Gosynhyll's *Scolehouse for Women* and *Mulierum Pean* alongside earlier works by Chaucer, but I do not include in my analysis the works of Edward More and C. Pyrrye, both of whom respond to Gosynhyll. In Chapter Two, my analysis of the Swetnam controversy largely overlooks the responses of Rachel Speght and Constantia Munda in favor of privileging Ester Sowernam's response alongside the anonymous play. Although Chapter Three examines Taylor's *Divers Crabtree Lectures*, its sister text, *The Juniper Lecture*, remains largely unconsidered. The voices missing from each cluster are significant, and their absence here should not be taken to indicate their lack of participation in the metapoetics created by the intertextuality of each cluster. Rather, the texts I have chosen to address stand as harbingers of the possibilities inherent in analysis that privileges voices and textual contexts.

Scholehouse of Women, 1541, and *Mulierum Pean*, c. 1542, respectively) ignite the controversy about women. Gosynhyll uses his feminine apologist—a figure named Venus—to reconsider the typical rhetorical methods of debate literature, specifically exemplarity as a persuasive tactic. Venus channels two very different medieval defenses of women—Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue"—to demonstrate how an alternative understanding of a key tool of argumentation can lead to a more generative and engaging debate about women.

Rather than employing exemplarity to organize a series of paradigmatic figures that demonstrate the argument at hand, Venus voices not only an alternative take on exemplarity but also an alternative form of evidence to demonstrate her argument for women's worth. When Gosynhyll's Venus draws on Chaucer to indicate that exemplary figures are dynamic pieces of proof that can be mobilized for diverse and even contradictory ends, she opens the door to a rhetorical method that privileges dialectical exchange. In providing both an invitation to and a means for such exchange, Venus enables the development of the very genre that she represents. The apologists in this chapter, I contend, disrupt a historically significant status quo by emphasizing the rhetorical possibilities inherent in a new understanding of exemplarity as a persuasive tactic. Thus, the female apologists articulate both a defense of women specifically and an authorial metacommentary on ways to conduct arguments in general.

Not only do Gosynhyll's pamphlets provoke multiple responses in the 1500s, but the genre also flares in a cluster of early seventeenth-century texts. The

intertextuality among the works in this cluster articulates a rather radical notion: the essential attributes that authors in the controversy respectively assign to men and women are in actuality performative gestures, fit for enactment by men *or* women. The focus of my second chapter, these works include Joseph Swetnam's *Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (1615), a pamphlet attacking women, and the responding pamphlet defenses by Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda. *Swetnam the Woman-hater* (1620), an anonymous play performed at the Red Bull Theater, closes this cluster and draws explicitly from the preceding pamphlets. Across the defense pamphlets, the voices of multiple feminine apologists investigate the essential nature of women, but the responding theatrical piece argues for severing the essentialist coupling of gender and the role of the apologist. The play turns the logic of the defensive pamphlets upside down, showing how any individual, man or woman, may fulfill the role of the feminine apologist because it is a role based in performative gestures rather than natural qualities. In *Swetnam the Woman-Hater,* a cross-dressed hero fashioned as an Amazon strives to rectify the social ills of a Sicilian Kingdom plagued by both the virulent rantings of Misogynos and the harsh justice of King Atticus. In the process, the play argues for the social benefits that arise when the voice of the feminine apologist no longer belongs strictly to women. Indeed, without her voice traversing multiple bodies both male and female, the play's kingdom would never restore the social order it lost at the hands of its unruly men. While this cluster explicitly praises and blames women, then, it also offers

significant metacommentary on the very means by which a person—male or female—can be known.

Departing from those of Chapter 2, the voices of the feminine apologists analyzed in Chapter 3 disrupt contemporary social order, imagining a new one in its place. This disruption enables one particular poet to establish his literary and social identities. In this cluster of works, John Taylor, one of the most prolific authors of the seventeenth century, uses voices of shrews to continue his poetic project of authorizing his work as writer and laborer. I argue that Taylor's *Divers Crabtree Lectures* (an attack on women printed in 1639), and *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* (the responding defense of women printed anonymously in 1640) appropriate the problem of shrews in order to legitimize Taylor's vocation as an author and his low social status as a waterman. The shrews that become most useful to Taylor's project are the shrews acting as feminine apologists in the *Womens Sharpe Revenge*. Taylor harnesses the marginal quality of these shrews, embracing the agency that their roles as apologists afford. The result is a stunning reimagination of what sort of person can call himself a "poet."

In arguing that the ventriloquized voices of the controversy about women perform important cultural work without necessarily perpetuating women's marginalization, I illustrate Thelma S. Fenster's and Clare A. Lees's claim that a "woman in debate literature can be the object of the most virulent misogyny, but she can also be the way, however tentative, of imagining a new order of things."[41]

[41] Suzuki, introduction, *Gender in Debate,* 14. Mihoko Suzuki's work on male subalterns and women is one of the few book-length studies to explore this "new order of things" made possible by reimagining women (though Suzuki does not

The authors considered in this dissertation, without qualification, use women's voices not only to offer specific defenses of women but also to imagine new orders of things: to interrogate long-standing rhetorical methods; demonstrate the social productivity enabled by transforming conventions into performative cultural artifacts; and reconstruct a valid poetic and social identity for marginal persons. As Mary Ellen Lamb writes, "formative discourses are seldom unidirectional; and loopholes, points of contradiction, and strategies of subversion are especially prominent for discourses of gender."[42] Infused by and dispersed into various other literary genres and interacting with evolving social concerns about women, the English controversy about women is one such formative discourse. From the perspective of this dissertation, its most significant loophole is the voice of the feminine apologist.

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focus specifically on women in debate literature); see *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003).

[42] Lamb, introduction, *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, xxiii.

Chapter 1: Exemplarity and The Chaucerian Origins of the Early English Controversy about Women

During the mid-sixteenth century, a flurry of texts announced the arrival of the controversy genre in England.[1] Known on the Continent as the *querelle des femmes,* the debate about women remained popular in England for over a hundred years. In these nascent moments of the genre, a practically unknown author, Edward Gosynhyll, wrote on both sides of the woman question, praising and blaming womankind. In doing so, he established the importance of the dialectical nature of the genre. Not only are Gosynhyll's texts in conversation with each other, but they are also in dialectical exchange with the medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. The complicated web of allusive relationships among the works of the two poets enables Gosynhyll to make an argument for the role of interpretive multivalency in the controversy about women. Infusing controversy works with a multiplicity of interpretations and forms of argumentative proof, features that

[1] These texts include Thomas Elyot's *The defense of good women, devised and made by Sir Thomas Elyot, Knight* (London: 1540), STC (2nd ed.), 7657.5; Edward Gosynhyll's *Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women*; Edward Gosynhyll's *The prayse of all women, called Mulieru[m] pean. Very fruytfull and delectable unto all the reders. Loke [et] rede who that can. This boke is prayse to eche woman* (London: 1542), STC (2nd ed.), 12102; Edward More's *A lytle and bryefe treatyse, called the defence of women, and especially of Englyshe women, made agaynst the Schole howse of women* (London: 1560), STC (2nd ed.), 18067; and C. Pyrrye's *The praise and dispraise of women, very fruitfull to the well disposed minde, and delectable to the readers therof. And a fruitfull shorte dialogue uppon the sentence, know before thou knitte* (London: 1569), STC (2nd ed.), 20523.

Gosynhyll identifies in Chaucer, ensures the ongoing textual exchange that will sustain the genre.

This chapter argues that Edward Gosynhyll's praise and blame pamphlets, published nearly simultaneously in the early 1540s, propel the controversy about women forward by explicitly privileging the function of exemplarity that enables multivalency. Much as the "Querelle de la rose" is the watershed moment for the French *querelle des femmes*, Gosynhyll's works mark a significant moment in the English debate about women.[2] Thus, their general attention to rhetorical method within a specific debate about women requires consideration. Rather than demonstrate the persuasive strength of exemplarity, Gosynhyll highlights the excesses of exemplarity as a rhetorical method and its capacity to generate content for the controversy; rather, he points to the way exemplary figures are never free from extra narrative material that can be used as proof in diverse arguments. Crucially, Gosynhyll's ability to attend to this quality of exemplarity relies on his use of Chaucerian *auctoritas,* themes, idioms, and characters, especially as these are embodied in the persona of the feminine apologist. Here, I identify the contact points between Gosynhyll and Chaucer, recovering an important and overlooked moment of early Chaucerian reception and demonstrating that the early modern

[2] R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy*, ed. Bloch and Frances Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1-20. Bloch suggests that the debate surrounding the *Roman de la Rose* is not only France's first literary debate but also its first literary debate specifically "enmeshed" in questions about women and interpretation. See "Medieval Misogyny," 6.

English controversy has its roots in the works of one of the greatest medieval English poets.[3]

In Gosynhyll's reading of Chaucer, the voice of the apologist establishes the genre in its nascent moment as one that requires multivalency—multiple interpretations and textual openness—thus making possible the dialectical exchange necessary for debating the worth of women. The feminine apologist does this by engaging with exemplarity in a way that exploits the excess inherent in the method *and* posits female experience as a category of evidence fit to rival exemplarity. The apologist's voice also crucially serves to legitimize Gosynhyll's work on both sides of the question as it demonstrates that the evidence used to debate women's worth is more capacious than it is conclusive. Gosynhyll's reasons for writing on both sides of the question may be lost with time—perhaps he did so to entertain, to demonstrate his rhetorical erudition, or to capitalize economically on multiple texts rather than one. Regardless, as the first early modern author to write in praise and blame of women, Gosynhyll provides readers and authors alike with nearly limitless ways to engage in the controversy about women. His illustration of the "excess" inherent in exemplarity is metacommentary applicable to debates beyond the controversy about women.

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[3] A handful of scholars have noted that Gosynhyll imitates Chaucer, but no one has explored the relationship between the two authors or the ways that such imitation must inform our reading of Gosynhyll's project specifically and the controversy generally. See Barbara F. McManus, "Eve's Dowry: Genesis and the Pamphlet Controversy about Women," *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain,* ed. Maria E. Burke and Jane Donawerth, et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 195; Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, 214; Henderson and McManus, ed., *Half Humankind*, 12.

The first recorded English Renaissance contributor to the controversy, Thomas Elyot, wrote a *Defense of Good Women* (1540), a formal, Socratic dialogue in which the churlish Caninius and the benevolent Candidus debate the worth of women, culling their arguments from classical giants such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates.[4] Elyot's dialogue is marked by an explicit attention to literate and Latinate authorities over other forms of evidence and a serious tone. Later controversy writers will either abandon or revise these attributes, juxtaposing serious and playful literary forms, calling upon a wider spectrum of evidence, and appealing overtly to humor.[5] Thus, it is difficult to make the case, as one foundational study of the English controversy does,[6] that Thomas Elyot's

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[4] For discussions of Elyot's work, see Constance Jordan, "Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defense of Good Women*," *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, Vol. 139, ed. Thomas Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, (Farmington Hills: Gale: 2007), 122-32; Dennis J. O'Brien, "Warrior Queen: The Character of Zenobia According to Giovanni Bocaccio, Christine de Pisan, and Sir Thomas Elyot," *Medieval Perspectives* 8 (1993): 53-68; Diane Bornstein (intro.), *The Feminist Controversy of the Renaissance: Guillaume Alexis, An Argument betwyxt Man and Woman (1525); Sir Thomas Elyot, The Defence of Good Women (1545); Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, Female Pre-Eminence (1670)* (Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints: 1980). For a modern edition, see *Sir Thomas Elyot's The Defence of Good Women,* ed. Edwin J. Howard (Oxford: Anchor Press, 1940).

[5] These later works in the controversy include Robert Vaughan, *A Dyalogue defensyve for women, agaynst malycyous detractours* (1542); Jane Anger, *Her Protection for Women* (1589); Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women* (1615); Esther Sowernam, *Esther hath hanged Haman* (1617); Constantia Munda, *The Worming of a mad Dog* (1617); Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617); *Hic Mulier* (1620); *Haec Vir* (1620); John Taylor, *A Juniper Lecture* (1639); John Taylor, *Divers Crabtree Lectures* (1639); Mary Tattlewell and Joane Hit-him-home (pseudo., John Taylor), *The women's sharp revenge* (1640).

[6] Woodbridge claims that Sir Thomas Elyot is responsible for inaugurating the early Tudor controversy; see *Women and the English Renaissance,* 18. Elyot may

Defense offers sufficient raw material and emotional and intellectual incitement to inspire the development of the controversy genre. Gosynhyll's works, on the contrary, showcase multiple viewpoints, diverse types of evidence, and both serious and ludic content. These features not only render the "verdict" of his debate inconclusive—thus inspiring continued exchange in the genre—but also provide content for those who wish to write on either side of the woman question.

Gosynhyll's works defending and attacking women channel Chaucer, but for different reasons. The Chaucerianisms of the *Mulierum Pean* (1542) outline a method for engaging in the controversy that ultimately ensures its sustainability as a genre. Gosynhyll's defensive *Pean,* appropriates, alludes to, and directly imitates Chaucer in various ways; but it draws most directly from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale." The defense poem adapts the formal structures of Chaucer's *Legend* in order to investigate the rhetorical method of exemplarity. The narrator Venus aligns herself with the Wife's "Prologue" as she explores the viability of defending women through both authority based on established exempla and authority based on personal experience; such attention to lived experience is a major departure from Elyot's defense of women through authorized discourses and clerkly

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have been the first to address the issue in Tudor England, but it is Gosynhyll who insists upon the textual exchange so crucial to the genre and whose work inspires responses and sets the tone for further contributions to the controversy. For a full survey of the state of the debate in Tudor England, see Woodbridge's chapter "The Early Tudor Controversy." Henderson and McManus identify the Gosynhyll texts as the start of the pamphlet war in sixteenth-century England. Their exclusion of Elyot and inclusion of Gosynhyll seems only a condition of the specific focus on dialectical pamphlets rather than the content and form of Gosynhyll's works; see *Half Humankind,* 12.

authority. In the voice of Gosynhyll's Venus, we not only hear echoes of the *Legend of Good Women* and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," but also learn how to exploit the elements of exemplarity usually left in the background.

The Chaucerianisms of the *Scholehouse for Women* (1541) harness subjects and tropes from the "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" to establish the ludic elements necessary for engaging a popular audience while also authorizing—via Chaucer's *auctoritas*—the stereotypical portrayals of women that comprise the attack on women. In using the Wife of Bath—the famous medieval defender of women—as the inspiration for the scurrilous material of the *Scholehouse*, Gosynhyll demonstrates the multivalency of exemplarity that he theorizes in the *Pean.* Gosynhyll deploys the Wife of Bath as if she were an exemplum, representing, on the one hand, the value of daily experience and, on the other, the threat of unbridled women. Like any good exemplum, the Wife of Bath can be used for a variety of divergent purposes. The textual conversation among Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" and Gosynhyll's two pamphlets enables Gosynhyll's inquiry into the way authors can pursue the controversy genre. In doing so, Gosynhyll critically reframes the exemplum, a rhetorical tool that had been used for centuries in works in and outside the controversy about women.

The 1532 publication of William Thynne's *The Workes of Geoffray Chaucer* gave Gosynhyll access to a Chaucerian corpus that could provide an

appropriate and significant foundation for the English controversy.[7] Notably, the Tudor Chaucer is "canonized by Thynne," and his edition contains a large quantity of "Chaucerian" works now known to be spurious attributions.[8] Although Gosynhyll may have known *The Legend of Good Women* from one of its twelve extant manuscripts, he more easily would have encountered it in Thynne's collection, where he would have also found "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" among the *Canterbury Tales*.[9] In this edition, Henryson's *Testament of Creseyde* appears directly before the *Legend*, which is placed before two other dream visions: Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and a "Dream of Chaucer" (an early title for *The Book of the Duchess*). All three of these dream visions conclude, as indicated in the table of contents, "with a ballad."[10] A partial translation of the *Romance of the Rose* attributed to Chaucer

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[7] *The workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed, with dyvers workes whiche were never in print before: as in the table more playnly dothe appere. Cum privilegio* (London: 1532), STC (2nd ed.), 5068.

[8] John Watkins, "'Wrastling for this world': Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer," *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 26.

[9] For a comprehensive overview of manuscripts of the *Legend*, see Janet Cowen and George Kane, eds., *The Legend of Good Women* (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1995). Regarding the two prologues available across the manuscripts, Cowen and Kane contend that "the larger differences in the form of the poem in each should be attributed to authorial revision" and that the *G* prologue does seem to be the chronologically later prologue (140). I will be concerned here with the F version available in Thynne's printing of the works of Chaucer. Before 1532, works of Chaucer available in print include, among others, William Caxton's *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Creseyde,* Wynkyn de Worde's *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troylas and Creseyde*, and Richard Pynson's *The Canterbury Tales.*

[10] The ballad appended to *The Legend of Good Women*, discussed below, is an

and his *Troilus and Criseyde* both appear in Thynne's edition. This placement creates a context for the poem that privileges discourses about gender while also emphasizing the structural apparatus of the dream vision.[11] In Thynne's collection, then, Gosynhyll would have had at his disposal elements for composing arguments on either side of the woman question: the shockingly abrasive Wife of Bath, the demure but treacherous Criseyde, the angry God of love, and stories of good women of the past.

Gosynhyll's *Pean*: Reconsidering Exemplarity

Narrated by the figure of Venus, Gosynhyll's *Pean* is a verse defense of women that has striking connections to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. Both poems use the rhyme royal verse form and the dream vision convention in which a figure of Love laments the existence of books that the figure finds damaging; both works imagine this Love figure seeking reconciliation through a literary assemblage illustrating virtuous women. Additionally, both poems selectively

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appeal to Venus's protection and beneficence; the narrator promises that all was written with a "faythful herte" and anything that might offend was written not out of malice but out of negligence. He asks Venus to accept *The Legend of Good Women* "in game," or, generously in the spirit of jest or play.

[11] If Gosynhyll had access to manuscript versions of the *Legend*, he may have found this dialectical context even more amplified. For example, Nicola McDonald demonstrates how manuscripts containing *The Legend of Good Women* contribute to contextualizing the *Legend* within the controversy about women because the contents of these manuscripts include "evidence for a kind of amorously inflected social game that was popular in elite society in late medieval Europe" (176). McDonald is interested specifically in Oxford, Bod. Lib. MSS Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638, both of which find the *Legend* nestled among ludic games and in a context of both courtly love and the controversy about women; see "Games Medieval Women Play," *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception,* ed. Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 176-97.

read previous literary works to enable their recuperation of women, raise concerns about the method of debating women's virtues, and ultimately produce a poem intended to fulfill the Love figure's behests. Gosynhyll's dreamer, like Chaucer's in the "F Prologue" to the *Legend*, never seems to wake, rendering it difficult to tell where the dictations of the *Pean*'s Venus end and where the inventions of the dreamer/author begin. In the dream, Venus commands the dreamer to write a book in defense of women, and the remainder of the poem fulfills that command, providing the content she presumably wishes the dreamer to include in his apology for women upon waking.

To understand Gosynhyll's reliance on Chaucer to frame his early modern contributions to the debate about women, we must understand the interest in exemplary rhetoric that unites the two authors.[12] As a writer of both praise and

[12] In this essay, "exemplarity" and "exemplary rhetoric" refer to the practice, common since Classical times, of using well-known historical, literary, and especially biblical figures as persuasive evidence for an author's claim. Compendia of saints' lives and books of instruction on medieval arts of preaching rely on exemplary rhetoric for organizational and persuasive purposes, and works within the *querelle des femmes* also make keen use of exemplary rhetoric. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, English writers in this tradition often conducted their arguments through examples of specific women generally famous for their virtues or vices. Use of exemplary narrative is prescribed throughout classical, medieval, and early modern rhetorical handbooks. See especially Cicero's *De Inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), book V, ch. 11; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944); Erasmus, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, trans. Betty I. Knott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978). Aristotle also authorizes the use of comparative examples of the particular, notable, or general kind, though Aristotle notes that the particular is stronger than the general because we often assess the actions of individuals by way of comparison to other particular acts; see *On Rhetoric,* trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991),

blame pamphlets, Gosynhyll stands to gain from the multivalency he invites by manipulating Chaucer's representation of exemplarity and refocusing on lived experience as a viable category of knowledge. Multivalency within a text defending women helps to authorize and create interest in a text attacking women—this is precisely Gosynhyll's material situation. Gosynhyll turns to Chaucer's *Legend* to provide structure to and content for his poem, but he revises Chaucer's presentation of exemplarity. Whereas Chaucer's work gives the appearance of a catalogue neatly ordered by exemplary rhetoric, Gosynhyll's work favors the possibility that exemplarity can coexist with experience as persuasive forms of knowledge. Gosynhyll makes explicit what is implicit in Chaucer's *Legend*, namely the tension between exemplarity and the narrative excess—any information related to the exemplum that is *not* stated but remains, nonetheless, in the background, by virtue of the very invocation of the exemplum—that always accompanies such a rhetorical method. In addition,

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books II-III. While the *Rhetoric* was not available to lay readers in the Middle Ages, Charles F. Briggs argues that the work was better known in scholastic circles than previously thought; see "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the Later Medieval Universities: A Reassessment," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 25.3 (2007): 243-68. In the Middle Ages, rhetorical instruction on the use of examples often made its way into works on the art of preaching. In "The Form of Preaching," Robert of Basevorn (fl. c. 1322) identifies examples as modes of instruction and proof but also as modes of inciting audience attention; the preacher may "frighten [the congregation] by some terrifying tale or example" (538), tell stories that "teach how Christ appeared to some hardened sinners" (ch. 24), or "show by an example or story that the devil always tries to hinder the word of God and the hearing of it" (ch. 24); see *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed., ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford, 2001). For a cursory examination of the *artes praedicandi*, see Fritz Kemmler's '*Exempla' In Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'* (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1984), esp. 60-89.

Gosynhyll's treatment of Chaucer's exemplarity shows how it can also create a polysemous text, the kind of text Gosynhyll needs in order to write on both sides of the question. Gosynhyll primarily employs the voice of his apologist, Venus, to reflect his engagement with Chaucer, indicating the expanded agency that Gosynhyll imagines for female speakers in the controversy. Whereas Elyot's Zenobia speaks as a representative of her late husband and his kingdom, Gosynhyll's women speak on behalf of womankind and about critical subjects, such as inquiring what constitutes viable proof in the debate about women; this, too, Gosynhyll takes from Chaucer.

Gosynhyll's exploration of exemplarity occurs primarily through the voice of Venus, the Love figure who appears in the dream to chastise the dreamer for writing an attack on women and demand his repentance. The majority of the *Pean* involves Venus dictating a defense for women that the dreamer can then incorporate into an apology for women.[13] Throughout, Gosynhyll makes her a mouthpiece for multiple and contradictory ideas. To readers and other potential controversy authors, Gosynhyll's work thereby shows that exemplarity creates the ideal rhetorical method for the controversy genre because of the excess inherent in exemplary rhetoric. I explore two key features of Venus to argue that Gosynhyll mobilizes her to enact the capacity of exemplarity to inspire the rhetorical openness hinted at in the *Legend*. First, Venus approaches exemplarity in ways that point to Gosynhyll's amplification of Chaucer's exemplary method. Second,

[13] Venus's dictations seem to become the apology that is *Pean*, as the close of the poem is an envoy sending the book—which at that point amounts only to Venus's narrative—out into the world.

Venus's enactment of concerns most famously voiced by Chaucer's Wife of Bath further illustrates Gosynhyll's interest in a dialectical method that fends off textual closure, a move made possible by Venus's establishment of female experience as a viable category of proof in the controversy.

In the *Pean,* Venus quickly turns to the exemplary mode to make her case for women, indicating the usefulness of exempla. In one instance, Venus tells the story of the woman who helped Saul to battle the Philistines, providing emotional and physical nurturance. The lesson here is that without the woman's counsel and food, Saul would have perished. Venus's biblical/historical exemplum establishes the criterion necessary for her then to extrapolate a contemporary relevance from the lesson that moves from exemplum to lived experience:

> When ye lie sick and like to die,
>
> Who then attendeth you unto?
>
> Were not the woman, there might ye lie,
>
> Dung in your den as beasts do.[14]

Venus recuperates women as caretakers and nurturers, illustrating one of the poem's rubrics for "good women": women live to relieve men's pains (and this makes women good), as evidenced by the wife, who "night and day then must … awake / and ready be at the first call" (Aiv^{r}) to aid her ailing husband. By amplifying an exemplum with proof from daily life, Venus reframes the biblical definition of "helper" from an auxiliary to an essential role; "helper" no longer

[14] Edward Gosynhyll, *Mulierum Pean,* sig. Aiii^{v}. Subsequent interlinear citations refer to signatures.

means a person who serves the master but rather a necessary and life-sustaining companion.

The exemplary figures that Gosynhyll's Venus uses to defend women reflect many commonplace arguments in defense of women: the Virgin Mary rights the wrong of Eve; the examples of the biblical Anne, Elizabeth, and Mary demonstrate "that god much favoreth the feminine kind / Since he him self after such rate / tendreth in them the devout mind [. . .]" (Biv^{r}). Here, claims about feminine virtue additionally suggest that good women are those on whom God has shown specific favor. Sarah, who pretended to be Abraham's sister and was thus sent to the arms of Pharaoh, and Rebecca, whose comparable dissimulation saved the life of her husband Isaac, remind us that women sacrifice themselves for their husbands. These women are "profitable" (Cii^{r}): contrary to the common stereotype of wicked wives, women in general are boons to their husbands. Venus intends these stories of good women to deter those "fables forged of willful mind / against the devout feminine kind" (Ci^{r}). Exemplary women parade through the *Pean*; even Mary Magdalen's "great faith and contrition" for her crimes makes her exemplary among women.[15] These exempla prove Venus's argument that it is "plain and evident / what grace is given the feminine" (Cii^{v}).

But Venus quickly troubles her use of exemplarity. She admits that "many women have sore offended," but "thousands mo[re] [have] done well oft" (Ciii^{r}). She questions the logic of exemplarity: "Should all the name be discommended /

[15] See especially sig. Ci^{r}-Cii^{r}.

Because the [best] number be reprehended?" (Ciii^{r}).[16] The implicit answer to her question is this: the "name" of all women should not be tarnished because even a significant number of women "have sore offended." Still, although Venus sharply condemns the logic of exemplarity, her catalogue of virtuous women implies that exemplary rhetoric can—and should—be used to persuade on the basis of positive qualities. Her rationale for the exemplary figures she marshals is specious: one good woman in a thousand proves women good; one bad woman in a thousand does not prove women bad. Venus wants to have her cake and eat it, too.

Venus's conflicted position becomes clearer when she explains the erroneous perspective on women created by misogynists who rely on the exemplary figure of Eve:

> Because that Eve, our prime parent,
> The will of God did once transgress,
> They blame al women in like consent
> And make themselves always faultless.
> There be of women, as of men doubtless,
> Albeit that divers have offended,
> Yet ought not all to be reprehended. (Bii^{v})

Venus voices the critique levied by Christine de Pisan and others that attacks on women use exempla to take advantage of the slippery slope between an individual

[16] In their partial edition of this work, Henderson and McManus suggest that "best" is a misprint for "least," though either way Venus is making a case for dislodging the connection between individual woman and the category of womankind; see *Half Humankind,* 167.

and a group: "Now if some women are the foolish kind, / brimming with sin of every stamp and type, / . . . / Must we, because of that, imprison all, / and testify that none deserve respect?"[17] With Eve as exemplum, women can never be anything but flawed at best, evil at worst. The logical stance, Venus states, is to accept that the categories of "men" and "women" include "diverse [that] have offended"; thus, vice cannot be extrapolated outward from individuals to groups.

Venus uses multiple tactics to display her skepticism towards the usefulness of exemplarity. In the process, she buttresses her argument with examples probably familiar to male and female readers. Not all cloth is "[a]like fine;" nor "[is] every man of one complexion, / Nor every woman of one condition" (Bii^{v}). Here, Venus echoes Chaucer's Wife of Bath, who offers similar analogies to insist upon valuing the multiple "conditions" of women. Venus's reasoned list gives way, finally, to a condemnation of the implicit tactics of exemplary rhetoric: those who practice such methods "ought to be ashamed, / And also in the conscience sore adread" (Bii^{v}). Even though she uses exempla to argue for God's favoring of her sex, Venus is clearly concerned with the way arguments made through exempla are dangerous to women.

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[17] Christine writes, "Et supposé qu'il en y ait de nices / Ou remplies de plusieurs divers vices, / Sans foy n'amour ne nulle loyauté, / Fieres, males, plaines de cruauté, / Ou pou constans, legieres, variables, / Cautilleuses, faulces et decevables, / Doit on pour tant toutes mettre en fermaille / Et tesmoignier qu'il n'est nulle qui vaille?" See "L'Epistre au Dieu D'Amours," *Poems of Cupid, God of Love,* ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), ll. 185-92, pp. 10-14. Thomas Hoccleve's English translation of Christine's *L'Epistre au Dieu D'Amours* is available in England in 1409.

Venus demonstrates that she is not against exemplarity per se; rather, she opposes exemplarity that rationalizes the condemnation of all women because of the behavior of a few. Inconsistently, she supports exemplarity that shifts the discourse to the many virtues of women. Venus explains that such inconsistency is also good for men because mankind, too, has its fair share of unvirtuous men:

> Large be the volumes in every nation
> Forever in chronicle to remain;
> If ye perceive and note the fashion,
> Evidence enough ye shall have plain:
> Against one woman, men twain,
> (Yea, twenty, I dare avow doubtless)
> Which be improved for their lewdness. (Ciii^{r})[18]

Of all of Venus's claims, this one most clearly reminds us that Gosynhyll—a male writer presumably interested in avoiding self-incrimination—is Venus's ventriloquist. Here, Venus suggests that many stories of "bad" men further justify doing away with exemplary logic when the values in question are negative. Venus deploys and criticizes exemplarity in practically a single breath. More perfect fodder for engagement in the debate about women could hardly be found for those whose opinion about women differs from Venus's.

[18] "Many are the volumes in every nation that forever chronicle [this matter]. If you perceive and note the fashion [of these stories], you will clearly have enough evidence: For every one woman, there are two men (yea, [perhaps] twenty, I dare avow, doubtless), who in their lewdness best women."

By meditating on exemplarity's multivalency, and in leaving the door open to its use under specific conditions, Venus enables a variety of reactions to the defense she posits. Readers might be compelled by her skepticism toward exemplary rhetoric or convinced that exemplarity is a valid method despite its drawbacks. They might identify with her indictment of misogynist literary traditions or see her own defense as participating in a separate (if much more limited) tradition of misandry. Her invocation of lived experience as evidence may appear logical and reasonable to a reader, or it may seem to be the response of a woman who does not like what she has read about womankind. Through the voice of apologist Venus, Gosynhyll embraces multivalency and even inconsistency, a position that authorizes and encourages the very double-sided task of an author writing on both sides of the controversy. Unlike the narrator of the *Legend*, Gosnyhyll's narrator makes no attempt to adhere to exemplarity as a primary persuasive mode.[19] Venus's role in responding to and revising Chaucer crucially enables Gosynhyll's authorial project. Gosynhyll actively turns away from the cohesive appearance created by Chaucer's use of exemplarity even as he adopts the dream vision's overall frame and some of its thematic concerns; the tension created by this invocation of and departure from Chaucer, a tension

[19] The genuineness of the *Legend*'s narrator is highly contested. See Robert O'Payne, "Making His Own Myth: The *Prologue* to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*," *Chaucer Review* 9 (1975): 197-211; Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "Irony and the Antifeminist Narrator in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*," *JEGP* 82 (1983): 11-31; Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, "The *Legend of Good Women*," *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 112-27; Michael Foster, *Chaucer's Narrators and the Rhetoric of Self-Representation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

embodied in and voiced by Venus, makes possible the dialectical work of this cluster.

Chaucer's *Legend*: An Exercise in Exemplarity

When we understand Chaucer's *Legend* as dependent upon exemplary rhetoric, we can better articulate Gosynhyll's interest in and relationship to his Chaucerian inspiration.[20] Generically speaking, *The Legend of Good Women* is a collection of saints' lives, a legendary: the poem's women are saints of Cupid, and their devotion to Love (as demonstrated by their willingness to suffer the slings and arrows of thoughtless male lovers) parallels the devotion of martyrs to the Christian faith (who suffer the tyranny of persecution by non-Christian leaders).[21] But both the poem's connection to the saints' legends genre and the specific roles of Alceste and the God of Love in Chaucer's *Legend* make it possible for Gosynhyll to read the dream vision as a catalogue. Catalogues, such

[20] *The Legend of Good Women* is not the only Chaucerian work to rely on the figure of the exemplum. As Larry Scanlon points out, "the exemplum served as the principal means by which the Chaucerian tradition established its cultural authority" (5); see his study *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Scanlon's analysis considers exemplarity in the works of Gower, Hoccleve, and Lydgate. See also Anne Middleton, "The 'Physician's Tale' and Love's Martyrs: Ensamples Mo' than Ten as a Method in the 'Canterbury Tales,'" *The Chaucer Review*, 8.1 (1973): 9-32. Middleton describes Chaucer's record of working with narratives based in exemplary method (10).

[21] Studies of the *Legend* that recognize the poem as a saints' lives compendium include Catherine Sanok, "Reading Hagiographically: The Legend of Good Women and Its Feminine Audience," *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13.2 (2001): 323-54; Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2007), 42-48; and Allison Adair Alberts, "The New Hagiography of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women,"* unpublished essay.

as Giovanni Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* and Christine de Pisan 's *Book of the City of Ladies*, use exemplary rhetoric to unite various historical and literary figures under a common rubric identified early on in the work, with the goal of providing persuasive *copia* for each work's respective arguments. Collections of saints' lives, then, are also exercises in exemplary rhetoric even if the common rubric (the elements of sainthood) is implied and need not be explicitly stated.

Chaucer's poem is organized by what John Lyons calls the "orienting gesture," a characteristic accompaniment to exemplification that tells us "in what direction to think about events."[22] Exemplary rhetoric requires these qualifying, "orienting gestures" because the act of using examples demands that the reader reconcile the specific context of the example with the general rule under consideration. The orienting gesture is the place in the text where the author or narrator indicates the framework for what is to come, defining the key terms that shape the collection of disparate figures. As Lyons puts it, an "exemplum (and example) is not a static isolatable unit but the relationship created or assumed between things"; it is "a way of taking our beliefs about reality and reframing

[22] John Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 5. Timothy Hampton's study of exemplarity describes a similar process of meaning-making, but he does not use the phrase "orienting gesture." Hampton instead envisions the process as "emplotment," or "placing a past event in a narrative which makes it available to the present" (13); such narrative includes a "filtering or censoring gesture" to make meaning from that past event (27); see *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). I have chosen Lyons's phrase because of the directional connotations of "orienting"—the metaphor of pointing towards a specific set of meaning(s) and away from others is particularly apt, I believe, for exemplary rhetoric.

them into something that suits the direction of a text."[23] Such reframing is necessary because an exemplum always contain excess narrative material that may compromise, or at the very least distract from, its efficacy when it is deployed as proof in an argument. A reader must be able to sort out the specific emphasis of the example from the "extra"—or excess—meanings associated with it; the orienting gesture enables such sorting.

In Chaucer's *Legend*, Alceste twice articulates the orienting gesture, and her words give the appearance of uniformity to the poem's use of exemplarity. First, she demands that the dreamer write "of wommen trewe in lovyng al hire lyve" (438); shortly thereafter, she qualifies this gesture by adding that these women who are constant in loving will also be so in the face of abuses from their male lovers. She instructs the narrator to write a "glorious legende" (483) of such women and to include stories of "false men that hem bytraien" (486). Alceste implies, too, that men's misguided actions will highlight how "trewe" these Cupid's saints have been. Aeneas's departure to Italy, for example, reveals both his "false teres" (1301) and Dido's constancy to him as she yearns to die his wife rather than be left behind (1311-1324). The legends that comprise the poem each adhere to this orienting gesture to varying degrees, even though the woman's individual stories explore diverse ways to understand notions of suffering and constancy.

Chaucer's *Legend* displays exemplarity as a rhetorical method because

[23] Lyons, *Exemplum*, 11, ix.

Chaucer accumulates various proofs of women's steadfastness that aim to persuade readers of female goodness and the virtue of remaining constant in love. Although the poem demands attention as both a dream vision and compendium of saints' lives, the generic label "catalogue" equally and importantly applies. In this catalogue of female sufferers—a catalogue of Cupid's Saints—the rules of exemplarity govern the persuasive ends of each individual legend. Once the poet establishes the orienting gesture—"good women are those who suffer steadfastly in love"—the reader understands that each exemplum points back to the original rubric. This is, after all, the logic of persuasion based on exemplary figures.

Chaucer's poem instances the function of exemplary rhetoric when it is adequately constrained by an orienting gesture.[24] This is not to suggest, however, that Chaucer's poem does not provide its own inquiry into the uses and limitations of exemplary rhetoric. Rather, Chaucer's complicated meditation on this subject is more implicit than Gosynhyll's is, and it is a meditation that Gosynhyll revises into an explicit skepticism towards exemplarity as a sole persuasive method. We can see some of the tension around exemplarity in the *Legend*'s narrative asides, intrusions that undercut the poem's establishment of what it means to be a "good woman" and hint at the excess of exemplarity that becomes a focus for Gosynhyll. For example, the narrator begins his foray into retelling exemplary stories of the past by noting that Cleopatra's Antony was "of persone and of gentillesse" (610)

[24] Christopher Cannon summarizes the *Legend*'s position on "good" women: the work "more generally defines goodness as the quality possessed by women who are mistreated by 'false men'"; see "The Lives of Geoffrey Chaucer," *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 32.

"worthi to any wight that liven may" (612), unless "bokes lye" (609). In this passing suggestion that books might "lye" is a gesture that undercuts the tradition of exemplarity itself: if books *do* lie, and they *do*, then exemplary rhetoric lacks the truth value it purports to possess. Similarly, in "The Legend of Dido," the narrator exasperatedly interrupts his tale to ask why women continue to fall for the wiles of men. He wonders how women, with "swich olde ensaumples" (1258) of duplicitous men before them, still place their trust in male lovers. Implicitly, this moment of narrative musing suggests that exempla—those "olde ensaumples"—are not as persuasive as literary tradition suggests.

Chaucer's poem is complicated in more ways than just its attitude towards exemplarity. Scholarship consistently fails to yield a consensus regarding whether the *Legend* ever actually defends women. In a recent collection of essays, *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception,* Carolyn Collette aptly summarizes the problems of reading and writing about Chaucer's *Legend*: because "it is an unfinished text, with an unstable manuscript tradition, and a complicated relationship to its putative sources," the *Legend* "poses a host of problems in Chaucerian criticism."[25] Collette notes that three major interests preoccupy readers of the *Legend*: the two prologues, the "tone and genre" of the exempla, and the "relationship of those tales to their sources."[26] Regarding whether or not the work serves its fictional purpose of defending women, as stated

[25] Carolyn P. Collette, ed., *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2006), vii.

[26] Collette, *The Legend of Good Women,* vii.

by the God of Love, scholars such as Donald Rowe, Sheila Delany, Florence Percival, Carol Meale, and Carolyn Dinshaw have investigated the way Chaucer reverses the Fall, invokes a "rich semantic field of allusions," engages in the "tradition of humourous anti-feminist/pro-feminist debate," fails to move beyond mere stereotype, and demonstrates the unsustainability of the masculine literary tradition.[27] Scholars agree, it seems, that Chaucer is doing something with the idea of female virtue, but precisely *what* that is remains undecided.

The *Legend*'s fraught interpretive history, I would argue, indicates scholarly attention towards aspects of the work other than the poem's interest in the debate about *how* to debate. The orienting gesture of the *Legend*—the poem's attention on women suffering in love—articulates a definition of good women, and the God of Love's demands show that the dreamer's textual mis-steps require textual reparations. But in articulating such a restricted and problematic definition of "good," Chaucer calls attention to the functional limits of the debate: his work continuously points outside itself to all the other available definitions of "good" and their respective exempla, to the always already insufficient ability of a literary work comprehensively to defend womankind. This, the very framework that makes Chaucer's text appear cohesive—the orienting gesture—is also the

[27] Collette, *The Legend of Good Women,* viii-ix. Donald Rowe, *Through Nature to Eternity: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988); Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good* Women (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Florence Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Carol Meale, "Legends of Good Women in the European Middle Ages," *Archiv fur das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 229 (1992): 55-70; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

portion of the text that implicitly shows the excess of exemplarity. When the poem qualifies what "good" means, the poem hints at the reality that "good" women are only what any given text defines them as.

Thus, the *Legend* is a study in what Gosynhyll could have done, but did not do. Exemplary rhetoric, as Timothy Hampton argues, cannot escape the tension between "opening the exemplar up"—that is, invoking the full narrative force behind a single figure—and the "gesture of closure which fixes the [exemplar's] ideological significance."[28] The orienting gesture frames how a reader should understand an exemplum, but that frame's very existence also reminds readers that something is left out. Chaucer's poem gives the appearance of sweeping that "excess" under the proverbial rug, as the poem's resistance to exemplarity is signaled on a much smaller scale than Gosynhyll's.[29] An explicit

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[28] Hampton, *Writing from History*, 27.

[29] The *Legend*'s abrupt ending might be a key to the poem's treatment of exemplarity, signally simultaneously Chaucer's use of exemplary rhetoric and his distrust in—or distaste towards—the method. Based on my understanding of the poem's trafficking in exemplary rhetoric, I suggest that the missing "conclusioun" of the tale reiteraties the tale's relationship to the poem's orienting gesture. That is to say, given Alceste's injunction to the dreamer and the consistency of suffering as a marker of "goodness" in each of the women's legends, it is reasonable to suggest that the "conclusioun" in Hypermnestra's tale points to the premise that underlies each of the other tales: women's suffering is a mark of women's faith in Love. Because the dreamer has already marshaled eight other exempla as variations on this theme, I do not believe we have any reason to assume that the ninth legend would deviate widely from that which came before. To continue with Hypermnestra's *Legend*, or with any additional legends, for that matter, is merely to add *copia* to a position that has already been buttressed by exemplary proofs. My reading of the *Legend* is informed, in part, by Donald R. Howard's attitude towards the *Canterbury Tales* and his desire that we "read the book as it is, not as we think it might have been" (1); see *The Idea of The Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1976. For a discussion of the lack of closure in Chaucer's structural conclusions, see especially Rosemarie P. McGerr,

inquiry into rhetorical methods—into exemplarity specifically—creates for Gosynhyll the multivalency that enables the dialectical exchange integral to the controversy about women. Thus, when Gosynhyll uses exemplarity, it is exemplarity rife with the excess and "extra" inherent in the rhetorical method. Gosynhyll brings to a sharp crescendo what is softly humming in the background of Chaucer's poem, creating the multivalency that Gosynhyll's two-text project requires.[30]

The *Legend* embodies what Catherine Sanok calls exemplarity's "central fiction" by assuming "that ethics are transhistorical, independent of their particular historical moment and social context."[31] Alceste's constraints upon exemplarity place limits upon the *Legend*'s representation of female virtue, but these constraints also make the poem appear to be cohesive in a way that Gosynhyll's defense of women is not. The orienting gesture gives Chaucer's

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Chaucer's Open Books: Resistance to Closure in Medieval Discourse (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

[30] Gosynhyll's choice to mirror Chaucer's dream vision genre also informs this general interest in multivalency: as A.C. Spearing explains, "the use of the dream-framework is frequently to evade the whole question of authenticity, of belief or disbelief" in what was seen or what was learned; see *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1976), 75.

[31] Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, 7. Sanok explains how exempla can never perfectly align with the rule they purport to demonstrate. Thus, "the particularities of the example will always threaten to qualify the ostensibly universal rule it demonstrates" (21). Thus, there is always excess in exemplary method. Hampton, *Writing from History,* also acknowledges the inherent conflict between past and present that coexists with exemplary rhetoric, noting that the paradox of Renaissance Humanist approaches to exemplarity is the Renaissance's valuation of a return to past history while also recognizing "the gulf between ancient culture and modernity" (16).

Legend explicit structure that Gosynhyll's poem lacks, as tale after tale points back to the original gesture. The silent goal of this task—of Love's initial injunction—is a cessation of textual exchange. If the dreamer writes adequately, he will not have to write further, and the "case" against him will be closed. Gosynhyll engages in the new controversy genre with two textual investments—the *Pean* and the *Scholehouse*—and thus his works inspire textual exchange even at the cost of losing the benefits of exemplary rhetoric properly executed. Venus forces readers to confront the "fiction" of exemplarity; in doing so, she demonstrates the literary benefits that accompany the recognition of such a fiction. In the excess of exemplary rhetoric lies the material for arguing either side of the question about women as well as the means for including women's experience as evidence in the debate.

Defending Women: Exemplarity and Experience in Gosynhyll and Chaucer

Venus's treatment of exemplarity is Gosynhyll's most extensive outlet for encouraging dialectic; crucially, it is not the only outlet. In additional moments of appropriation, Gosynhyll further revises Chaucer's poetry in order to embrace multivalency. Venus voices concerns about the relationship between experience and authority that Gosynhyll could easily find in Chaucer's Alceste and Wife of Bath. But, as she does with the topic of exemplarity, Venus avoids a conclusive position on the subject. Explicit discussions of both exemplarity and the value of women's experience link Venus and Alison; these allusive registers, I argue, are crucial to Gosynhyll's project of establishing the textual exchange of the controversy genre. Channeling women's experiences has the same benefit for

Gosynhyll as manipulating the limitations of exemplary rhetoric: experience offers a guaranteed point of access to the controversy for men and women, defenders and attackers alike.

In attending to the issue of female experience, Gosynhyll's Venus is initially a mouthpiece for articulating ideas most readily available in Chaucer's *Legend*. The "F Prologue" of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* begins with an overtly self-conscious reference to the relationship between the real and the textual; since humankind cannot know all things, recourse to books allows us to find "olde thinges" outside our experience or knowledge.[32] Indeed, there are even those things that "by assay . . . [m]ay no man … preve" (9). Sometimes, the narrator suggests, we can have no sensory experience or other evidence of a phenomenon except through books. Old books tell "appreved stories / of holynesse, of regnes, of victories, of love, of hate" (21-23); should they be lost, "yloren were of remembraunce the keye" (26). The narrator understands textual authority as both a supplement to and a stand-in for lived experience: "Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve, / These bokes, there we han noon other preve" (27-28). In the absence of other evidence, he avers, we should defer to the authorized books of old. Explaining that he writes so "that men mosten more thyng beleve / Then men may seen at eye, or elles preve" (99-100), the narrator emphasizes the symbiosis between experience-based knowledge and book-based knowledge. Without books, we would be limited, as Shakespeare's Horatio is, to what can be dreamt of in our philosophy and experienced through our senses. The

[32] Geoffrey Chaucer, "F Prologue," *Legend of Good Women.* Interlinear citations refer to line numbers.

interdependence between authorized and experiential knowledge introduces us to a key concern of Chaucer's *Legend*, a concern that Gosynhyll amplifies and modifies.

The narrator is not the only figure in Chaucer's *Legend* to weave experience and authority into a cloak of knowledge. The God of Love, too, makes such moves in the closing verses of the "F Prologue." Love asks the narrator if he can identify the beautiful Alceste; when the dreamer responds that he knows "no moore but that [he] see[s] wel she is good" (506), Love prods knowingly, "[h]astow nat in a book . . . In thy cheste, / the grete goodnesse of the quene Alceste[?]" (510-11). Chaucer the narrator immediately realizes that the woman of the book outside his dreams and the woman in front of him in the dream are one and the same, and he connects Alceste's current generosity towards him to the "affeccioun / that [he] [has] to hire flour" (523-24). Thus, his daily devotions to the daisy, his old books, and his dream conversations become mutually informing modes of knowledge. When Love clarifies the recuperative task that lies before the narrator, he reinforces the connections between lived experience and books. Because the dreamer has previously "forgate" to praise Alceste, he must include her in his new *Legend* once he has "other smale ymaad before" (550). Furthermore, the women in front of him in his dream are also the women he can find "in [his] bookes" (556); now they are to become the women of Chaucer's *Legend*.[33] Crucially, it is Chaucer's previous encounters with these women—Love calls them "hem that ben in thy knowyng" (558)—that will enable the current

[33] See lines 540-56.

project to proceed at a pace bearable for author and reader alike. Chaucer cannot possibly include in his poem all "that swiche lovers diden in hire tyme" (571); hence, according to the God of Love, he shall relate only "the grete, / after thise old auctours" (574-75). It cannot be clearer, then, that the *Legend* is no "Wife of Bath's Prologue" in terms of its epistemology. Here, experience is a significant type of "knowyng" that works in tandem with the "old auctours" who offer textual authority.[34]

Whereas Chaucer's *Legend* articulates a mutually beneficial relationship between experience and authority, Gosynhyll's *Pean* does not bring the two to any kind of accord, despite Venus's gestures at making them reciprocally informing. After discussing the limitations and advantages of authorized discourse versus lived experience, Venus enacts her belief in the epistemological benefits of lived experience by invoking it as proof in her arguments about women. This shift aligns her with the Wife of Bath. Much as with her discussion of exemplarity, however, Venus's contribution to the debate about lived experience versus authority is inconclusive: she first criticizes the self-perpetuating, misogynist textual tradition, then she elaborates on the value of lived experience. Finally, she returns—via exempla—to authority culled from a textual tradition. In this waxing and waning, Venus furthers Gosynhyll's dialectical project.

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[34] In "Chaucer and the Nominalist Questions," *Speculum* 53.4 (1978): 745-60, Russell Peck argues that Chaucer takes an "Ockhamian" position in his works by positing that "experience is the most direct approach to knowledge" (748) and that "experience is pre-eminently an authority" (749) for Chaucer. Experiential knowledge, however, is not always processed and understood correctly: "no mental construction can be completely adequate to experience" (757) because as humans, our somatic capacities are ultimately limited.

Venus believes that men misuse poetry and scripture to authorize their real-life mistreatment of women; by enshrining in the present book instances of good women, she believes she will return male-female relationships to a proper level of respect and mutual need. The natural state of men and women, she suggests, has been corrupted by mean-spirited male readers and writers, but her narrative can be a corrective: through "examples many, hereof may ye rede / . . . Howe by the vertue of the femynyne face / Myrth encreaseth, and thoughts give place" (Gosynhyll, *Pean,* sig. A3^{r}).[35] Venus's proof, however, relies on more than "book knowledge." As she cites proof from the history of Christianity and literature of the past, she amplifies these paradigms by suggesting that the experiences of contemporary men verify the textual lessons she cites. Just as Saul was "counseyled and fed," leading to victory over the Philistines, so, too, are men healed by women who are "redy to go" to ensure that men recover from illness.

To reinforce the point that writing can restore amicable interactions between men and women, Venus promises that her book—presumably the book she is dictating to the dreamer—can match the books of men, example for example. Evidence of women's goodness for men (provided by Venus) will rival evidence of the vices of women (provided by men who write such stories): "Where as in trueth recorde I can / as many [examples that] aryse as by the man" (A4^{r}). For every example of women's flaws written by men, Venus can provide examples of women's merits taken from daily life. She implies that experience must be codified by textual authority in order for a reader's perception to be influenced;

[35] Henderson and McManus translate the last line as "joy increases and anxieties give way"; see *Half Humankind*, 158.

experience cannot persuade anyone if not recorded as examples. Thus, for a moment, it appears that Gosynhyll understands the relationship between experience and authority as Chaucer's narrator does: textual authority supplements and at times supplants experience.

As Gosynhyll's Venus resurrects women from various textual pasts to persuade male readers of women's beneficence, her own attention to such stories corrects those of the past. She explicitly acknowledges the flawed *auctoritas* of poetry and bookish stories:

> Hystoryes many I coulde forth lay
> That maketh wel with the feminye
> Of lyke sentence I dare well saye
> And grounded on good auctoryte
> Howe be it because that poetry
> Is taken nowe in suche despyte
> Of other reasons, I wyll thou wryte.[36] ($A4^{v}$)

Here, she claims that she could pull from "good authorities" many examples of feminine virtue, but rather than turn to literary and historical sources (held in "suche despite"), she will turn to the world of experience (the "other reasons" of which she will write) to gather proof of female goodness. Readers should view Venus's claim that poetry's reputation is in "suche despyte" with comic irony

[36] Venus's claim about the state of poetry is not entirely clear. She seems to imply that "hystoryes" taken from "good auctoryte" are part and parcel of the poetry that is "taken nowe in suche despyte." While she does not explain why this is so, it fits her juxtaposition of valued experience and troublesome authority.

given the poetic form that accompanies it, but her claim nonetheless evokes existing narratives about women and dismisses them at the same time. She promises to, and does, counter such flawed poetry with "other reasons" drawn from the realm of experience: women bearing the difficulties of pregnancy and birth for the sake of family, caring for families and husbands rather than their own well-being, enabling husbands to go about other business by managing their domestic affairs. Venus's consideration of female experience is extensive, ranging from marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth to the rearing of offspring and the role of keeping peace and health in the household (Bi^{r}-Bii).

By privileging female experience, Venus invites readers to view such experience as proof akin to the proof provided by men's textual authority. Her interest in lived experience, and in examples taken from real life, is at times exceedingly energetic: there are so many women who could offer living proof of her arguments—"thousandes or two I dare well say / of them that yet here lyvyng be / in ful recorde forth bryng I may / and seke nat farre out of the countre"—that she chooses instead to turn to stories of those "that gone be many yeres past" (Ci^{r}). She even claims that she can find, from "any exemple . . . / Taken an nowe of the lyvynge sorte" [examples taken from the lives of living women] proof to counter Solomon's sarcastic quip, "Mulierum fortem quis inveniet" (Aiii^{r}).[37]

[37] By way of the *Shipman's Tale*, this phrase, which rhetorically asks whether a good woman can indeed be found, is another key link between Venus and the Wife of Bath; see Theresa Coletti, "The *Mulier Fortis* and Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism*, 15.3 (1981): 236-49.

Venus pairs her excitement about the persuasive capacities of lived experience with sustained attention to textual authority, gathering exempla from established sources such as the Old and New Testaments. Venus does not recognize these disparate forms of proof as problematic in light of her meditation on the flaws of exemplary rhetoric, and she weaves in and out of each approach with relative ease. She follows her citations of experiential proof with numerous examples culled from the authoritative traditions.[38] For example, she uses the historical past to ground her lengthy list of the ways in which women's goodness improves men's experiences. Men can harvest the fruits of the earth because Ceres "dyd fyrst invent / all maner grayne to inne and sowe"; Carmenta's alphabet makes it possible for us to "use our myndes to endyte / one to another ful and perfyte"; "Mannes mynde" finds comfort in the music created by Sappho; the mystery of the Christian religion—man's salvation—first expresses itself in the prophesies of "the Sybbilles .xii" (Gosynhyll, *Pean,* sig. A3^{r}-A4^{v}). Ultimately, Venus cites familiar authorities and repeats the stories of virtuous women without signaling how she undercuts this process with her own insistence on lived experience and her meditations on the troubles of exemplary rhetoric.

Venus's interest in the "lyvynge sorte" and her promise of "examples many" signal the Chaucerian figure that stands behind Gosynhyll's apologist: the

[38] In this way, Venus and Chaucer's Wife of Bath are kindred spirits. As Carla Arnell explains of Alison, "in her own way, the Wife of Bath also legitimizes herself through textual authority. Despite her assertion that she does not need authority in order to speak, she first affirms the truth of her points by quoting written texts" (938); see "Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* and John Fowles's *Quaker Maid*: Tale-Telling and the Trial of Personal Experience and Written Authority," *Modern Language Review* 102 (2007): 933-46.

Wife of Bath. Alison, with her vested interest in using her experience of marriage to speak of the "wo" within the institution, devotes much of her prologue to railing against and reinterpreting the authoritative discourses that demand women's chastity, silence, obedience, and, especially, their virginity. That the Wife of Bath's challenges to authority are, ultimately, concerns with a tradition of exemplarity helps to explain why Gosynhyll might depart from the *Legend* the way that he does and turn to this Chaucerian figure, instead. Alison consistently points to the limitations inherent in exemplary rhetoric. Gosynhyll reads Alison as a character invested, as he is, in exemplarity, and he appropriates her rhetoric to his own purposes by transferring it to the voice of *Pean*'s Venus and to the women of the *Scholehouse*.

As argued above, the *Legend*'s exemplary method, marked by a strong orienting gesture, enables Chaucer's poem to show one side of the "fiction of exemplarity" by positing a transcendental truth, in this case, that good women are those who suffer patiently in love.[39] Alison engages with exemplarity in her "Prologue" to accomplish what the *Legend* does not: she takes nearly every available opportunity to remind her listeners that exemplarity is fit only for a specific time, place, and person, but not for all times, places, or people. In doing so, she provides a source for Venus's own position on the subject.

The Living Exemplum

Alison first levies her attacks on exemplary rhetoric by criticizing the dicta passed down by authorities seeking to conform individuals to the patterns of

[39] Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, 7.

various exempla. For instance, she refuses the glorification of virginity at the expense of sexuality that occurs throughout religious lore. Specifically, she defies such commandments and the exemplary frame that they promote by claiming, "this word is noght taken of every wight," thus hinting at the contingencies that render commandments not absolute demands but rather "conseil."[40] By translating "commandments" of virginity to "conseil," the Wife underscores the potential for interpretive multivalency within exemplary rhetoric. Her unwillingness to participate in the fiction of exemplarity is motivated by a desire to legitimize and lend credibility to her own experience, but she also resists exemplarity because it provides a ready-made interpretive framework for her actions when she prefers to fashion the hermeneutics herself. She makes this position clear in her reaction to Jankyn reading a portion of Ecclesiastes that suggests a man might as well hang himself if he lets his wife roam freely out and about. She claims: "I sette noght an hawe / of his proverbe n'of his olde sawe, / Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be. / I hate hym that my vices telleth me" (659-62). The Wife's hatred of having others—specifically men—detail her vices to her indicates her resistance of others interpreting her actions through a history of exemplarity, an interpretive act that consistently renders her faulty because of that tradition. Given the orienting

[40] Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," *The Canterbury Tales*, Fragment 3, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), ll. 77, 82. Subsequent parenthetical citations refer to line numbers, and all lines quoted here from *The Canterbury Tales* in the *Riverside Chaucer* also appear in Thynne's 1532 edition. In two important places, Alison demonstrates her understanding that commandment "nys but conseil," underscoring her awareness of the limitations of exemplarity. See lines 82 and 67. While the specific subject here is commandments to virginity, her dictum is broadly applicable to the position she takes throughout her prologue.

gestures of the exempla Jankyn cites—it is, after all, a "book of wikked wyves" (685) from which he reads—Alison will always live an unauthorized and thus denigrated experience. Thus, she reinterprets the lessons gleaned from exempla and questions the validity of exemplarity itself.

Alison involves herself in a discussion of exemplarity in part by engaging with a specifically Christian tradition of exemplary rhetoric: the opening moments of her prologue take up one of the most important exempla in the Christian tradition—Christ himself. Alison summarizes the position of people who view Christ as an exemplum whose life demonstrates the virtue of marrying only once: because Christ "ne wente nevere but onis / to weddyng, . . . / … by the same ensample taughte he me / that I ne sholde wedded be but ones" (10-13).[41] Then, she immediately offers an alternative signification of the same exemplary figure by pointing to the narrative of Christ and the Samaritan women who had multiple husbands. Here, Alison's use of the "excess," to return to Lyons's description of exemplarity, enables her to adjust the signification of the exemplum. Implicitly, this excess demonstrates Alison's recognition not only that exemplary rhetoric is extremely malleable, but also that exemplary rhetoric is never conclusive despite its persuasiveness. Then, as if to concede her willingness to participate in the game of exemplarity, Alison offers an exemplum to suit her own purposes, pointing to the "wise kyng, daun Salomon" (35) with his "wyves many oon" (36),

[41] Alison's conflation of attending a wedding and actually being wed goes unnoticed by her listeners.

whose conduct indicates that it is acceptable for Alison to "be refresshed half so ofte as he" (38).

In addition to providing alternative exempla to make her case, Alison has two other arrows in her quiver for attacking authority based on exemplarity: she invokes the divine diversity of humankind (diversity proving problematic to the logic of exemplarity), and personal experience as a form of authority equal to that of authoritative exemplarity. When Alison compares herself to the lesser vessels that still "doon hir lord servyse" (101) and to the "barlybreed" (144) that "refresshed many a man" (146) despite not being "pured whete-seed" (143),she emphasizes her claim that real life cannot support the enactment of exemplarity: a household needs diverse goods the same way a body needs diverse nourishment (for Alison, nourishment comes from both food and sex). Without such diversity, she implies, the health of the system—domestic or corporeal—is compromised. If this analogy is not enough to convince her listeners that she is skeptical of the exemplary method, the values it perpetuates, and the restrictions it imposes, she offers personal experience as a supplementary source of knowledge from which a person can derive the sort of meaning that one might cull from exempla. Throughout her prologue, the Wife juxtaposes traditions of authority based on exemplarity with her own view of authority based on experience, thus providing, to use Lyon's term, a new orienting gesture for interpreting the behaviors of women like her. Good women, she argues, can include those who make use of their God-given "instruments."[42] This reimagining of what constitutes "good" is

[42] See lines 105-62 for the Wife's discussion of her "instrument."

precisely what Venus does in her rehearsal of the ways women heal and provide counsel to and sustenance for men. Both the Wife and the goddess are heavily invested in capitalizing on the useful excess of exemplarity, particularly exempla culled from authorized traditions.

Alison makes herself into a living exemplum by offering up her own experience and glossing it as if it belonged to the clerkly discourses she abhors. She can use her own "instrument" freely because God gave it freely; she can marry multiple times because fulfilling her sexual appetites through marriage is better than sex outside of marriage; and she can mistreat her husbands because biblical authority instructs husbands to cleave to their wives and love them well.[43] Her own experience using her "membres" for sexual gratification counters the glossing "bothe up and doun" of those who contend that such members are only for purgation, and thus her own body becomes an exemplum upholding the validity of uninhibited sexuality. No moment more clearly indicates the extent to which Alison views herself as a living exemplum—buttressed by experience—than her promise that the story of her experiences will serve as a corrective: "For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten. / Whoso that nyle be war by othere men, / By hym shal othere men corrected be" (179-80). Here, Allison tells the men in her audience specifically to learn from the stories she is about to relate, suggesting these men will be "corrected" by the stories of her poor husbands, even if they have failed to be warned by previous men.

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[43] See especially ll. 149-50, 51-52, 160-61.

In her promise of "ensamples mo than ten," Alison's interest in exemplary rhetoric critically asserts itself. The examples rehearsed in the prologue are, ultimately, examples culled from her life. They are *her* experiences primarily, and her husbands' secondarily. Astute male listeners will learn their lessons not just by attending to what the men in her stories do but by listening to what Alison describes as her deceitful and manipulative behavior. Thus, Alison and her experiences are elevated to the status of exempla. She engages, rejects, and ultimately plays with accepted forms of exemplarity, finally suggesting that her own experience is as instructive as established and authoritative exempla. Her own experiences sufficiently constitute "ensamples mo than ten." In this way, the Wife demonstrates that engaging critically with exemplarity is a generative and compelling topic, especially as exemplarity relates to debating women's worth.

With the Wife as a model for questioning exemplarity and working to establish female experience as an authoritative category of evidence in the debate, Gosynhyll is able to ground his defense of women in a tradition that is at once established (because it is Chaucerian) and also provocative (because the Wife's views on sex are inciting). Through Chaucer's Wife, Gosynhyll can make a persuasive defense of women while leaving plenty of fodder for the offense. This comparison between Gosynhyll and Chaucer's engagement with the tenuous relationships among authority, exemplarity, and experience emphasizes the provocative nature of the Wife of Bath's attitude towards authority based on exemplarity. We can see more clearly, then, how Gosynhyll frames Venus's multivalent position in the *Pean*. While Alison wants to exonerate sexuality, and

Venus aims to recuperate women from various slander and libels, both women engage in thoughtful intellectual exercises around exemplary method. A crucial difference is that Alison seems to turn largely towards experience as a viable alternative to authority based on exemplarity. For Venus, experience and exemplarity coexist to varying degrees. Through this difference, Gosynhyll co-opts Chaucer for his own purposes. Gosynhyll's turn towards an apologist such as Alison grounds the early controversy about women in an understanding of women's voices that renders them active and embraces the way such voices can do more than rehearse the interests of men.

Throughout his *Pean*, Gosynhyll focuses on the benefits and drawbacks of exemplary rhetoric, an approach he learned, I argue, from Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Venus aligns this critique of exemplary rhetoric with a declaration of her belief in experience as a viable category of evidence from which to make claims about women's worth.[44] Because Venus, as narrator of *Pean,* never offers a consistent position on exemplary rhetoric (like Chaucer's Alison, she refuses fully to recognize exemplarity as an authoritative form of knowledge),[45] we must see her exploration of the subject as an important metapoetical moment for Gosynhyll himself. In this metacommentary, Gosynhyll establishes the controversy genre as one of inquiry and multivalency, its texts trafficking in multiple, divergent viewpoints and resisting conclusive positions. Voicing this position through the mouth of his female apologist enables Gosynhyll to position female experience as

[44] See especially sig. A3^{r} and following.

[45] See especially ll. 1-183 in "The Wife's Prologue."

a category of proof that incites continued debate; harnessing the generative power of exemplarity as a method invites readers and writers from diverse social positions to engage in the controversy. Furthermore, Gosynhyll's reconsideration of exemplarity has wide implications for any argument made using exempla as proof—thus, this metacommentary speaks at once to the controversy about women and to other persuasive endeavors.

Enacting Multivalency: The Excess of Exemplarity in the *Scholehouse of Women*

Although Gosynhyll uses Venus in the *Pean* as a repository for some of Alison's more serious concerns, most of the Wife of Bath's ludic, obscene, and shrewish nature gets channeled into Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse*. In the process, the *Scholehouse* actually enacts the multivalency of exemplarity theorized by both Venus and the Wife of Bath. This pamphlet attacking women explores the alternative narratives—the excess—in the exemplary rhetoric used to defend women. Given Gosynhyll's interest in illuminating the way exempla can be put to multiple and contradictory uses, it is no surprise that he turns to the Wife of Bath to support both his defense *and* his attack on women. In distributing the features of the Wife of Bath across both his attack and defense texts, Gosynhyll clarifies his vested interest in inciting dialectic and debate. He shows how easily any exemplum can be framed one way and then reframed another.

The resonances between Chaucer's work and Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse* include both texts' use of a metaphorical female schoolhouse, attention to the sexual connotation provided by the term "instrument," and concern with the

impossibility of women keeping secrets.[46] I attend here to the central and titular episode of Gosynhyll's attack on women—the figurative women's schoolhouse—to demonstrate how the *Scholehouse* participates in Gosynhyll's work on exemplarity. Specifically, the attack on women uses an exemplary moment from Chaucer and exploits the "excess" of this moment to demonstrate the multivalency of exemplarity. I argue that Gosynhyll transforms the figurative schoolhouse of women inspired by the Wife of Bath's imagined counsel to other wives in her "Prologue" in order to display an alternative way of interpreting such a conceit. Identifying the allusive registers between Gosynhyll's attack text and Chaucer's Wife of Bath shows how Gosynhyll uses Chaucer in order to incite interest in and engagement with the controversy by demonstrating the capaciousness of exemplarity.

The sister text to *Pean*, Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse* narrates the many faults of women. The central episode of the work shows how young wives invite old gossips to teach them ways to abuse their husbands. The work uses the medieval verse form of rhyme royal and a structure from the rhetorical judicial oration, complete with an *exordium, propositio, narratio, digressio, refutatio, confirmatio*,

[46] Examining all the points of contact between the *Scholehouse* (*SH*) and Chaucer's Wife of Bath's "Prologue" (*WOBP*) is beyond the scope of this chapter. Resonances that I will not examine here include: women's bodies as bad food (*SH* sig. A2^{v}, *WOBP* 143); the alignment of tales and tongues, chattering and falsities (*SH* sig. A4^{v}, *WOBP* 466ff); the fable of Socrates having a piss pot poured on his head (*SH* sig. B3^{v}, *WOBP* 703ff); women dressing to seduce men (*SH* sig. D1^{v}, *WOBP* 337ff); the lure and hawk metaphor (*SH* sig. D1^{v}, *WOBP* 415ff); women's desires to take men's money (*SH* sig. D2^{r}, *WOBP* 205, 309; women as preachers (*SH* sig. D4^{r}, *WOBP* 165); the work as a "jest" (*SH* sig. D4^{v}, *WOBP* 193). In accumulating this list, I am indebted to Theresa Coletti's encyclopedic knowledge of *The Canterbury Tales.*

and *peroratio*.[47] The catalogue that comprises the *narratio* goes far in indicting the general category of "women" with standard claims about women's deceitfulness, frowardness, moodiness, maliciousness, wrath, and "raucousness."[48] Interrupting this list of the ills of womankind is the titular attack on women, who draw to them their gossips. Such gatherings enable the old, bitter wives and widows to impart to the young, impressionable wives the various ways to trick men and make them miserable. This, we learn, is the "schoolhouse" of women.

Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse* episode brings to life the "schooling" metaphor of Chaucer's Alison. The scene describes the way in which women cultivate vice among each other.[49] The old gossip instructs the young wife, "Be sharp and quick with him again. / If that he chide, chide you also, / And for one word give you him twain" (Bi^{r}).[50] Initially, it is unclear whether the goal of such chiding is to encourage the husband to reform or merely to vex him as much as he vexes the young wife. Much clearer is the implication that the gossips are teaching a reactionary pedagogy—for each of his vices, enact one of your own in return. The

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[47] Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance,* 25-30.

[48] Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance,* 25.

[49] In its composition, the schoolhouse episode partially recalls the group of women who comprise The Distaff Gospels, a collection of folk knowledge translated from French and printed by Caxton circa 1510; see *The Distaff Gospels, A First Modern English Edition of* Les Évangiles des Quenouilles*,* ed. and trans. Madeleine Jeay and Kathleen Garay (Toronto: Broadview Editions, 2006).

[50] The gossip's instructions sounds similar to Chaucer's Wife's proud proclamation "for god it woot I chidde hem spitously" ("Prologue," l. 223).

gossip encourages the young wife to answer the husband's scolds with "an evil answer," to "keep him hungry," and to bid him, shamefully, to go to his adulterous lovers. If the young wife senses a sharp rebuke from her husband, she should claim to know all his vices—drinking, sleeping around, looking for trouble—and promise him a sharp revenge.[51]

The old gossip in Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse* fulfills the same role as Chaucer's Wife, for both instruct wives on how to get the best of their husbands. Alison opens her metaphorical schoolhouse with a call for attention from her female audience: "Now herkneth hou I baar me properly, / ye wise wyves, that kan understonde" (224-5). Alison's instructions are vast and frightening in their capacity for manipulation. Wives seeking control of their husbands must falsely accuse them of some misdeed, compare their own clothes and household goods unfavorably to those of a neighbor's wife, and spend nights walking the town with the aim of spotting the husbands' lovers (230-399).[52] Furthermore, women are born with God-given aids for manipulation: "deceite, wepyng, spynnyng" (401). If these tools don't procure wifely control, Alison contends that "continuel murmur or grucchyng" (406) will do the trick. Alison recommends chiding and withholding of sex; as she describes her life with her fifth husband, she adds physical and emotional violence to the list of actions that allow a woman "to han the governance of hous and lond" (814-5). Both women recommend taxing their

[51] Gosynhyll, *Scholehouse,* sig. Bi^{r}-Bi^{v}.

[52] Like Alison, Gosynhyll's Old Gossip also recommends that wives accuse their husbands of coming home drunk (*SH* sig. B1^{v}).

husbands with physical and verbal difficulties in order to maintain power over them. Alison's schoolhouse is grim in its perpetuation of manipulation, marital discord, and violence; only with the introduction of Jankyn do the women get to share with men the role of discord-makers. Without question, Alison's schoolhouse is damning to women.

In Gosynhyll, however, ambiguity regarding women's roles in fomenting discord marks the schoolhouse episode from nearly the beginning. Implicitly, this scene portrays all women as bent, to some degree, towards vice. The old women in the *Scholehouse* are perhaps the most to blame, conjuring up tales to entertain their young pupils; the picture also includes young wives eagerly inviting the gossips to their houses and hanging on their every word. The culpability of the young wife, however, is called into question explicitly when she laments her treatment at the hands of her husband. She complains that he withholds affection from her, nearly pushes her out of the bed at night, acts without manners or kindness, calls her "whore" and "harlot," and makes her labor beyond reason. The husband's actions here range from annoying—getting up at night to urinate and then coming back to bed and stealing the covers—to downright deplorable. The young wife is so out of love with her husband that, save "these children three, / [she] would not tarry . . . / Longer with him, day nor hour" (Gosynhyll, *Scholehouse,* sig. Bi^{r}). In this moment, it is not greed, laziness, or an implicit evil that brings these women together but rather the suffering of a young wife.

Unlike Chaucer's Wife, the young wife of Gosynhyll's schoolhouse is not an active agent making her husband miserable but a passive recipient of

unprovoked malice. She merely reacts to his poor behavior, regretting that she was "curste, or els starke madde" when she married such a man, and thus her liability for her own bad behavior diminishes (Bi^{r}). The process of this "schooling" reveals a paradox: women are not inherently and sufficiently evil to know how to displease their husbands on their own, but they can learn to become evil enough through the instructions of other women. In the *Scholehouse*, the old gossip analogous to Chaucer's Wife bids the young woman, "shewe your mynde, hollye to me" (Aiv^{v}). Thus, women are at once innocent but quickly fallen; though they ultimately damn their own gender, they are also initially benign. The overall effect of this paradox is that this schoolhouse narrative can both damn women and partially exonerate them from blame. The same simply cannot be said for Chaucer's Wife of Bath, whose actions seem to indict women at every turn as she describes her treatment of men. Even though Alison freely acknowledges men's blameful behaviors, she also shows how women can be instigators of chaos. And even though it seems counterintuitive for Gosynhyll to revise Chaucer in this way—after all, Gosynhyll's work is supposed to attack women—the inconclusiveness grafted into this scene emphasizes the capaciousness of exemplarity, leaving thematic and logical space for someone to counter his attack on women. The space afforded by such an approach enables Gosynhyll *himself* to counter the *Scholehouse* with the *Pean*.

In his treatment of the schoolhouse episode, Gosynhyll continues a revisionary approach to Chaucer that emphasizes the expansive potential of exemplarity. The allusive tactic he takes in the *Scholehouse* enables him to locate

his shrewish conception of women as part of an authoritative Chaucerian tradition of such remarks. That Chaucer—and specifically, his female apologist Alison—can be used to enable both sides of the debate here is clearly not lost on Gosynhyll and should indicate to modern scholars the degree to which Chaucer was understood as far more than a courtly love poet. To borrow a phrase from Whitman, Gosynhyll is acutely attuned to the ways that Chaucer's work contains multitudes, especially as embodied by the Wife of Bath. Those multitudes are precisely what he needs to authorize his writing on both sides of the question about women.

Wife of Bath, Child of Venus

One last important point of contact between Gosynhyll and Chaucer serves to conclude my argument. I have suggested throughout that Gosynhyll and Chaucer are linked, purposefully on Gosynhyll's end, in a web of affinities that enables Gosynhyll to imagine and execute his project. But there is also a metaphorical family link that ties Gosynhyll to Chaucer, enabled by the figure of Venus. Gosynhyll's inspiration for this figure likely stems not only from the figures of Alceste and The God of Love in the *Legend of Good Women* but also from the *Ballad* that concludes the *Legend* in Thynne's edition.[53] While there are

[53] *The workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed*, sig. Ss5^{v}. References in parentheses refer to line numbers. While this ballad has since been struck from the Chaucerian canon, no definitive author has been identified; Walter Skeat says it is "manifestly Lydgate's"; see *Chaucerian and Other Pieces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), lxx. Available online, *Project Gutenberg,* Accessed January 25, 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/43195/43195-h/43195-h.htm> .

certainly other Chaucerian Venuses, the Venus of the *Ballad* most strongly provides an imaginative framework for Gosynhyll's Venus. Following a series of ballade stanzas (translated from two French poems) dedicated to the "fresshest flour" (2) of whom the speaker asks protection and "governaunce," (7, 14, 21) the envoy of the poem sends the work forth "in holy Venus name" (63). The dedication is not surprising, for the body of the poem seeks the beneficence and attention of an unnamed beautiful lady. The speaker desires to be called her child, he wishes her all things that might her "hertes ese amende," he promises her his service despite his lack of skill and wisdom, and he bestows upon her his faithful heart even if he cannot offer her much else. Asking Venus to preside over such adulations merely serves to prove the speaker is a faithful servant to Love generally and thus would trustily serve the addressee.

The Venus of Thynne's *Ballad* is a Venus who restores amicable relationships between men and women, who helps women readers to forgive "that in [his] wryting ye finde wol som offence" (51). Anything that seems like malice on the man's part "is caused of negligence" (54), and Venus as benefactor should be enough to convince the lovely lady "to accept in game" (60) any ineloquent turns the writer may make. It should come as no surprise, then, that Gosynhyll chooses Venus to preside over his defense text. His Venus, too, is a Venus of reconciliation whose job it is to manage the strengths and weaknesses of the author's writing. The narrator of the *Ballad* imagines Venus as an intercessor; an interceding Venus is precisely what Gosynhyll gives us in the *Pean.* When *Pean*'s Venus seeks to defend women not by adhering strictly to exemplarity but by

harnessing the multivalency of exemplarity and combining it with lived experience, she intercedes in the debate about women's worth by offering a mediating understanding of what constitutes "proof."

True to Gosynhyll's form, however, the way his Venus links back to another Chaucerian character calls into question the very benevolent and reconciliatory nature of the Venus I have just described. Crucially, the Wife of Bath, the woman whose actions, explanations, and idiom infuse so much of Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse*, is, as she claims all women are, a self-proclaimed child of Venus. Gosynhyll's creation of a defense, voiced by Venus, that invokes the serious concerns of the Wife of Bath—knowing, as I believe he must, that the Wife describes herself in this way—further points to Gosynhyll's interest in dialectical exchange. At the very least, it is proof that Gosynhyll has a complicated sense of humor.

Men and women are "the children of Mercurie and of Venus" (697); therefore, they embody certain traits as their governing planet demands. Whereas Venus "loveth riot and dispence" (678), Mercurie "loveth wysdam and science" (677); when one planet presides over a birth, the qualities of the other planet fail to materialize in the progeny. Thus, "Mercurie is desolat / in Pisces wher Venus is exaltat / And Venus faileth ther Mercurie is reysed" (681-83). These differences in turn explain why male clerks simply cannot bring themselves to write in praise of women. In fact, the Wife claims, works highlighting women's adulterous nature are generally the product of bitter, old, impotent men of the Mercurial sign, unable to do "Venus workes worth [hir] old sho" (686). Gosynhyll's Venus

provides in her defense of women exactly what the Wife of Bath hopes for: a defense of Venus's children written by Venus herself. But ironically, and comically, Gosynhyll, son of Mercurie, is the voice behind that of his Venus. The Wife of Bath's imagination as enacted by Gosynhyll thus provocatively calls into question the very authenticity of the *Pean* itself. The *Pean* is indeed a defense—it is surely *not* the rant of an old clerk railing about women who "kan nat kepe hir mariage"—but its Venutian voice offering the perspective for which Alison longs ultimately belongs to a man. Once again, Gosynhyll's turn to Chaucer embraces the multivalency he finds in the medieval poet: Chaucer's Wife is similarly ventriloquized by Chaucer himself.

In focusing on women's voices—particularly the voices of the apologists Venus and Alison—as mouthpieces for inquiry into the controversy genre, Gosynhyll capitalizes on and perpetuates ideas of women's volatile (hysterical) nature: of course, female characters should demonstrate and enact a literary method based on multivalency because they, too, are multivalent. But Venus also signifies in multiple ways, just as nearly *every* exemplum can.[54] Thus, she is both the mediator and the bawd. The link between the voice of the Wife of Bath and the figure of the old bawd in the *Scholehouse* enacts one side of women's mutable nature just as the link to the *Ballad of Venus* enacts the other. The controversy genre—built as it is on commonplaces and stock exempla—traffics in dialectic, in

[54] The complexity—and mutability—of Venus as a mythical figure is well documented in Theresa Tinkle's *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996). Tinkle examines various medieval depictions (literary and visual) of Venus and Cupid, determining that "multiplicity, change, and ambiguity are all part of the deities' literary function and value" (2).

the multiplicity of the nature of womankind (and mankind) that enables the debate in the first place. Here, in Gosynhyll's reintroduction of the genre on English soil, he uses women's voices explicitly to emphasize this feature of the genre because such multivalency attracts readers and writers alike to the controversy.

While it is not my intention to make a case for Gosynhyll's actual attitudes towards women, his ready pairing of subject and form in his approach to the controversy suggests, at the least, that he recognizes the marketability of his take on exemplary rhetoric. That readers of the controversy, as well as printers of controversy texts, validated his approach to the controversy via the print market is equally if not more important than whether this perspective was considered "true." Furthermore, Gosynhyll uses his feminine apologists to transform the debate about the virtues and vices of women into a discourse about persuasion itself. Gosynhyll's metacommentary on exemplarity contributed to the controversy about women, but it is also metacommentary that applies to strategies of argumentation in general.

The Sixteenth-Century Chaucer

Gosynhyll's use of Chaucer as explored in this chapter suggests how modern critics might revise prevailing views of Chaucer's sixteenth-century reception. Scholarship on the "Renaissance Chaucer" fashions the medieval writer as a poet of love, the court, and *sentence*. Early modern antiquarians and literary authors viewed Chaucer as a "master and teacher," the poet who could provide England with a national, poetic identity paradoxically derived from a medieval

past marked by the absence of just such authoritative figures.[55] Chaucer inspires and energizes sixteenth-century authors, so much so that "by the 1530s . . . Chaucer is effectively a 'world,' a reliably abundant source of provision."[56] Chaucer provided Gosynhyll with just such an abundant poetic "world," and I argue that Gosynhyll's work demonstrates that he deemed Chaucer fit to preside over both the high and low elements of the genre.

The Renaissance Chaucer was many things: England's "native, Gothic laureate,"[57] a "wellspring of poetry,"[58] a "quintessentially serious and sententious poet,"[59] a man whose work, according to printers' epilogues, was "antique, obscure, magnificent."[60] Renaissance readers admired and indebted themselves to Chaucer, yet they were acutely aware that Chaucer's magnificence was enhanced by his diachronic distance from the Renaissance and the accompanying belief that such "genius" was an unlikely legacy of England's medieval past. Alice S. Miskimin explains: Chaucer's "antique poetic diction and his 'learning' were a national treasure, preserved from that age of 'darkness and error' primarily

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[55] Theresa M. Krier, ed., introduction, *Refiguring Chaucer,* 2.

[56] Krier, *Refiguring Chaucer*, 6. Later authors inspired by, responding to, or thinking about Chaucer include Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare (10-14).

[57] Watkins, "'Wrastling for this world,'" 23.

[58] Krier, *Refiguring Chaucer*, 2.

[59] Clare R. Kinney, "Thomas Speght's Renaissance Chaucer and the *Solas* of *Sentence* in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Refiguring Chaucer*, 68.

[60] Alice S. Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 244.

because he satirized its ignorance and civilized its language."[61] Also clearly treasured by later poets is Chaucer's emphasis on courtly love: much of the spurious Chauceriana included in the early editions are works of "moral, allegorical, or amorous verse, and most are in the high style of the fifteenth century."[62] William Thynne's 1532 edition includes a number of works mistakenly attributed to Chaucer, among them many "second-rate" poems on "women, love, and misfortune."[63]

But important for my purposes, Chaucer's poetry is also a repository for ways of thinking about women, both their virtues and vices. Even though Renaissance writers do not seem to conceive of Chaucer as a poet deeply engaged in discourses about gender, Krier explains that Chaucer's works contain a richness of gender as a "theme, as narrative resource, as marker of difference among genres, as path of intertextuality, as manifestation of diverse social possibilities."[64] Indeed, Krier refers to this richness as Chaucer's "gift" to the

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[61] Miskimin, *Renaissance Chaucer*, 259.

[62] Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer*, 245. Stephanie Trigg also notes that the sixteenth-century Chaucer is "represented at this time primarily as a poet of courtly love" (283); see "Discourses of Affinity in the Reading Communities of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, ed. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 270-92. For more on Chaucer's reception, see Trigg's chapter "Chaucer's Influence and Reception," *Yale Companion to Chaucer,* 297-323.

[63] Miskimin, *Renaissance Chaucer*, 246.

[64] Krier, introduction, *Refiguring Chaucer*, 13.

Renaissance.[65] Similarly, Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson contend that, after the mid-sixteenth century, Scottish writers repeatedly cite and allude to Chaucer as an authority on misogyny.[66] They even go so far as to claim that for these readers and writers, Chaucer's "involvement in the argument about women" was the "defining feature" of his identity.[67] Writers such as John Rolland and Gavin Douglas, they argue, use Chaucer to "[fix] [women] into damning categories," reflecting a Scottish "fear of being unmanned and rendered illegitimate, politically and culturally."[68] This quality of Chaucer's poetry, identified by modern scholars and early modern Scottish writers alike, provides precisely the raw material Gosynhyll needs to make his entrée into the English controversy.

Gosynhyll's linking of Venus in the *Pean* with the Wife of Bath and his appropriation of her idiom in the *Scholehouse* can be read as a microcosm of his entire project. He offers us Venus and a passionate defense of women; then, he reminds us that women like Alison are Venus's progeny, and Venus's progeny are the reason that schools of women continue to make men's lives miserable. How to reconcile these options represented by the *Pean* and the *Scholehouse*, by the *Legend* and the Wife of Bath—*if* we even can—he leaves up to his readers, but

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[65]Krier, introduction, *Refiguring Chaucer*, 13.

[66] Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer," Prendergast and Kline, *Rewriting Chaucer*, 186.

[67] Ives and Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer," 190.

[68] Ives and Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer," 189. Ives and Parkinson contend that this fear is a result of female rulers in Scotland, persistent belief in "Galen's one-sex model," and a cultural awareness that Scotland "must also rely on a foreign literary tradition . . . to construct its own genealogy" (189).

his readers are unlikely to find any of his works—or Chaucer's—to be definitive. The intertextuality between and among Gosynhyll's works and Chaucer's provokes continuous reflection, revision, and engagement. Such provocation is possible because Gosynhyll's attention to the excess of exemplarity, combined with personal experience as evidence, means that his works take a generous and multivalent position on argumentation itself, encouraging readers and writers to derive proof from wide and disparate sources. Across Chaucer's diverse poetry, Gosynhyll finds pieces large and small to weave into an explicit argument about the generative—because multivalent—nature of exemplarity, and he uses the malleability of women's voices to do so. This feature of the apologist's voice—her flexibility and appropriateness for articulating diverse or even contradictory issues—becomes a hallmark of the English controversy, as subsequent chapters demonstrate. Later authors in the controversy will find continuing and ever-expansive ways to use the voice of the feminine apologist as a discursive vehicle for conversations aside from the inherent nature of women.

Chapter 2: Conventions and Performativity in The Swetnam Controversy Pamphlets and Swetnam the Woman-Hater

When Joseph Swetnam wrote *The araignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women* (1615, hereafter *Araignment*), his masculine-voiced attack provoked responses from three authors who use feminine-voiced pamphlets to articulate their defenses of women, silence Swetnam the misogynist, and rebut his libelous claims about women. The *Araignment* criticizes women on fronts typical of the controversy genre; despite its often-troubled logic, grammar, and style, the work is immensely popular throughout the seventeenth century, reprinted in ten editions through 1637.[1] Thus, respondents Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda[2] have much work to do to muzzle the barking Woman-Hater that is Joseph Swetnam. Both the number of respondents and the establishment of female authorship for at least one of the pamphlets make the Swetnam works a remarkable cluster in the controversy. In addition, this cluster witnesses a unique type of intertextual moment in the genre, as an anonymous play *Swetnam the*

[1] Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind,* 16.

[2] In her work on *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, Coryl Crandall identifies Daniel Tuvil's 1616 *Asylum Veneris* as part of the Swetnam Controversy, though Linda Woodbridge disputes this association; see Crandall's *Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy and the Play* (Purdue: Purdue University Studies, 1969) and Woodbridge, '*Women and the English Renaissance,* 103-10. Shepherd names Tuvil's work and Christopher Newstead's *An Apology for Women* as two male responses to Swetnam in *The Women's Sharp Revenge,* 22; Henderson and McManus suggest we cannot be sure whether Tuvil wrote in direct response to Swetnam, nor whether his work is actually a satire or a defense (16).

Woman-Hater (1620, hereafter *Woman-Hater*) follows on the heels of the pamphlet responses.[3]

Several features mark this group of controversy works, all of which were written in pamphlet form: the emphasis on marriage and choosing a wife, the ways in which social class inflects the answering pamphlets, and the use of female authorship (real or pseudonymous) to counter the instigating attack.[4] In addition to demonstrating the fluid boundaries between social concerns—such as class and marriage—and the controversy itself, this cluster calls explicit attention to the conventions on which the controversy is built. Through the play's treatment of the conventions of the pamphlets, conventions about women's nature and their propensity for virtue or vice, the *Woman-Hater* argues that these same commonplaces can be put to socially useful ends *if* they are recognized *as*

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[3] For further reading on the Swetnam Controversy, see Shepherd, *The Women's Sharp Revenge;* Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind*; Woodbridge, ch. 4, ch. 11, and ch. 12; Ann Rosalind Jones, "Counterattacks on the 'Bayter of Women': Three Pamphleteers of the Early Seventeenth Century," *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*; Anna Bayman, "Female Voices in Early Seventeenth Century Pamphlet Literature," *Women and Writing c. 1340-c.1650,* ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 196-210.

[4] Simon Shepherd claims that "*if* Sowernam and Munda are male authors, they produce texts that radically differ from Swetnam's . . . [T]hey open up his arguments in a way that shows a different set of values, an alternate mode of thinking"; see *The Women's Sharp Revenge,* 22. Jo Carruthers argues that, at least regarding Sowernam's pamphlet, critical consensus is that the author is male; see " 'Neither Maide, Wife, or Widow': Ester Sowernam and the Book of Esther," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 26.3 (2003): 322. For my part, there seems little compelling evidence on either side to establish the genders of Sowernam and Munda. Regarding Swetnam's *Araignment*, Henderson and McManus explain that the pamphlet was "published under the pseudonym Thomas Tell-Troth but very quickly associated with Joseph Swetnam"; see *Half Humankind,* 16.

conventions. The pamphlets in this cluster rely on arguments about the essential characteristics of men and women, arguments whose use is authorized by the rhetorical underpinnings of the controversy.[5] In response, the play demands recognition of the performative—rather than essential—quality of these characteristics. In addition to cross-voicing, where the play articulates anti-feminine sentiments through female characters and anti-masculine sentiments through male characters, a crucial way that the play reveals these qualities as performative is through the strategy of cross-dressing: the hero Lorenzo dresses himself as an Amazon for most of the play. The *Woman-Hater* uses such cross-dressing to suggest that the rhetoric of the controversy genre is as performative as drama itself. At every moment where the *Woman-Hater* portrays debates about gender, it actively highlights the art and artifice—the performative nature—of the conventions that imbue the controversy about women. Whereas the pamphlets that inspire the play attempt to fix gender conventions, the play's attention to the performative aspects of the debate about women enables apologists to use such conventions for the greater good of an ailing society.

This chapter fills an important silence in scholarship on the Swetnam controversy by examining the ways *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* actively revises the governing assumptions of the pamphlets to which it responds. In addition, I contend that the interaction among the works creates metacommentary that criticizes essentialist arguments, favoring instead the social benefits of

[5] For a discussion of the rhetorical methods of the genre, see Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance,* 14-17; Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind*, 32-42.

performative identity. I argue that while the feminine voices of the defensive pamphlets try to silence the misogynist by identifying more persuasively the essential nature of women, the play quiets the misogynist by demonstrating that the "nature" of women—and men—is neither consistent nor essential. Rather, the "nature" of men and women in any given moment is the result of an accrual of performed conventions. Further, in demonstrating that the conventions of the controversy are performative, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* crucially revises the pamphlets' implicit construction of the defender of women *as a woman*. That is, the defense pamphlets, with their overt desire to assert the feminine authorial voices of the texts as well as their efforts to establish the essential virtue of women, posit women *specifically* as natural and appropriate apologists. The play challenges this feature of the pamphlets by displaying the ease with which anyone—man or woman, high-born or lowly—may act the part of defender of women. Indeed, the social disruption caused by the misogynist in the *Woman-Hater* is of such significance that a disordered kingdom simply cannot afford to relegate the apologist's role to women alone. Performativity thus renders the apologist's voice an always accessible role, ensuring that a society can counter the destructive force of misogyny. By highlighting the performative aspects of identity, the metacommentary of this cluster turns a critical eye towards traditional methods of "knowing" in early modern England.

The Swetnam Controversy Pamphlets: Debating the Essential Natures of Men and Women

The Swetnam pamphlets are overtly concerned with persuading their readers to agree with their claims about the nature of women, and their

unsurprising attention to this topic is representative of the controversy genre generally. What *is* surprising about this cluster of controversy texts, however, is the way this standard attention towards essentially gendered traits gets turned on its head by the anonymous play. For Joseph Swetnam, attention to essential natures means persuading readers that women are inherently prone to vice, inclined to making men miserable, and attracted to sexual proclivity that makes men victims of women's libido. For the female-voiced respondents, it means persuading readers that Swetnam's claims are false and offering in their place a new and compelling vision of women's essential nature. Because the *Woman-Hater* responds specifically to the pamphlets' attempts to establish the nature of women, I review briefly here the position each pamphlet takes regarding the inherent qualities of men and women. Understanding the pamphlets' intense interest in this topic clarifies the anonymous play's creative response in imagining these conventions as performative.

Swetnam's *Araignment* demonstrates his position regarding women's nature through his treatment of the conventional topic of women's creation. Made from man's rib, women are "froward" in nature, "for a ribbe is a crooked thing, good for nothing else, and women are crooked by nature."[6] This crookedness of

[6] All citations, including subsequent parenthetical citations, refer to signatures from Joseph Swetnam, *The araignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women or the vanitie of them, choose you whether: with a commendation of wise, vertuous and honest women: pleasant for married men, profitable for young men, and hurtfull to none* (London: 1615), STC (2nd ed.), 23534; for this quotation, see sig. B1^{r}. Here, "froward" describes a person or behavior that is perverse, inclined towards vice, and generally contrary to that which is reasonable; see *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online,* s.v. "froward, adj., adv., and prep," accessed April 14, 2014. Oxford University Press, March 2014.

women's nascent material in turn engenders women's mischievous and deceitful behavior—what Swetnam calls the "haynous evils of inconstant women" (A2^{r})—evidenced by Eve's procurement of "mans fall" through eating the forbidden fruit. Swetnam declares, "therfore ever since they are and have beene a woe unto man, and follow the line of their first leader" (B1^{r}). Women are inherently inconstant creatures, and the crooked, turned rib from which women came prefigures the wayward turning of women's moods, allegiances, and love: "It is wonderful to see the mad feates of women, for she will be now merry, then againe sad; now laugh, then weep; now sicke, then presently whole; all things which like not them, are naught: and if it be never so bad, if it like them, it is excellent: againe, it is death for women to bee denied the thing which they demand: and yet they will despise things given them unasked" (C2^{r}).

Having established, then, the inherent waywardness of women, the remainder of Swetnam's pamphlet traces how women display this volatility in their interactions with men. Here, Swetnam is concerned largely with women's predisposition towards deception as lovers and wives, and his diatribe against women rehearses standard conventions about women as evil temptresses and shrewish wives. Women go to great lengths to make themselves desirable and attractive, but Swetnam warns young men especially that "all is not gold that glistereth" (B2^{r}). Even *if* a man chances upon a beautiful woman who initially makes him happy, causing him to think he has "gotten God by the hand," he will find soon enough that he has "but the Devill by the foot" (B2^{v}). The abrupt juxtaposition of God and Devil in this clever turn of phrase enacts linguistically

Swetnam's understanding of how quickly female nature reveals itself despite women's attempts at deceiving their male suitors. According to Swetnam's pamphlet, women are hell-bent on entrapping men in snares of love, being "cunning in the art of flattery, . . . [With] Sirens songs to allure [men], and Xerxes cunning to inchant [them]" ($B2^{v}$). Once married, men will suffer at the hands of shrewish wives who demand more than husbands can provide, spend all that their husbands earn, and continuously threaten to make their husbands cuckolds. Thus, women "are called the hooke of all evill, because men are taken by them, as fish is taken with the hooke" ($C4^{r}$). Despite Swetnam's claim only to arraign unvirtuous women, he consistently takes the position that women *in general* are essentially bent towards vice.

The pamphlets written in response to Swetnam face the double burden of not only persuading readers that Swetnam's assessment of women's nature is inaccurate but also providing an alternative assessment of women's inherent qualities. The responding authors frame their rebuttals around the terms offered by Joseph Swetnam; hence, it is not surprising that the responses reconstruct essentialist arguments.[7] The respondents offer new ways of imagining an answer to the question implicitly posed by Swetnam, "what is the nature of womankind?" In addition, the pamphlets reassign to men many of the vices that Swetnam assigns to women, and in this way the defenses effectively re-gender certain conventions of the controversy often considered essentially feminine. Only by

[7] For a discussion of the way in which defenders of women often only reinscribe the social mores that require women's submission, see Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, 205-30.

recognizing the extent to which these pamphlets seriously engage the question of men and women's nature can we then recognize the extent to which the anonymous play upends such engagement. What the defense pamphlets activate through attention to women's essential natures—namely, the authority and material for defending women against misogyny—the play will activate through attention to performativity, inviting any able body to perform the part of the apologist.

Responding first to Swetnam, Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617) theorizes the essential nature of women even as she is concerned primarily with the issue of marriage.[8] Christina Luckyj argues that Speght uses Puritan commonplaces about marriage, "uttered by just those male writers that Speght allegedly seeks to refute," in order to reframe Swetnam's attacks on marriage in general into a discussion about the specific contemporary religious politics of marriage.[9] Alongside this attention to marriage, Speght's work establishes women's nature as excellent; she is an appropriate companion and helper to man. Women are the "excellent worke of Gods hand, which in his great love he

[8] For an examination of at least one reader's response to Speght, see Cis van Heertum, "A Hostile Annotation of Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus*," *English Studies* 68.6 (1987): 490-96. I place my discussion of Sowernam's work after my analysis of Speght and Munda's pamphlets because her work's influence on the play is of a larger magnitude.

[9] Christina Luckyj, "*A Mouzell for Melastomus* in Context: Rereading the Swetnam-Speght Debate," *English Literary Renaissance* 40 (2010): 113-31; see especially p. 114.

perfected for the comfort of man."[10] The very creation of women signals man's nascent imperfection: "man was an unperfect building afore woman was made." (C1^{v}). To those who argue that women's nature is flawed, Speght reminds, "the work of Creation being finished, this approbation thereof was given by God himself, that *all was very good*: if all, then *woman*" (C2^{r}). Speght acquiesces to the notion that men are inherently better than women, because this formulation enables her to account men more at fault for original sin than women. As the more perfect being, Adam should have refused Eve's temptation, and it is only when Adam finally transgresses that the two recognize their "spiritual nakedness" and thus their depravity (C3).

More important than Adam's deficiencies, however, are all the "causes" of women's creation that grant her excellence. First, women were made by God, and just as "bitter water can not proceede from a pleasant sweete fountain, nor [can] bad worke [proceed] from that workman which is perfectly good" (D1^{r}). Second, while men were made from "dust of the earth," women were made from the more perfect creation that was man, and from his side "to be his equall" (D1^{v}). Third, because woman's body mirrors man's body in some ways and complements it in others, woman's body is excellent. Finally, because woman was made to glorify God, she is excellent in her very essence.[11] Speght assumes that, given the

[10] All citations refer to signatures from Rachel Speght, *A mouzell for Melastomus*; for this quotation see B2^{v}. Subsequent citations will be interlinear.

[11] Speght, *Mouzell*, D1^{v}-D2^{r}.

circumstances surrounding the creation of Adam and Eve, men and women indeed have essential natures, inextricably tied to one another and both inherently good.

Constantia Munda's response to Swetnam, *The worming of a mad dogge: or, A soppe for Cerberus the jaylor of Hell. No confutation but a sharpe redargution [reproof] of the bayter of women* (1617), the last to appear in print, is easily the most vitriolic. Munda's vitriol stems from her conviction that women are inherently *not* the evil creatures that Swetnam contends they are. This anger also serves to position Munda as an opponent equal to Swetnam. As Ann Rosalind Jones has shown, "rather than establishing an honorable difference between herself and Swetnam, Constantia imagines a battle between like and like."[12] According to Munda, women are "natures best ornament" and "mirrors of creation."[13] While Munda often acknowledges the "lower" sorts of women such as prostitutes, her general position is that women are godly creatures with natures contrary to those described in Swetnam's text. As "the crown, perfection, [and] the meanes / of all mens being" ($A2^{v}$),women are a "goodly peece of nature" endowed by God with beauty and virtues ($B1^{r}$). Swetnam's vile attack, Munda insists, cannot turn to evil the inherent goodness of women: "things simply good, / Keep still their essence, though they be withstood / by all the complices of hell"

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[12] Jones, "Counterattacks on the 'Bayter of Women,'" 58.

[13] Contantia Munda, *The worming of a mad dogge: or, A soppe for Cerberus the Jaylor of Hell. No confutation but a sharpe redargution of the bayter of women* (London: 1617), STC (2nd ed.), 18257; sig A2. Subsequent parenthetical citations refer to signatures.

(B1^{v}). Women are also naturally modest (B3^{r}), unlike Swetnam's claims to the contrary.

Munda leaves room for men to be virtuous, comparing women to the "second edition" of God's creation, of which man is the first. The point of her comparison is to demonstrate how far men like Swetnam—and there are *a lot* of men like Swetnam according to Munda—have fallen in their questioning of "even the most absolute worke [woman] composed by the worlds great Architect" (B1^{v}-B2^{r}). Additionally, Munda's comparison serves to make women essentially better than men, since men were the first creation but women were the perfected version (B2^{r}).[14] Thus, men who disparage women are "so besotted with a base and miserable condition" (B2^{v}) that women have no choice but to "manicle [their] dissolute fist" so such men cannot deal "[their] blows so unadvisedly" (B3^{r}). While Munda makes no explicit or extended claim about the nature of men (her concern is with the nature of Swetnam specifically as a degenerate monster of his sex), her positioning of women as God's perfected creature implies men's secondary position and comparative imperfection. Her major correction of Swetnam, then, is her argument that women's God-given nature is not flawed the way Swetnam argues it is. Women may fall from their God-given nature, but so can men, as Swetnam himself proves through his very existence.

Ester Sowernam's *Ester Hath Hanged Haman* responds both to Swetnam's work and to Speght's. Sowernam's defense of women includes an

[14] Munda is willing to grant that men are *not* inherently evil, though she positions women as more perfect than men and thus more virtuous.

arraignment of Swetnam that, more than the other pamphlets, seems to have inspired the events of the *Woman-Hater*. Thus, it is helpful to examine the ways in which Sowernam's attempt to define the essential qualities of men and women provides material that the play appropriates. Sowernam defends women primarily from a biblical standpoint, arguing "what blessed and happy choyse hath beene made of women, as gratious instruments to derive Gods blessings and benefits to mankind."[15] Her basic premise is that women are "so blessed a worke of his Creation" that those women who digress from their natural blessed state "disappoint the ends of Creation" and thus rightfully deserve to be shamed (A3^{r}). In a direct address to her women readers, Sowernam states the three main points that prove her argument: "You are women; in Creation, noble; in Redemption, gracious; in use most blessed" (A3^{r}). Through this triad—creation, redemption, and use—Sowernam frames women as essentially noble and "blessed above all Creatures" (A3^{v}).[16]

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[15] All citations refer to signatures from *Ester hath hang'd Haman: or An answere to a lewd pamphlet, entituled, The arraignment of women With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant men, and husbands. Divided into two parts. The first proveth the dignity and worthinesse of women, out of divine testimonies. The second shewing the estimation of the foeminine sexe, in ancient and pagan times; all which is acknowledged by men themselves in their daily actions. Written by Ester Sowernam, neither maide, wife nor widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend all* (London: 1617), STC (2nd ed.), 22974; for quotation, see A2^{v}. Subsequent citations will be interlinear and refer to signatures. Like Gosynhyll, Sowernam is also heavily interested in exempla, offering catalogues of women valued in ancient and modern times who demonstrate feminine goodness; see A2^{v} and especially D1-D3^{r}.

[16] Sowernam's work is full of diverse approaches to defending women, approaches marked by an array of narrative voices that Sowernam invokes to make her case; see Bayman, "Female Voices," 202. Sowernam also aims to recuperate women as marriage partners, a part of her defense that I will not

Sowernam engages explicitly with Swetnam's explanation that women's essential nature, derived from a crooked rib, is itself crooked. She counters, "did Woman receive her soule and disposition from the rib[?]; Or as it is said in Genesis, God did breath[e] in them the spirit of life?"(B2^{r})[17]. Not only are women borne out of God's breath and intentions, but also they are endowed with privileges that prove their inherent virtue. First, she suggests that God's work was "wrought by degrees" such that the last work—woman—was the most excellent (B3). Second, whereas men were made from dirt and earth, women were made "out of subject refined" (B3^{v}). Third, womankind, represented by Eve, was created in Paradise; and as "every creature doth correspond [to] the temper and the inclination of that element wherein it hath tooke his first and principall *esse*, or being," women cannot then degenerate from "that natural inclination of the place, in which she was first framed" (B3^{v}). Having established women's inherent goodness, Sowernam offers a list of exemplary women that proves her point, including women from the Old and New Testaments, such as the Virgin Mary and

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consider in this chapter. For a discussion of Sowernam's approach to marriage, see Megan Matchinske, "Legislating 'Middle-Class' Morality in the Marriage Market: Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman*," *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994): 154-83. On Sowernam's provocative reuse of Swetnam's phrase, "neither maid, wife, or widow," see Jo Carruthers, " 'Neither Maide, Wife, or Widow': Ester Sowernam and the Book of Esther." While Swetnam uses the phrase to designate whores, Carruthers argues that the liminality of the construction allows Sowernam to create the very authority she needs to render judgment against Swetnam.

[17] Sowernam adds to her defense a sly gesture towards the philosophy, "that which giveth quality to a thing, doth more abound in that quality." Thus, she suggests, if readers *do* want to believe Swetnam's version of events, they must axiomatically accept that men excel in the quality of "crookedness"; see B2^{r}.

Mary Magdalene, and many Christian martyrs of the early church (C2-C4^{r}).

One particular feature that distinguishes Sowernam's pamphlet from those of her co-defenders Speght and Munda is her emphasis on establishing the essential nature of men. Her focus on men as the "beginners" of women's offenses provides the grounds for the *Woman-Hater*'s larger concern with the issue of which party—man or woman—is the first cause of illicit love, a role the play later calls *primus motor* (A3^{v}). Sowernam writes, "no woman is bad except she be abused," and this abuse comes primarily at the hands of men (A4^{r}). Just as Eve was virtuous before "she met with the Serpent," so, too, "her daughters are good Virgins, if they meet with good Tutors" (A4^{r}). Much of her indictment of men rests in her argument that while Eve may be complicit in original sin, Adam's fault is greater. In eating the fruit of the Garden, hiding in shame from God, and attempting to excuse his sin, Adam represents sin in "fulnesse" whereas Eve represents only sin in its beginning (B4^{v}).[18] That Eve's punishment for her sin—bearing children—is the means for mankind's redemption (while Adam's punishment has no such redemptive value) also demonstrates women's greater honor in the eyes of God (C1^{r}). Finally, men spare no tricks in their pursuit of women. When these tricks serve to bring a woman to shameful behavior, the disgrace that she brings upon herself only reveals both the greater excellence of womankind and the corollary conclusion that men are not as excellent; men's

[18] Because Sowernam conceives of the serpent as masculine, this assertion does not conflict with her claim that men are the beginners of women's fall from virtue.

shameful behavior is less disgraceful because they are not as virtuous as women to begin with, setting lower expectations for their behavior.[19]

These responses to Swetnam take markedly different approaches to defending womankind, but they all share a commitment to identifying women's nature as fixed and inherently good. In addition, the feminine voices of the pamphlets imply how appropriate it is that *women* are defending women. What current scholarship on the Swetnam controversy has yet to recognize is the way the *Woman-Hater* makes use of and responds to the pamphlets' vested interests in essentializing gender. The pamphlet-writers' efforts to establish the inherent nature of women—and to some extent men—provide the literary inspiration and crucial context for the play's demonstration that such efforts are, ultimately, futile, because qualities that authors in the controversy assign as essential to men or women are actually conventions that can be put on and off at will. Furthermore, the play argues that through such performative demonstrations of conventions lies a path towards rectifying the social harm committed by the misogynist who believes in the fixity of women's lack of virtue. Crucially, the play suggests, this path towards social restoration is a path for women *and* men alike, who are both fit defenders of women precisely *because* the way to such defense is through performance. No inherent or essential quality of man or woman makes a person more or less appropriate to defend womankind. Thus, this controversy cluster

[19] Her position in this regard is summed up in the phrase "the best thing corrupted proveth the worst"; see E1^{r}.

explodes the category of apologist by showing how the voice of the defender can—and indeed should—traverse multiple bodies and contexts.

Performativity, Theatricality, and Controversy Conventions

To argue for the performative qualities of the controversy about women that infuse the *Woman-Hater*, I draw from Judith Butler's analysis of constructions of gender identity, work that has evolved over decades but consistently remains in deep metonymical relationship with the theater and the stage. Whereas Butler's work extrapolates the performative aspects of identity, and my interest in this chapter is the performative aspects of rhetorical conventions, her conceptions of what it means for something to *be* performative are crucial to my argument. In an early essay, Butler contends that gender identity is "tenuously constituted in time . . . . through a *stylized repetition of acts*": "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts" because such acts use historical and cultural constraints to convey meaning through embodied gestures, speeches, and movements.[20] Much as an audience's perception of theater is governed by a contract of belief with the players on stage that renders these constituting moments "a compelling illusion, an object of *belief,*"[21] prevailing ideological norms concerning what it means to be masculine or feminine inform an individual's experience with expressions of gender identity, enabling those expressions to render the compelling allusion of a

[20] "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-31; for quotations see p. 519 and 521.

[21] Butler, "Performative Acts," 520.

stable self. The pamphlets of the Swetnam controversy attempt to fix identity via gender as solidly as possibly, suggesting there are essential features of men and women. The female-voiced respondents especially attempt to constitute a strict expression of their gendered identity by embracing certain conventions of femininity and abandoning others. In response, the play continually invokes the conventions of the pamphlets only to suggest that these conventions are not strictly assigned to men or women in the way the pamphlets maintain that they are.

Throughout this chapter, my use of the word "performative" channels Butler, who explains that something performative "suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning."[22] The actions of the characters in the *Woman-Hater*, especially their rendering of conventions about gender originating in the controversy about women, are contingent upon the audience's familiarity with those conventions, especially as they are most recently expressed in the Swetnam pamphlets. When the play combines these actions with acts of cross-dressing and cross-voicing, the audience creates meaning through a variety of temporary, embodied significations. Performativity, Butler notes, is citational,

[22] *Gender Trouble: The 10th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 177. Specifically relating to constructions of gender identity, Butler defines such identities as performative "in the sense that the essence or identity they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (173). I have chosen the broader definition cited above over this more nuanced one because my topic is not gender identity specifically but rhetoric and the conventions of the controversy more generally.

drawing its power through the "invocation of convention."[23] The characters in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* consistently engage in a citational relationship with the conventional contents of the pamphlets that precede the play. Namely, the characters in the play engage with typical understandings about the essential nature of women. In this way, the play demands attention to its concern with performativity.[24]

Swetnam The Woman-Hater **and the Co-Opting of Pamphlet Rhetoric**

In print in 1620, and performed at the Red Bull likely a year earlier, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, the anonymous play that concludes this moment in the English debate about women, offers a comical, provocative look at the consequences of misogyny, both for the authors of such pamphlets and for the society that embraces such views.[25] Based on a novelette by Juan de Flores, the *Woman-Hater* tells the main story of Atticus, King of Sicily, whose sons are lost to the ravages of war—one through death and the other through capture—and who must therefore reimagine the succession of his kingdom through the marriage

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[23] *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xxi, 171.

[24] My goal is not arbitrarily or anachronistically to impose on the play the theories of twentieth-century feminist scholars. Indeed, the play invites us to make comparisons that Butler's theories would not substantiate. In its use of the cross-dressing motif, the play suggests that the performativity of controversy rhetoric is analogous to cross-dressing: the position of the female apologist or even the misogynist can be "put on" or "put off" at will in the same way as clothes. Despite these differences, Butler's framework for understanding the contingency of phenomena often understood as innate or essential provides language for unlocking a key concern of this moment in the early English controversy about women.

[25] For an examination of the points of contact between the pamphlets and the play, see Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women*, 203-17.

of his daughter, Leonida.[26] Once her brothers' absences make Leonida heir to the throne, suitors clamor for her attention. King Atticus then sequesters her away under the watchful eye of Nicanor, a nobleman whom he trusts and values. Intent on securing the throne for himself, Nicanor plans to woo Leonida, who is herself madly in love with Lisandro, the Prince of Naples. When Nicanor catches Leonida and Lisandro in the midst of a clandestine meeting, the young lovers are arraigned in the Sicilian court in order to determine whether Leonida or Lisandro was the "first cause" of the transgression. Whoever is found guilty of the crime of *primus motor* will be sentenced to death, and the secondary party to banishment. Both lovers indict only themselves, leaving the judges unable to render a decision. Atticus then demands a larger debate, one that pits women in general against men in general, and representatives come forth for both sides.

In the second half of the play, the character of Joseph Swetnam, who has been seeking refuge in Sicily from English women angry over his misogynist pamphlet, has renamed himself Misogynos and takes the stand to attack women.[27] Meanwhile, the long lost son Lorenzo, who has made his way back to Sicily in disguise in order to discern the state of the kingdom, dons the clothing of a woman. Dubbing himself Atlanta, he takes the stand to attack men. After much

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[26] For a discussion of Flores's text (and its English version) as a source, see Crandall, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy,* 22. I use Crandall's edition for all citations from the play. For a discussion of the literary afterlife of the *Woman-Hater*, see Cis van Heertum, "A Plagiarist Plagiarized: Pray Be Not Angry; or, the Women's New Law (1656)," *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographic Society* 13.4 (1991): 347-50.

[27] For the purposes of clarity, I will refer to the play's character of Swetnam as "Misogynos" and will retain "Swetnam" to refer to the pamphlet author.

debate, Atlanta fails to prove men the principal cause of the erring ways of lovers, and her/his failure means certain death for Leonida and banishment for Lisandro. A dumb show depicts the sentences carried out against the lovers, and in a flash Misogynos feigns love for Atlanta. Atlanta sees this turn of events as an opportunity for revenge, and with the help of Queen Aurelia, Atlanta stages a meeting between herself and Misogynos. This meeting of false lovers quickly yields revenge when the women of Sicily descend upon Misogynos, tie him up, and pinch, prod, and verbally arraign him. Misogynos, successfully baited by women, promises repentance, and the play ends not only with the discovery of Leonida and Lisandro alive and well, but also with Lorenzo revealing his true identity, thus quelling the succession crisis at the heart of the play. Misogynos promises to be ever a defender of women, and King Atticus repents his overly harsh conception of justice.

Coryl Crandall demonstrates that the play, for all that it invites laughter at Misogynos especially, takes a moderate stance regarding the controversy by indicting both men and women.[28] Nicanor, after all, is scheming and power hungry, but it is Loretta's gossip as Leonida's maid that puts the lovers in jeopardy in the first place. The play openly condemns King Atticus's strict adherence to justice as he understands it, but the anonymous hoard of women who arraign Misogynos at the end fit nearly all the contemporary stereotypes of

[28] Crandall, *Swetnam the Women-Hater: The Controversy*, 3. Crandall suggests that the play actually makes an effort "to lessen the severity of the man-woman argument" (17) by depicting evil characters on both sides. Perhaps this balancing act was motivated by the commercial concerns of a theater production.

shrewish and scolding women. Linda Woodbridge also notes the difficulty in assigning a specific pro-woman position to the play: "one after the other, ancient stereotypes about women are introduced and then demolished. Sometimes a stereotype is shown to be untrue, or not consistently true. Sometimes it is robbed of all value by proof that it applies equally to men. And occasionally a stereotype about women holds true *only* for male characters."[29]

Crandall's and Woodbridge's examinations of the questionable acts of both male and female characters help us to understand the appeal of the play to a gender-diverse audience; they also curb the very real temptation to use only the concluding arraignment of Misogynos to identify the position of the play regarding the controversy. But the notion that the play is primarily interested in putting men and women on equal footing (as agents of good and of bad alike) is not, I contend here, wholly accurate. Rather, I argue that the play is overtly invested in identifying the performative aspects of the controversy itself, demonstrating that the conventions that uphold the controversy are free for performance by men and women alike, by those of high or low status. This overt interest enables metacommentary on the social benefit that arises from such a shift in understanding human nature. The play emphatically does *not* ask only or even primarily the question, "which sex is more virtuous?" but rather stages the opportunities arising from seeing gender identity as something that can be acted. In arguing for the performativity of gendered conventions, the play provides the means through which any individual can act the part of defender of womankind

[29] Woodbridge, *Women in the English Renaissance,* 307.

by removing the limitations on the apologist's voice created by the essentialist logic of the pamphlets. Furthermore, in conceiving of the apologist's position as a role to be played, the play posits a social construct in which men have no reason *not* to defend women (and society) against the misogynist. When the play imagines that men can voice defenses of women as easily as women can, it implicitly demands masculine participation in silencing masculine misogyny.

When Nicanor (acting on a tip from Loretta) catches Lisandro and Leonida violating King Atticus's orders barring any access to his daughter, the King explains that the laws of Sicily forbid punishing two people equally for the same crime. Instead, the law assumes that one person is the *primus motor*, the "prime mover" of the misdeed, and thus subject to more punishment (3.1.36-43). The two lovers are brought to the bar so that the judges may interrogate "which of [the] two begun th'occasion, / by any meanes, direct or indirect?" (3.1.52-3). Here, the play stages its first demonstration of the performative nature of qualities that the pamphlets understand as essentially gendered, with Leonida making arguments usually voiced by men and Lisandro making arguments usually marshaled in defense of women. Through this cross-voicing of conventions that are strictly gendered in the controversy, the play calls attention to Atticus's misconstrued justice and suggests that such errant justice arises directly from the essentialist logic that lurks behind the lovers' speeches. In addition, the lovers' cross-voicing initiates the play's expanded conception of the role of defender of women, as Leonida's voicing of misogynist sentiments de-naturalizes the notion that apologists should indeed *be* women.

Cross-Voicing Conventions and Stalling "Justice"

Commonplace assertions in the controversy regarding the seductiveness of courtiers and the wiles and artifice of lusty men inform Lisandro's attempts at portraying himself guilty and Leonida innocent. As he tries to take the blame for being *primus motor*, he demonstrates the ease with which he can co-opt the essentialized positions proffered by Swetnam and Sowernam in their pamphlets. As a man who should presumably be interested in maintaining his own reputation, Lisandro should *not* take up so easily the rhetoric offered by defenders of women, but he does just that. He claims, "'Twas I that first attempted, su'd, and prai'd, / Us'd all the subtile engine Art could invent, / Or Nature yeeld, to force affection" (3.1.59-61). In invoking "Art," Lisandro likely refers to the love manuals for courtiers offering advice on wooing, with "subtil engines" such as gifts, letters, and flattery.[30] Such wiles "force affection" because women are naturally inferior, incapable of acting "above [their] weakeness" (3.1.63) or withstanding the "continued siege" (3.1.65) of a determined lover. Lisandro lists the "continuall paines [he] tooke" to win over Leonida: "messages, intreaties, gifts, and prayers" (3.1.113-14). He even implies Leonida's innocence by describing her as the uninterested and unwilling object of his affection. He recalls his attempts to woo her as "hard and dangerous: / therefore more honorable in the conquest" (3.1.66-7). His point is clear. Men are the *primus motor* by virtue of their strength in the

[30] The most popular Renaissance *ars amatoria* tradition is Ovidian, and many translations of Ovid's work existed in England in both Latin and English; see M.L. Stapleton, ed., "Introduction," *Thomas Heywood's* Art of Love*: The First Complete English Translation of Ovid's* Ars Amatoria (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

face of women's weakness, their willingness to use both art and nature as tools of seduction, and their embrace of conventions that portray women as more desirable the more unattainable they are.

The commonplaces of Lisandro's argument in the play are most readily available in Sowernam's pamphlet defense of women, where Sowernam uses such conventions to prove women's virtue and explain women's vices. I examine Sowernam's pamphlet and its focus on the essential goodness of women in comparison to the flaws of men to demonstrate the way the play manipulates the pamphlet's conventions. Sowernam's promise that men were "the beginners" of women's offenses positions men as the force that moves women. Sowernam reinforces this point by telling her readers that she will readily listen to the derogations of men who have encountered evil women *without* having tempted them to be so: "so let them raile against a woman, who never tempted any woman to be bad" (A4^{v}). This, she continues, is "an hard case" (A4^{v}) because it is so unlikely to have happened. Rather, men regularly woo and pursue women, and in the process, pull the women they court down from their God-given heights of excellence.

Sowernam describes men's efforts to win women over, and her description clearly informs Lisandro's detailed account of his own actions. Sowernam rails against the devices men employ in their pursuit of women:

> What travaile? what charge? what studie? doe not men undertake to gaine our good-will, love, and liking? what vehement suits doe they make unto us? with what solemne vowes and protestations do they solicite us? they

> write, they speake, they send, to make knowne what entire affection they beare unto us, that they are so deepely engaged in love, except we doe compassion them with our love and favour, they are men utterly cast away. . . . What? will they say that we are baser then themselves? then they wrong themselves exceedingly, to prefer such vehement suits to creatures inferiour to themselves. Sutors doe ever in their suites confesse a more worthinesse in the persons to whom they sue. ($D3^{r}$ -$D3^{v}$)

Not only does this account of men's actions prove women's goodness—men would not so vehemently pursue that which was naturally so evil—but also it proves men are the *primus motor*. Men are drawn to women and will use any array of persuasions to tempt them, offering, as the Serpent did to Eve, "wine and banqueting," extolling a woman's beauty and claiming "what a paragon she is in their eyes," promising to keep her in noble arrays "as the best woman in the Parish or Country shall not have better" ($E1^{v}$).

Sowernam demonstrates her skepticism towards the idea of women as temptresses—skepticism repeated by Lisandro in the *Woman-hater*—through a series of rhetorical questions that point towards men as the aggressors: "how common a practise is it for men to seeke and solicite women to lewdnesse? what charge doe they spare? what travell doe they bestow? what vowes, oathes, and protestations doe they spend, to make them dishonest?" ($G3^{r}$). Her conviction regarding the essential natures of men and women is clear: women are naturally good, and men's actions call into question inherent masculine goodness. Sowernam's pamphlet articulates such a position for the express purpose of

defending women from misogyny, but Lisandro appropriates this stance, especially the skepticism of man's inherent goodness, in order to serve his own purpose of deflecting any punishment of Leonida. His appropriation is the play's first gesture towards unsettling the essentialist logic of the pamphlets, as he proves to be women's defender despite the pamphlets' attempts at painting men as either inherently better than women (according to Swetnam) or inherently flawed (according to some of the defenses).

Whereas Sowernam uses essentialist logic to argue on behalf of women and Lisandro voices Sowernam's conventions, Leonida voices Swetnam's misogynist logic in order to save Lisandro from death. Leonida fights Lisandro's conventional fire with an equally conventional flame: the fault was hers alone, due to her "alluring face, and tempting smiles, / that drew on [Lisandro's] affections" (3.1.76-7). Here, Leonida invokes an argument nearly as old as Eve in fashioning men as poor victims to temptresses. She grants that even *if* he may have instigated the affair, "the fault was [hers] / in yeelding to it" because "'tis a greater shame / for women to consent, then men to aske" (3.1.78-80).[31] Women's natural state is chastity, so Leonida's action in consenting to Lisandro constitutes a crime against nature while Lisandro's actions in pursuing her are merely natural. Furthermore, women are creatures of deceit, capable of conjuring up the plans and disguises necessary to conduct covert affairs, affairs that happen because women

[31] These lines echo Heywood's translation of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*: "The difference is, a Maide her love will cover, / Men are more impudent and publicke lovers: / Tis meet we men should aske the question still. / Should women do it, it would become them ill" (12); see *Loves schoole, Publii Ovidii Nasonis de arte amandi, or, The art of love* (London: 1625), STC (2nd ed.), 18935.5.

are aggressors who fall in love "unask'd, [and] unpraid" (3.1.103, 82). Lisandro never even spoke to her, she argues, before she "had ingag'd / [her] heart and love to him" (3.1.81-2). This last comment underscores Leonida's use of the stereotype of women as fickle and inconstant, remaking or turning their affections without so much as a word from the object of their desire. According to her, women are the aggressors in love, so it is only natural that Leonida is "the first, / the middle, and the end" of the crime committed (3.1.119-20). Leonida enacts the conventions of misogyny in Joseph Swetnam's pamphlet, but the play clearly contextualizes her enactment *as* performance aimed at exonerating Lisandro.

Notions of women as teases and temptresses heavily inform Swetnam's pamphlet attack against women, which offers the most immediate literary context and source for Leonida's performance of female depravity. In Swetnam's *Araignment*, women are "lascivious and crafty, whorish, thievish, and knavish" (*Araignment* A4^{v}). Women, he claims, are synonymous with deception: "their faces are lures, their beauties are baytes, their looks are netts, and their words charmed, and al to bring men to ruine" (B2^{v}). Men cannot trust the external charms and beauties of a woman because her exterior appearance does not always (or ever) correlate to her interior character. Rather, women are "compared unto a painted ship, which seemeth faire outwardly, and yet nothing but ballace within" (B2^{r}); they are "as the Idolls in *Spaine*, which are bravely gilt outwardly, and yet nothing but lead within them" (B2^{r}). Swetnam even analogizes women to nature to prove the validity of his claims:

> Although women are beautifull, shewing pitty, yet their hearts are blacke, swelling with mischiefe, not much unlike unto old trees, whose outward leaves are faire and greene, and yet the body rotten[.] (31)

Throughout his pamphlet, he remains convinced that women exist as foils to men's happiness and virtue, being "dissembling in their deeds, and in all their actions subtill and dangerous for men" ($B2^{v}$).

When Leonida argues that women really *are* the beginning, middle, and end of men's depravation, she enacts logic from Swetnam's pamphlet, logic that demands the essential two-facedness of women. But in enacting this "womanly deception" in order to save Lisandro, she collapses the essentialist logic behind claims of women's two-facedness. Leonida's arraignment of herself in defense of Lisandro comes from the same wellspring of commonplaces as Swetnam's *Araignment*, but it is not, I argue, merely a shared store of commonplaces that unites these texts. Rather, the *Woman-Hater* actively dramatizes the strategies and contents of the pamphlets, rendering these conventions not as essential qualities belonging to one gender but rather performable, theatrical qualities available to men and women alike. When both Lisandro and Leonida voice conventions from the pamphlets, but in ways that depart from the pamphlets' intended contexts, the two lovers in the *Woman-Hater* dislodge these conventions from their essentialized underpinnings.

In a startling display of their love for one another, Lisandro and Leonida each impugn only himself or herself, actively arguing the innocence of the other. Their actions to this end as they engage the question of who exactly *is* the *primus*

motor dramatize a major component of the pamphlet exchange generally, and especially the exchange between Swetnam and Sowernam. Whereas Swetnam's pamphlet declares women as evil from the start—and thus unquestionably the *primus motor* in men's downfall—Sowernam consistently argues in her pamphlet that women are only as evil as men have made them, pointing the finger squarely at men.

The defense of women as it unfolds in both the play and the pamphlets all use essentialist logic, framing men and women as creatures whose natures are easily understood because their foundational characteristics are so innate. In the play, however, the way that the lovers cross-voice the conventions that arise from such logic makes it impossible for the judges to reach a verdict. When the judges fail to discern whether Lisandro's or Leonida's arguments are most compelling, this scene dramatizes the impotence of arguments made on the premises of essentialist logic. Even more important, when the performance of commonplaces from the controversy ultimately manages to temporarily stall the harsh justice of Atticus's court, this scene proves the social utility of understanding the controversy through performative—rather than essential—qualities of gender. The very aspects of the controversy that are traditionally used against women become, in this scene, temporarily beneficial. The unmooring of the apologist's voice from the essentialist logic of the pamphlets is what saves the lovers from immediate death and banishment.

The rhetorical tactics underlying the positions taken by Swetnam, Sowernam, Lisandro, and Leonida are bound up in the premise that women—and

men—possess essential natures. The essentialist rhetoric of the controversy, demonstrated through the pamphlets' use of gendered conventions, underwrites the faulty "justice" of King Atticus's court, as it assumes there *must be* a *primus motor*, thus leaving room only for arguments that operate within that assumption. The arguments of the pamphlets, aiming to make the most persuasive case for the natural traits of men and women, exemplify ideas ripe for the framework of such a court. The play actively cross-voices these arguments, however, in a way that calls into question the original presumptive framework of *primus motor* and the essentialist positions that this framework encourages. Once arguments about either gender become commonplace, they are as available for the Sowernams of the world in pursuit of justice for women as they are for the Lisandros of the world in pursuit of protecting true love. As the lovers in the *Woman-Hater* make their cases, the judges demonstrate the uncertain position such generalizations create, interjecting "This knot is intricate" (*Woman-Hater* 3.1.87), and calling this case "harder still" (3.1.99). If the conventions propounded in the pamphlets *were* essential qualities assigned to one gender over another, the judges' decision would not be so difficult to resolve.

When Atticus asks whether the judges have reached a verdict, one of them explains, "we are as far to seeke, / in the true knowledge of the prime Offender, / as at the first" (3.1.124-26). The arguments, this judge claims, have offered such little *meaningful* information that it is as if they had not heard them at all. I argue that much of the difficulty in making meaning comes from cross-voicing in the courtroom the positions from the pamphlets: conventions presuppose that men do

not use arguments such as Sowernam's to condemn themselves (as Lisandro does), and women do not sound like Swetnam the misogynist (as Leonida does). Although the pamphlet writers can take absolute positions against the other sex and, in the process, idealize their own, the cross-voicing of this phenomenon in the *Woman-Hater* functions in an entirely different way: it momentarily stalls the faulty justice that jeopardizes the two lovers. In transforming the conventions of the pamphlets from essential truths to performative spectacle and using that spectacle to delay the court's harsh punishments, the *Woman-Hater* shows how the contents of the controversy can become key discursive tools for social order. When identity is performable rather than essential, any individual can enact the roles necessary for restoring justice. In light of their incapacity to decide the case, the judges recommend a public "disputation" between "two advocates"—one for women and one for men—in hopes that such a display will confer information that can lead to a judgment against one party. In this public disputation, the positions and the contents of the pamphlet writers are again dramatized through cross-voicing and, this time, cross-dressing.

Cross-Dressing: Atlanta vs. Misogynos

Atlanta, a.k.a. Lorenzo, already dislikes Misogynos when she agrees to match wits with him in the public disputation—the two meet early on in the play, when Atlanta hears Misogynos discourse about the wicked ways of women (3.2.22ff). The significance of cross-dressing to the play's interest in performativity comes to the fore in this latter episode. Here, the issue of *primus motor* is still in dispute; to this end Atlanta promises to prove men, "not women,

are the cause of woe" (3.3.143). The judges are sworn "justly and truly to waigh and balance the Reasons and Arguments of the deputed Advocates, and thereupon to determine and proceed in judgement" (3.3.36-8). Despite the core issues remaining the same, with the fates of Leonida and Lisandro suspended, the play signals subtly but crucially that this debate will *not* be like the trial between the lovers. As the advocates indicate their readiness to begin, they are introduced as "*Misogynos* for the men" (3.3.44) and "*Atlanta*, for poor innocent women" (3.3.43). Here, the play announces that this debate will be forged in the softer metal of a conventionally sympathetic appeal, where women, as weaker vessels, cannot thus also be the *primus motor*. The play signals its interest in performativity over essentialist logic when it simultaneously introduces Atlanta, the warrior, and refers to women as "poor" and "innocent." The contradiction between these two ideas becomes the contradiction through which the play reveals that the conventions of the pamphlets are as performable as theater itself.

Atlanta's insistence upon the inferiority of women is problematic, given her physical appearance as an Amazon; and while the audience may find it laughable or disturbing, the discord between Atlanta's physical presence and her rhetoric stands out in this scene. She describes her chance to address the judges as "an honor farre beyond [her] weakness" (3.3.45), marveling that, though she is "but a woman," she is allowed to speak before these men, "grave and wise, / that can at every breathing pause, correct / the slipp'ry passages of a womans speech" (3.3.49-51). Her madness has method in it, however, for she rhetorically corners the judges into stating they will not use her status as "a silly woman" as an excuse

to find "small defects" in her speech (3.3.57). Performing a stereotypically gendered role, she immediately draws out the potential prejudices of the judges, and thus makes it harder for them to enact such prejudices; initially, the judges (and presumably the audience), are impressed with such a move: "A promising *Exordium*," one judge claims (3.3.65).

After this encouragement, Atlanta continues her decision to portray women as essentially subordinate to men when she compares women to wax. She claims that Misogynos

> Doth charge
> The supple wax, the courteous-natur'd woman,
> As blamefull for receiving the impression
> Of Iron-hearted man, in whom is graven,
> With curious and deceiving Art, foule shapes
> And stamps of much abhord impietie. (3.3.67-74)

Here, Atlanta offers an equally essentialist alternative to the defense pamphlets' assertions of female superiority, claiming that women are so weak they become what men make them. Just as wax accepts whatever impression is forced upon it, so women's nature is subject to the impressions of the "curious and deceiving Art" of men. Men cannot blame women for bearing the stamp men have given them.

Misogynos and Atlanta take turns rehearsing gendered conventions from the controversy about women. Misogynos promises to prove that women "in all their passions . . . Are impetuous, / and beyond men, ten times more violent" (3.3.92-

93). Atlanta responds with a declaration of men's wily devices used to seduce women:

> Witnesse the vows, the oaths, the protestations,
> And Crocadile teares of base dissembling men,
> To winne their shameless purpose: Whereof missing,
> Then but observe their Gifts, their Messages,
> Their wanton Letters, and their amorous Sonnets,
> Whereby they vent the smoke of their affections,
> Readie to blind poor women, and put out
> The Eye of Reason. (3.3.102-9).

In their attempts to win the object of their affection, Atlanta avers, men are shameless and tireless. Misogynos counters by citing the painted, dissembling nature of women, using a pithy analogy to the London marketplace: "There's not / a Citie Tradesman . . . / . . . / But knowes full well the garish setting out / of Beautie in their shops will call in Customers" (3.3.153-7). He summarizes: "beautie set forth to sale, / wantons the bloud, and is mans tempting Stale" (3.3.158-9). As a "tempting stale"—a bait or trap—women are dangerous but incapable of being ignored.[32]

Misogynos uses logic now familiar from both earlier moments in the play and the controversy pamphlets condemning women. Women do what they do in order to create opportunities to entice men. Misogynos describes how mothers teach their daughters to "adde a lustre / to the defects of Nature" through

[32] *Oxford English Dictonary Online,* s.v. "stale, n.3."

"Painting, Curling, Powdring" (3.3.174-5, 176), all "for men to gaze at on a Midsummer Night" (3.3.179). Thus, Misogynos concludes, women are the first movers, and their moves are all deception. For this reason, women are guilty of depravities far greater than misleading male suitors: "what Tyrannies, Oppressions, Massacres, / women stand guilty of" (3.3.202-3). Here, Misogynos's argument rests on the idea that women are *not* the weak wax Atlanta claims but are in fact dangerously powerful; in other words, Misogynos, the Swetnam of the play, sounds much like Joseph Swetnam, pamphlet author, in his recourse to narratives of women's inherent nature.

Misogynos aptly makes use of the counter-narrative to the weak-woman story Atlanta is trying to tell. In his insistence upon women's strength in deception and their victimizing of men, Misogynos points subtly towards the Amazon. I contend that Atlanta's presence on the stage—her cross-dressed body known to the audience but *not* to the judges—enables the persuasiveness of his argument and highlights the play's interest in performativity. Indeed, as soon as Misogynos claims women guilty of world-wide disaster (cities sacked, "kingdoms subverted, lands depopulated, / monarchies ended!" [204-6]), Atlanta responds with actions that demonstrate not the supple, yielding wax she claims defines her essence, but rather the aggressive and violent characteristics suggested by her outer appearance as an Amazon. She counters back with force, demanding that Misogynos "bite out [his] slandrous tongue" (3.3.207). Her outburst is so aggressive that she must, a few lines later, apologize that she has "forgot [her] self" (3.3.216). The argument becomes heated, and when Misogynos offers a

lengthy example of women's sexual strength and appetite, the women of the courtroom call for a physical silencing of their detractor, demanding the court "stop [his] mouth" and expressing their desire to "teare him in pieces" (3.3.248-9). Here, the women enact the physical strength and irreverence toward men that is the hallmark of the Amazonian race to which Atlanta belongs.

The visual presence of Atlanta combines with both Misogynos's claims of (dangerous) female strength and with the women's aggressive cries against him to strengthen the viability of Misogynos's position. In turn, this combination explains why the judges almost immediately thereafter conclude "that women are the first and worst temptations / to love and lustful folly" (3.3.260-1). The audience may understand that Lorenzo's cross-dressing complicates Misogynos's claims for women's duplicitous strength; but the judges see an Amazon, *not* a man dressed as an Amazon. In the voice of such an Amazon, and in light of her forceful lashing out at Misogynos, Atlanta's argument for female inferiority and inherent weakness simply cannot stand. Through the combination of cross-dressing and cross-voicing, the validity of the essentialist project that Atlanta spouts crumbles, revealing the theatrical nature of the conventions that the pamphlets endeavor to essentialize.

Contemporary Cross-Dressing: The *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* Context

The combination of Atlanta's appearance *and* performance as an Amazon creates meaning for the judges that ultimately confirms Misogynos's arguments; for the audience, Atlanta's cross-dressed body also signals the transformative and performative potential of gendered conventions for behavior, because Atlanta is

always on the verge of either confirming her disguise or revealing her trickery. Sara Gorman theorizes the attraction of such a liminal character for Renaissance audiences:

> [T]he cross-dressed figure was an object of visual fascination for Elizabethan audiences in precisely the way youthful and virginal figures were. A figure inevitably caught in between two categories, the cross-dresser is in a state of constant transformation. This transformative nature lent itself easily (and delightfully) to performance. The cross-dresser on stage becomes a spectacle due to the open possibility of transformation in either direction by maintaining an in-between doubleness, a state of being that could potentially (but not yet) resolve into masculine or feminine.[33]

Atlanta's recourse to the conventions of female behavior familiarized by the controversy about women is performative *because* Atlanta is actually a man; thus, the *Woman-Hater* sidesteps the issue of whether female aggression is natural in favor of privileging the spectacle of *acting* like a woman. Leonida and Lisandro's previous actions serve to reinforce the notion that such conventions need not be thought of as naturally gendered traits but rather considered opportunities for dramatic rendering. Indeed, when the judges do not bother to confirm whether their disputants are actually members of the sex they are defending, the play continues to emphasize theater over nature.

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[33] Sara Gorman, "The Theatricality of Transformation: cross-dressing, sexual misdemeanour and gender/sexuality spectra on the Elizabethan stage, Bridewell Hospital Court Records, and the Repertories of the Court of the Aldermen, 1574-1607," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 13.3 (2008): para. 8.

The cross-dressed apologist does not appear in the source texts for the anonymous play (the source text features an actual woman defender), so Atlanta's appearance demands explanation.[34] As one scholar notes, there is no good explanation for why "the anonymous playwright turned the character of Hortensia, the female defender of women found in the play's prose source text, into an [A]mazonian disguise for the returning prince."[35] I contend that the author(s) of the play imagined this figure as an opportunity to capitalize on the exceedingly popular topic of cross-dressing, a topic given extensive attention in the pamphlets *Hic Mulier, Haec Vir,* and *Muld Sacke: An Apologie for Hic Mulier.*[36] The play's reference to a popular contemporary debate enables reading the *Woman-Hater*'s episodes of cross-voicing and cross-dressing as moments highlighting the performative nature of controversy rhetoric. Contemporary concerns about cross-dressing reflected anxieties about the permeability and artificiality of boundaries generally taken to be naturalized, and the play's manipulation of dress and voice stands in contrast to the essentializing efforts of the pamphlets. The issue of cross-dressing looms large in the England of James I,

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[34] Crandall discusses the source of the play in her edition; see pp. 22-26; see also note 52, above.

[35] Chantelle Thauvette, "Masculinity and Turkish Captivity in *Swetnam, the Woman-Hater*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 52.2 (2012): 426.

[36] All three pamphlets, *Hic Mulier, Haec Vir,* and *Muld Sack*, were published in London in 1620. Henderson and McManus summarize, "*Hic Mulier* violently attacks the masculine style of dress [of a haec vir] as unnatural and blasphemous, an outward sign of women's attempt to usurp masculine aggressiveness, authority, and sexual freedom; *Haec Vir* counterattacks with the figure of the effeminate fop . . . *Muld Sack* . . . capitalizes on the controversy and . . . is more of a general treatise on vice"; see *Half Humankind,* 18.

seen in the religious and political prohibitions of the act.[37] As Jean E. Howard explains in her foundational essay on the subject, "cross-dressing . . . threatened a normative social order based upon strict principles of hierarchy and subordination, of which women's subordination to man was a chief instance."[38] The *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* pamphlets, indicting mannish-women and effeminate men, are particularly concerned with the way violations of sumptuary traditions and regulations enabled women to encroach on the privileges of both the aristocracy and of men. Howard explains that "dress, as a highly regulated semiotic system, became a primary site where a struggle over the mutability of the social order was conducted" (422), and in cross-dressing, the differences between classes and "sexual 'kinds'' (422) break down.[39]

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[37] The list of those preaching and writing against cross-dressing is extensive, including John Calvin, Philip Stubbes, Arthur Golding, Richard Brathwaite, John Williams, William Harrison, and William Parkes; see Valerie R. Lucas, "*Hic Mulier*: The Female Transvestite in Early Modern England," *Renaissance and Reformation* 24.1 (1988): 65-84.

[38] Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.4 (1998): 418.

[39] While some of the main tenets of Howard's essay have since been questioned by other scholars, such as the extent to which cross-dressing actually occurred and the degree to which it provoked or reflected social anxiety, this crucial point remains, I believe, credible: the chaos caused by men and women cross-dressing is not, socially, the same chaos. As Howard puts it, "disruptions of the semiotics of dress by men and by women were not, however, read in the same way" (423). For a historian's take on the phenomenon of cross-dressing, see David Cressy's reply to Howard, "Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 35.4 (1996): 438-65. Cressy disputes the fact that the historical and/or literary records demonstrate a "sex-gender system in crisis" (464) as indicated by cross-dressing. Rachel Warburton maintains Howard's position that cross-dressing "threatens sexed social distinctions" (153) in "Travestied Hermeneutics: Social and Semiotic Instability in *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*," *Social Semiotics* 16.1 (2006): 151-72. Anna Bayman forges a middle

To the audience, aware of the cross-dressing, Atlanta is a man dressing up as a woman; thus, Atlanta's invocation of controversy conventions cannot be understood as expressive of traits that are essentially gendered. Rather, such invocations must be read as performative. Spectators watching the play see Atlanta as *haec vir*; to the characters in the play, Atlanta, as an Amazon, represents the mannish-woman that cross-dressing women strived to emulate because, while biologically female, Atlanta represents a masculinized race of women. Mannish women, "roaring girls" as they came to be known throughout the seventeenth century, were often read as sexually forward, given the "strong discursive linkages throughout the period between female cross[-]dressing and the threat of female sexual incontinence."[40] As women-as-men, these cross-dressers became their own masters who "violated the socio-sexual hierarchy by introducing into daily life the female unruliness and pugnacity allowed only at carnival and other occasions of licensed misrule."[41] This mannishness, particularly in the form of the Amazon, had its benefits: "while Amazons were

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path, suggesting that the cross-dressing pamphlets "simultaneously voice and mock moral outrage" (65) in "Cross-dressing and Pamphleteering in Early Seventeenth-Century London," *Moral Panics, the Media, and the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. David Lemmings and Claire Walker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 63-77. In *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Marjorie Garber attends to the cross-dressed person as a critical "third" figure that make binary categories usefully vulnerable.

[40] Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle," 420. Sandra Clark explains that *Hic Mulier* is overtly concerned with the way that women dressing as men reveal insidious social decay; see "*Hic Mulier*, *Haec Vir*, and the Controversy over Masculine Women," *Studies in Philology* 82.2 (1985): 157-83.

[41] Lucas, "*Hic Mulier*: The Female Transvestite in Early Modern England," 68.

conceived of as female, they were imagined as excelling in 'virtue' in the etymological sense of 'manliness.'"[42] To play an Amazon "means to perform masculinity while at the same time perversely remaining recognizable to others as a woman."[43]

When the judges render a verdict against Atlanta and for Misogynos, then, the play participates in the uneasy moral legislation of the ambiguously gendered individual: the audience can read it as a sentence in part cast down on the cross-dressing transgressor; but given Lorenzo's quasi-hero status in the play, any condemnation is only partial and temporary. The point is that, to the judges, Atlanta's performance is *not* performative: as an Amazon, her outbursts are "natural" and all-too-readily support arguments against women. Only the audience can identify the error of the judges' conclusion; the recognition of this error can occur because the audience is keyed in to the fact that Atlanta's espousal of conventions is not the result of innate features but the result of theatrical performance. In this scene, the cross-dressed body of Atlanta mirrors the cross-voiced rhetoric occurring in both Lisandro and Leonida's trial and the debate between Misogynos and Atlanta. By invoking the contemporary topic of cross-dressing, a topic acutely bounded by concerns over actions that are performative, the play invites readers to see that the rhetoric of Atlanta and Misogynos—rhetoric established in pamphlets such as those by Swetnam and Sowernam—is as

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[42] Winfried Schleiner, "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 19.4 (1988): 618.

[43] Thauvette, "Masculinity and Turkish Captivity in *Swetnam, the Woman-Hater*," 435.

easily habitable as the dress of an Amazon. Thus, there is no natural defender of womankind but only men and women who are willing to take on the role of apologist. While the essentialist framework of Atticus's court disables the efficacy of the apologists Lisandro and Atlanta, their efforts at defending women nonetheless demonstrate the performativity of the role.

Silencing the Misogynist by Performing Conventions

Whereas the first half of the *Woman-Hater* dramatizes how the persuasive methods of the controversy may be co-opted at will, the portion of the play following the judges' verdict is keenly preoccupied with the idea of revenge: Misogynos wants revenge on Atlanta for her stout defiance of him in the debate. Atlanta and Aurelia especially want revenge on Misogynos for his success in condemning women, success that leads to the banishment of Lisandro and the death of Leonida (the play depicts both events through a dumb show). As the play shifts its attention towards revenge, it demonstrates even more clearly that the conventions of the controversy, when understood and used as performative, are key tools is restoring social order. Most of the characters, save Nicanor and his followers, also desire the King's repentance for his blind devotion to a questionable sense of justice. This portion of the play, then, dramatizes not only how the language of the controversy can merely be "put on" as if it were fashionable clothing, but also how the conventions inherent in the controversy can be embraced as means to socially productive ends. The killing of Leonida and the exile of Lisandro are such affronts to the sensibilities of the characters of the play that the King who allowed these affronts must admit and repent his callous

justice. The play rectifies these social ills of both Misogynos and Atticus through the putting on—and off—of the stereotypes so popular in the controversy about women. In doing so, the play ultimately suggests not a dismissal of the contents of the controversy but rather a cold and calculated embrace of them.

The play's interest in performativity reaches a climax when, under the ruse of love, Atlanta and Misogynos agree to meet in an arbor, each intent on tricking the other. The two "lovers" briefly and coyly interact before Misogynos promises that he will use his fencing skills to defend any knave who might cross Atlanta. When Misogynos asserts that he would prove the extent of his skills if only "some were here to make experience" (*Woman-Hater* 5.2.105), Atlanta seizes the opportunity to shatter the illusion of their courtship by aggressively striking him. She hits him multiple times, berating him for the audacity of showing love to any woman, but especially her, a woman who is "vow'd [his] publique enemie" (5.2.111); he immediately abandons any pretense of love as the two engage in a fencing match. After Misogynos quickly loses the match (his poor fencing skills are a joke throughout the play), a hoard of women surround, entrap, and subdue him. Through his ensuing submission, the play insists that *all* conventions of the controversy—not merely those idealized conventions that make men or women out as excellent—are performative.

The hoard's entrapment of Misogynos signals the play's movement towards finally arraigning him and ameliorating the damages done by his presence in the kingdom. The arraignment scene in the *Woman-Hater* is most directly inspired by the arraignment of Joseph Swetnam that concludes Ester Sowernam's pamphlet.

In her work, authoritative feminine voices preside over the arraignment, taking their authority from the essential excellence that Sowernam has argued is inherent in women. These voices give way in the *Woman-Hater* to a collective performance of conventions about women. But rather than act out conventions of women's virtue and excellence (as the women in Sowernam's pamphlet do), the women in the play act out conventions of women's shrewish, vengeful, and unruly natures. Crucially, though, the collective force behind this performance achieves a temporary silencing and restraining of the Misogynist, in large part because this moment stages the performative voice of the apologists in a context not arbitrated, as Sowernam's pamphlet is, by essential logic. Comparing the final arraignment of Misogynos in the play to the one presented by Sowernam in the pamphlet clearly demonstrates the play's interest in performativity. Specifically, the *Woman-hater* reveals that performing the conventions of the controversy can be socially restorative because it provides additional and important means for countering the damaging logic of essentialized rhetoric.

Ester Sowernam's essentialist project comes to full fruition in her pamphlet's closing arraignment of Swetnam. In this final moment, Sowernam becomes a character in her own pamphlet and presides over a legal trial in which Joseph Swetnam is arraigned for his crimes against women. Here, a courtroom full of women enacts the Godly and virtuous roles that the earlier portions of the pamphlet argue are inherent in their nature. Sowernam and her female readers arraign Swetnam in front of two feminized judges, "Reason and Experience," so that "no man can suspect them with any indirect proceedings" (*Ester Hath*

Hanged Haman E2^{v}). Reason, combined with Experience, will assure each man his just desserts. The twelve-person jury is composed of Swetnam's five senses—his "nearest inward familiar friends"—and the seven deadly sins; Conscience witnesses against him (E2^{v}-E3^{r}). The court indicts Swetnam for pretending to "arraigne lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women" while in actuality he "diddest rashly and malitiously rail and rage against all women" (E3^{r}). The charges against him include citing women as made of crooked material and being evil from the very beginning, in "the line of their first leader" (E3^{v}), as well as blaming women for being temptresses who "allure men to lewdnesse" (E3^{v}). When Swetnam pleads not guilty, he recedes into silence for fear that a trial under the given circumstances would be too dangerous a risk. Members of the courtroom—"most of them of the foeminine gender" (E4^{r})—grant him additional time to decide whether he might plead guilty or proceed with a trial. The members of Sowernam's courtroom each reflect the essential qualities she assigns to men and women throughout the earlier portion of her pamphlet: the female judges Reason and Experience are excellent in nature; Swetnam's five senses are presumably as corrupt as he is. The seven deadly sins are fit to judge the extent of Swetnam's crimes because of their familiarity with him.

In the time the pamphlet grants to Swetnam's personal deliberation, Sowernam's character in the pamphlet delivers a speech to the court in which she offers "the answere to all objections which are materiall, made against Women" (E4^{r}). Sowernam's speech in the defense pamphlet is nothing if not an argument

for men as *primus motor*, demonstrating her sustained attention to the issue of essential nature:

> Woman at the first might easily learne mischeife, where or how should she learne goodnes? her first Schoole-master was aboundant in mischiefe, and her first husband did exceede in bad examples. First, by his example he taught her how to flye from God: next how to excuse her sinne: then how to cample [quarrel] and contest with God, and to say as Adam did, thou art the cause, for, the woman whom thou gavest me, was the cause I did eate. What Adam did at the first, bad husbands practise with their wives ever sithence, I meane in bad examples. ($F1^{v}$-$F2^{r}$)

Just as Eve learned her first lessons from Adam, present women learn their lessons mainly from the men who court them and marry them, so that any man need only point the finger back at those of his own sex should he find himself the victim of a dishonest, forward, or inconstant woman. Against claims that men are lured by women's looks and seductive actions, Sowernam rebuts, "Doe not say and rayle at women to be the cause of mens overthrow, when the originall roote and cause is in your selves. If you bee so affected that you cannot looke but you must forthwith be infected" ($F4^{r}$). Her speech to the courtroom acts as a final closing argument to a trial that we never see, and Swetnam never speaks again in the pamphlet, nor do the jury or judges declare any official decision in the arraignment. Official justice is supplanted by essentialized rhetoric, painting women as virtuous creatures from God who are only as corrupt as men make them. In Sowernam's pamphlet, Joseph Swetnam does not receive the last word,

but neither is he punished or brought to justice. The character of Sowernam and her naturally excellent female entourage succeed in subduing Joseph Swetnam's desire to speak. This is the extent of the "justice" afforded by the pamphlet.

The *Woman-Hater* play transforms this scene in the pamphlet from one enacting the essentialist conventions of defenders of women to a scene steeped in the restorative—even if violent—potential of performativity. The voice of the defender of women, the play argues, need not be the excellent voices of Sowernam's pamphlet. Rather, as the hoard descends on Misogynos in the unauthorized (and thus freer) space of the arbor, women of many ranks and dispositions seize the opportunity to take part in his public shaming, yelling at him, pinching him, and tying him to a post. In this moment, the play acts out a reversal of early modern punishments of scolds. Misogynos is a scold and the women are agents of civil order, whose shaming of the male scold is part of a restoration of the order lost at the hands of both Misogynos and King Atticus.[44] Still, the scene is not quite this simple: the shaming ritual depends entirely upon women acting in accordance with the negative descriptions of them that fill much of the attack texts of the controversy. Here, to act as a defender of women means to act against Misogynos, a gesture that authorizes in turn a host of aggressive, violent, and uncivil actions. In other words, this scene depicts women, acting as

[44] For discussions of scold- and shrew-taming rituals, see David Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116-36; and Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, ed. Dana E. Aspinall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 130-67.

scolds, punishing a man as a scold. Rather than try Misogynos at the hands of virtuous, idealized women as Sowernam does to Swetnam in the pamphlet, the play imagines unofficial justice enacted by women who are, in this moment, anything but virtuous or idealized. Unlike the play's previous episodes of the lovers' trial and the public debate, both staged within the court, this scene is free from any of the governing assumptions of essentialism. In this freedom, the power of the performative finally subdues the misogynist.

Queen Aurelia and Atlanta lead the charge against Misogynos, and their descent into unruliness in this scene is especially performative given that they have remained, like Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, the voices of reason throughout the previous scenes. The Queen demands that Misogynos be bound, and Loretta—the maid who earlier revealed Lisandro and Leonida's covert meeting—demands further physical silencing: "Skrew his jawes" (*Woman-Hater* 5.2.155). Through their parallel demands for physical punishment of the offender, the divide between Queen and handmaid narrows, and soon the entire group of women literally sounds the same. Aurelia asks, "what punishment / shall we invent sufficient to inflict, / according to the height of our revenge?" (5.2.156-8); and the mob responds, "let's teare his limmes in pieces, joynt from joynt" (5.2.159). Another woman demands "three or foure paire of Pincers, now red hot," (5.2. 161); Loretta suggests using their bodkins, and Aurelia commands, "pinch him, pricke him" (5.2.164).

As the women's distinct social positions gradually give way to a collective voice, the voice of the apologist finds expression not in the virtuous (or at least

admirable) figure of Atlanta or in the honorable love of Lisandro but in the collective representation of woman as scold. Atlanta describes the arraignment of Misogynos in this way as "womans counsell" (5.2.218). Each woman has a part to play—Aurelia as "Ladie Chiefe Justice of this Female Court," Atlanta as "Mistris Recorder," Loretta as notary, the scold as the crier, and "the rest shall bear inferior Offices, / as Keepers, Servants, Executioners" (5.2.221-25). Here, the women eagerly embrace the shrewish roles that the essentialist logic of misogynist pamphlets assigns them as they act rashly, violently, and with a desire to make Misogynos miserable. But aside from Loretta's earlier inability to keep secret the meeting between Lisandro and Leonida, none of the women have demonstrated that such actions are indicative of their *nature*; thus the play encourages us to read this scene as performative rather than revelatory. We are not, I argue, seeing the women's "true natures" revealed but rather witnessing their performance of a useful convention, a performance necessitated by the disruptive nature of Misogynos's essentialist rhetoric.

While this sense of justice, then, is not official—women after all, arraign Misogynos in an arbor without standing for such legal proceedings—it is the *only* moment in the play that leads to his temporary silencing.[45] Neither the figures involved—all women—nor the physical setting of the arraignment—in the woods—suggest that the judgments of the scene carry the weight of civic

[45] For a detailed analysis of this scene that considers the "justice" offered, see Ann Rosalind Jones, "Revenge Comedy: Writing, Law, and the Punishing Heroine in *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Swetnam The Woman-Hater*," *Shakespearean Power and Punishment*, ed. Gillian Murray Kendall (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), 23-38.

proclamation. Yet the events of the scene transform the verbose Misogynos into a stammering fool. Throughout the scene, Misogynos can barely manage "oh, oh, oh, oh" in response to the women's calls for violence towards him, and his denials of the charges against him are equally brief, even though he attempts to fight back verbally. Atlanta decrees that he will be muzzled, "led, and publike shown, / in every Street I'the Citie," (5.2.328-33), bound to a post or stake, and "bayted by all the honest women of the parish." Additionally, his books are to be burned and news of his current arraignment publicized, all in an attempt to discredit and humiliate him. In place of the official and authorized trial of Lisandro and Leonida and the debate between Atlanta and Misogynos, this scene offers an unofficial and unauthorized attempt at justice.

Victory over Misogynos occurs in this scene because the performance of conventions enables the women to act as a unified, cohesive force against the damaging voice of their opponent. The audience sees Atlanta and Aurelia slip easily into the roles of scolds. This slippage is disquieting but also provocative because it demonstrates that the role of "scold" is as performable—as artificial—as that of the virtuous apologist. Aurelia, a woman, and Atlanta/Lisandro, a man, are so familiar with the conventions of the scold—conventions detailed in attack pamphlets such as Joseph Swetnam's—that they can enact them when it most suits their purposes, whether or not they are *actually* scolds or even women. When this enactment in turn nearly silences the misogynist, it is clear that the play refuses entirely to condemn such performances. Any willing participant can

effectively harness the voice of the apologist, in even its most unruly and dishonorable iteration.

The Play's The Thing

Sowernam's pamphlet ends after the silencing of Joseph Swetnam, but the play does not end after the silencing of Misogynos. In this way, the *Woman-Hater* suggests that additional restoration is needed to repair the damage done to the kingdom by Misogynos and Atticus. With Misogynos temporarily silenced and his books burned, the first steps toward restoring social order have been taken. The next step is to make King Atticus confront his own erroneous justice so that he might repent, and thus reform. Once more the play presents performativity as an effective avenue for social change. A dumb show composed of figures representing abstract concepts coaxes Atticus towards repentance and reformation. First, "willful Ignorance" (5.4.59) leads a dance, accompanied by "false Suspition" (5.4.63), "Detraction" (5.4.65)," and "Crueltie, a King that long, / In seeming good, did sacred Justice wrong" (5.4.66-7). While pleas and protests from his wife and others earlier in the play had fallen on deaf ears, the King immediately understands the meaning of this performance and submits to its indictment of his harsh justice:

> This Moral's meant by me: by heaven it is,
> By heaven, indeed: for nothing else had power
> To make me see my Follies. I confess,
> 'Twas wilfull Ignorance, and Selfe-conceit,
> Sooth'd with Hypocrisie, that drew me first

Into suspition of my Daughters love,

And call'd it Disobedience: false Suspect,

'Twas thou possest me, that *Leonida*

Was spotted and unchaste. (5.3.68-76)

King Atticus's immediate conversion from proud and unfeeling to humbly remorseful underscores in a new context what the play has continually staged in the moments explicitly concerned with the controversy about women: performativity, art, and artifice are powerful tools of social criticism, capable of pointing out hypocrisies, inconsistencies in logic and emotion, and even outright maliciousness. Theater itself, the play demonstrates, can act as the voice of the feminine apologist.

What we cannot learn through basic means of persuasion can be impressed on us through a dramatic portrayal; what does not persuade at first persuades when performed. Throughout the play, performative spectacles catalyze action and change; the dumbshow is no exception. Nicanor emphasizes the efficacy of the performance with a succinct, "So, now it worked" (5.3.75). When Repentance joins the masque, Atticus sees his chance to combine knowledge of his misdeeds with forgiveness for them. He actively watches her participation in the show: "On my knees, / she must be followed, call'd and su'd unto, / and by continual Prayers, woo'd, and wonne" (5.3.104-6). The sense that performativity is a powerful force all its own is reinforced when Nicanor finds himself, too, unexpectedly under the persuasion of Repentance, exclaiming, "I am trapt. / Oh, the great Devill! [W]hose device was this? / . . . I never dream't / upon

Repentance, I" (5.3.112-15). Not even the Iago of this play can escape the reformative power of performance, and his repentance shows how the ameliorative influence of the defender of women trickles through society.

The revelations of personal misdeeds brought about by the personified figures in the dumb show pale in comparison to the revelation brought about by the second set of figures: Lorenzo, Lisandro, and Leonida, disguised as an old Sylvan, shepherd, and shepherdess, respectively. Sylvan tells Atticus a story of his young, beautiful daughter Claribell, madly in love with Palemon, but the young lovers' marriage was threatened by an "old decrepit man" who sought Claribell's affections (5.3.120-43). The old father pleads with the King to marry the young lovers here and now, in hope to "end this strife" (5.3.148). Once the two are wed, the Sylvan directs them, "Princes, discover" (5.3.159), and Lisandro and Leonida cast off their disguises. In this uncovering, this "discovering," the King and Queen learn their daughter is still alive (contrary to the earlier dumb show depicting Leonida's death and Lisandro's banishment). Finally, the King renews his declaration of his injustice. He calls his actions, which were filled with "too much wrong" (5.3.170), "Our errour" (5.3.171), and "the tyrannie of Our unjust decree" (5.3.173).

But the most important revelation occurs in response to Aurelia's inquiry into the "happie accident" (5.3.174) that kept the two lovers alive. Here, the old man casts off his Sylvan disguise to reveal Atlanta, explaining, "Those that I

could not save / by eloquence, by policie I have" (5.4.176-7).[46] Atlanta's explanation that eloquence, or rhetoric, could not save the doomed lovers but "policie" could reinforces the notion that in this play, the conventions of the controversy are not only points of contention in rhetorical debate but also devices that can be put on, like disguises, as means to any number of ends.[47] They are artifices, things that can be performed and enacted, "policies," as well as things that can be removed, "discovered." This notion underscores Atlanta's next gesture of discovery: when Atticus praises her as "worthy *Atlanta*, [who] has merited / beyond all imitation" (5.3.178-80), Atlanta reveals just how imitable her art actually is by throwing off her Amazonian disguise and responding, "dread Soveraigne, / all my deserts, my selfe, and what I have, / Thus I throw downe before your Highnesse feet" (5.3.181-3). What makes Atlanta Atlanta, this moment demonstrates, is not any inherent quality at all but rather a set of imitable conventions drawn from lore about the famed Amazon women, conventions free for the use of men and women alike. When Lorenzo takes up the role of the

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[46] Here, "policie" refers to a trick or device. See *Oxford English Dicitonary Online,* s.v. "policy, n.1." Constance Jordan describes the term thus: "Policy, like the Fortune (or chance) it dominates, came to be associated with the possession of character traits considered particularly feminine: deviousness, changeability, intelligence operating in unorthodox and sometimes illicit ways" (162); see "Gender and Justice in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*," *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987): 149-69.

[47] Winfried Schleiner suggests that the moments where cross-dressed "garments are put on and when they are removed" are "prime moments of heightened conciousness" of matters of cultural gender stereotypes (615); see "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances."

Amazon and its corollary persona of feminine apologist, he proves that one need not be a woman (or even a virtuous woman) to counter misogyny.

The play does not offer a naive perspective on the benefits of performativity. The power to voice a role, once recognized, is a power available to those with good and bad intentions alike. In fact, the closing of the play hints at the uncomfortable truth that performable conventions, in the wrong hands, are key tools of social deception. The Epilogue confirms such dark potential. Here, a group of women drag a muzzled Misogynos across the stage; he laments his punishment and present treatment, having been tried, arraigned, tortured with "sharp-pointed needles" and whips and "old Wives Nayles" (1-4). As the women ready him for yet another trial (this one a general trial, in light of the "general wrong" he has committed against women), he promises repentance:

> I Now repent,
> And thus to you (kind Judges) I appeale.
> Me thinks, I see no anger in your eyes:
> Mercie and Beautie best doe sympathize:
> And here for-ever I put off this shape,
> And with it all my spleene and malice too,
> And vow to let no time or act escape,
> In which my service may be shewne to you.
> And this my hand, which did my shame commence,
> Shall with my Sword be us'd in your defense. (12-21).

Several parts of this speech point toward a skeptical reading of the resolution it offers. First, Misogynos resorts to the simple flattery that has multiple times been invoked as a means of explaining women's weak will in the face of a lover's advances. Lisandro invoked such conventions earlier in his attempt to indict himself as *primus motor*, and Atlanta did the same in her attempt to find men guilty of the same crime. Misogynos enacted such gestures in his attempts to woo—and get revenge on—Atlanta, and Atlanta enacted feminine susceptibility to such flattery in order to lure Misogynos close enough for her own revenge. Thus, this character trait, this convention of the controversy, is nothing but "policie" throughout the play, and there is no reason to believe it is otherwise here. Second, Misogynos calls attention to the performative aspect of philogyny when he promises to "for-ever . . . Put off this shape." When the actions that signal love of women are shapes that can be put on or off at will, anyone can play the Amazonian defender of women. Finally, Misogynos's promise that he will put down his shameful pamphleteering hand in return for raising up his defensive sword-wielding hand continues the joke of Misogynos's poor fencing skills. In a play that has already established Misogynos as a poor swordsman, his promise to defend women through those same skills can hardly be taken seriously.

Thus, the man who has caused so much of the play's chaos—Misogynos—achieves only questionable reform at the end; the man who moves the play towards its attempts at resolution between genders—Lorenzo—does so through shining displays of performativity. Both men, however, stage the "policie" behind gender conventions. In dramatizing the performability of the

conventions and rhetoric of the controversy, particularly the conventions surrounding discourses of love, the play suspends resolution of the *primus motor* question in favor of attention towards performativity itself. Here, the *Woman-Hater* uses disguise, cross-dressing, and acting to present the conventional contents of the controversy. The play does not do so in order to take sides on the gender debate—as the authors of the pamphlets use the conventions to do— but to highlight that the conventions of the controversy can be used to ameliorate the injuries that the very same controversy causes the social body. Performativity matters, the play argues, because it enables the voice of the feminine apologist to manifest itself across a wide variety of bodies, classes, circumstances, and physical spaces. Without such an expansive notion of the feminine apologist's voice, the dangerous rhetoric of Misogynos and the disruptive justice of Atticus would never have been curtailed.

The cross-voicing that occurs through performance goes hand-in-hand with disguise, cross-dressing, and acting. As the voice of the apologist travels through various iterations and bodies in this play (Lisandro, Atlanta, Aurelia and the mob), its very mobility becomes its defining characteristic. Whereas the pamphlets preceding the play do their very best to imagine precisely the most appropriate voice for defending women—and to fix her voice as such—the play offers a stark alternative by making multiple bodies fit harbingers for pro-feminine sentiments. Anyone can play the part of apologist, because the conventions of the controversy have made it so that it is indeed a *part* to be *played*. Even Swetnam himself, should he choose (or should female violence so

persuade him), can take off the role of misogynist and put on the role of defender of women. And while the pamphlets energetically debate what exactly is women's nature, the play energetically stages an inquiry about how we can ever *know* a man or a woman, much less the nature of a man or the nature of a woman.

An English Ending

I have interpreted the *Woman-Hater* as inherently interested in the English controversy about women in deep and provocative ways. One last point supports this interpretation. The play, set in Sicily and reflecting the concerns of an Italian kingdom, resolves its Italian conflicts in a very English way. Throughout the early portions of the play, the audience knows from explicit and implicit references that Misogynos—aka Swetnam—hails from England. At the end of the play, important details supplement this knowledge as Swash explains Misogynos's path to Sicily. Misogynos, he explains, "tooke the habit of a Fencer" in Bristow, and

> There he liv'd
> A yeere or two, till he had writ this Booke [his *Arraignment*]:
> And then the women beat him out of the Towne,
> And then we came to London: there forsooth,
> He put his Booke I' the Presse, and publisht it,
> And made a thousand men and wives fall out.
> Till two or three good wenches, in meere spight,
> Laid their heads together, and rail'd him out of the'Land[.] (5.3.315-22)

Not only is Misogynos of England born and raised, but the response to his pamphlet by the Englishwomen gets replicated by the Sicilian women in the

arbor, who rail against him until he is disempowered. The two or three good wenches of England—Speght, Munda, and Sowernam—become the two or three good wenches of Sicily—Atlanta, Aurelia, and Loretta—who enact his silencing through their own verbosity at the end of the play. Loud, railing women, an English phenomenon according to Misogynos (who ran to Sicily to escape such women), bookend the main plot of the play. In "Englishing" the women of Sicily, the play humorously and even affectionately points up its own concerns as predominately domestic despite the play's foreign setting. The controversy about women—in all of its performative glory—is an English problem with an English solution.

When the *Woman-Hater* responds as it does to the pamphlets, almost immediately and with an arguable irreverence towards the pamphlets' efforts to argue the essential qualities of woman and men, it demonstrates that the conventions that underwrite the pamphlets are capable of widespread appropriation that can ultimately be useful and ameliorative to society at large. The play adamantly insists that those qualities the pamphlets yearn to assign definitively to men or women are qualities that, like an Amazonian disguise, are best understood as "policie." Most important, recognizing the performative nature of such qualities is a necessary step towards silencing the misogynist because it enables men and women of all ranks to act as defenders of womankind. While the logic that underscores this recognition also means that anyone can play the part of the misogynist, the play only gestures towards this possibility. If the conventions of the controversy are performable, and the play argues convincingly that they

are, then anyone may play the part of the defender of woman: the voice of the feminine apologist is not reserved, as the defense pamphlets suggest, strictly for women. The *Woman-Hater* argues that the social disruption caused by the misogynist cannot be completely remedied in a world that does not enable the position of defender of women to be available to men and women alike.

Chapter 3: The Waterpoet, the Shrew, and the Ghost of Long Meg of Westminster: Appropriating the Controversy Discourse

The English controversy about women thrives well into the seventeenth century. A cluster from the late 1630s, represented by the works of John Taylor, also importantly reveals that authors still see the genre and the apologist's voice as agents for their own metacommentary. Known as the "Water Poet," Taylor is one of the most prolific authors of the seventeenth century, writing travel literature, parodies, histories, satire, poetry, and prose.[1] Taylor contributes to the English controversy about women three pamphlets—*A Juniper Lecture* and *Divers Crabtree Lectures* (both attacks on women published in 1639), and the responding, female-voiced defense, *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* (published

[1] Taylor first published works in 1612, and throughout this decade, he capitalizes on his literary feuds with various authors. These works, as well as travel writing and religious versus, account for much of what he printed during the 1610s. The 1620s saw the printing of many of his mock encomia as well as his personal *Motto*. In 1630, he oversaw the publication of his own collected works in a Folio edition, what Capp calls "a massive undertaking, involving four printers, running to 630 pages, and containing sixty-three listed titles" (30); see Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor 1578-1653* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Georgia Wilder argues that we should add *The Parliament of Women* (1640) to Taylor's corpus, in part because the characters in *The Parliament* are drawn from the curtain lecture pamphlet genre, to which Taylor is obviously a contributor; see "John Taylor and *The Parliament of Women:* An Attribution," *Notes and Queries* 48.1 (2001): 16-17.

anonymously in 1640).[2] Today, James Mardock observes, Taylor is "most notable for the colossal disparity between his contemporary acclaim and his modern obscurity."[3] Although modern students and scholars of early modern English literature may be less familiar with Taylor than with other seventeenth-century poets, evidence suggests that precisely the opposite was true in Renaissance England. Taylor wrote for a wide audience, "reflecting topics of interest and concern to the London middle class."[4] Taylor's works identify Nicholas Breton, Ben Jonson, and even Samuel Rowlands as friends and acquaintances. Despite his familiarity with such literary circles, Taylor constantly concerned himself with defending his skill as a poet.

Both Taylor's controversy and non-controversy works are rife with references to his worth as a waterman and his capacity as a poet, and his controversy writings specifically marshal the marginal woman as a vehicle for discussing these same concerns. All three of Taylor's pamphlets seriously engage

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[2] Other controversy texts from the first half of the seventeenth-century include Robert Gould's *Love Given O'er* (1682), and Sarah Fige Egerton's, "The Female Advocate" (1686). For the state of controversy texts in the mid-seventeenth century, see Katherine Romack, "Monstrous Births and the Body Politic: Women's Political Writings and the Strange and Wonderful Travails of Mistris Parliament and M[ist]ris Rump," *Debating Gender in Early Modern England*, 209-30.

[3] James Mardock, "The Spirit and the Muse: The Anxiety of Religious Positioning in John Taylor's Prewar Polemics," *Seventeenth Century* 14.1 (1999): 1.

[4] Patricia Panek, "John Taylor (24 August 1577 or 1578-December 1653)," *Seventeenth-Century British Nondramatic Poets, First Series*, ed. M. Thomas Hester, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 121 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), 256.

with the figure of the shrew; he ultimately instrumentalizes this figure in order to make arguments about his own worth as a low-born poet and waterman.[5] Using a broader historical connotation for the term "shrew" and highlighting the way such typically marginal figures engage in productive social work, Taylor reimagines the shrew for his own use. Taylor takes advantage of the notion of verbose shrews and makes his shrewish women articulate criticisms that enable him to construct the legitimacy of his poetic and laboring work. Although Taylor's project of appropriating the shrew begins in the attack texts, it comes to fruition in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*; this defense of women clearly demonstrates the malleability and usefulness of the apologist's voice as a vehicle for social criticism. By instrumentalizing the voices of marginal woman to serve his poetic agenda, Taylor shows that the controversy genre could importantly be used to establish his authorial identity.

With the exception of historian Bernard Capp, scholars have had a difficult time (or shown little interest in) determining the role of Taylor's controversy pamphlets within the context of his own work and the controversy at large. In part, this difficulty may result from the repetitive nature of Taylor's attack pamphlets, the *Juniper Lecture* and the *Crabtree Lectures,* and the digressive nature of the defense, *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*: the attacks repeatedly rehearse the same scenario, changing only minor details; and the

[5] The controversy about women is not the only discourse Taylor appropriated to address issues of poetic authority. For his appropriation of travel discourses, see Joshua Fisher, "Fashioning Familiar Space in the Domestic Travel Writing of John Taylor the Water Poet," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 35.2 (2009): 194-219.

defense begins as a rollicking and original apology for women but devolves into a rant about the ills of drinking too much. Partly to blame for the difficulty in contextualizing Taylor's pamphlets is also the "jesting" nature of the attacks: the women are supposed to be shrews, and the joke should be on them, but the men of the *Lectures* often undeniably earn the scorn they receive. They are drunkards, cheats, and swindlers.

This chapter offers a new way of reading these works within the context of Taylor's life and times, bringing Taylor's controversy texts into conversation with the rest of his poetic corpus. In doing so, it argues that the malleability of the controversy discourse emerges most significantly from the voice of the feminine apologist. I contend that these works articulate Taylor's concerns regarding poetic authority and the legitimacy of his occupational endeavor, concerns expressed throughout Taylor's oeuvre. Crucially, the controversy pamphlets use the voice of the shrew to address Taylor's own sense of self as poet and waterman, in turn suggesting a revised cultural appreciation for such occupations. Seen in this light, the pamphlets emerge as major components of his literary corpus. Taylor's use of the controversy genre to explore social concerns unrelated to gender demonstrates the extent to which, by the 1640s, the debate about women provided a useful discourse for engaging with a wide array of contemporary problems and even personal concerns.

Taylor's *Crabtree Lectures* rely on what I term a "rhetoric of work": an overt and consistent emphasis by the wives on the laboring tasks of the husbands over other qualities and activities. Using the voice of the shrewish wife and this

rhetoric of work to disparage various contemporary occupations, Taylor offers an implicit rebuttal to criticisms of the work of watermen by demonstrating the faults of other occupations and thus the hypocrisy of social hierarchies. In these lectures, men destabilize both domestic and social orders by virtue of how they handle their work, leveling the occupational playing field so as to render waterman only as flawed as everyone else in the lower and middle classes. Taylor's rhetoric of work is a response to long-standing cultural criticisms of both the activities of the waterman and the poet.

This rhetoric of work reappears in revised form in the responding defense pamphlet, *The Womens Sharpe Revenge.* In this defense, the mythic folk hero Long Meg is summoned from the grave to offer a condemnation of misogyny. During this condemnation, she reminds readers of key parts of her own life, often appearing shrewish in the process. In doing so, Long Meg demonstrates the socially productive nature of work that might traditionally be considered marginal or deviant (such as a woman fighting aggressively in battle), thereby legitimizing the liminal social status of men such as Taylor. By periodically connecting both poets and watermen with the maligned female figure—Long Meg in particular and the shrew in general—*The Womens Sharpe Revenge* significantly criticizes those who question the poetic capacity or social contributions of individuals marginalized by hierarchical values. Identifying the thematic and poetic links between the *Crabtree Lectures, The Womens Sharpe Revenge*, and Taylor's other

poetry, this chapter also posits additional evidence for Taylor's authorship of the anonymous defense pamphlet.[6]

Shrew Wives and Shrew Husbands

Taylor's *Lectures* are part of a larger genre of curtain lectures popular in early modern England. Generally speaking, curtain lectures instance a woman taking advantage of the quiet just before bed to chastise her husband while they lie behind the bed curtain. Taylor's readers never learn explicitly that the woman's haranguing of her husband occurs in bed, but the sexual innuendo throughout these works suggests that Taylor's *Lectures* are true to the wider genre. Kathleen Kaplin explains: "curtain lectures are imaginative reconstructions of private speech between a man and a woman. Typically they appear in male-authored texts that depict a wife speaking persuasively to her husband in bed."[7] Thomas Heywood uses the genre in *A Curtaine Lecture*, 1637, as does Richard Braithwaite in *Ar't Asleepe Husband? A Boulster Lecture,* 1640. While curtain lectures could actually rehearse women's speech (as Taylor does) or merely tell stories about overly talkative women (as Heywood does), the portrayal of women

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[6] I include a discussion of attribution later in this chapter.

[7] Kathleen Kaplin, "Framing Wifely Advice in Thomas Heywood's *A Curtaine Lecture* and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 48.1 (2008): 131. Kaplin also explains, "According to the OED, the term 'curtain lectures' was first used in print in 1633 by Thomas Adams in his *A Commentary or, Exposition upon the Divine Second Epistle Generall, Written by the Blessed Apostle St. Peter*"; see n. 2. LaRue Love Sloan argues that the interactions between Desdemona and Othello should be considered curtain lectures; see "'I'll Watch Him Tame, and Talk Him Out of Patience': The Curtain Lecture and Shakespeare's *Othello*," *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, 85-99.

aggressively engaging their husbands in order to persuade them unifies the genre. Images from curtain lectures, as Kaplin argues, depict "the topsy-turvy nature" of a world in which women domineer in the bedrooms, capitalizing on the fear "that neither [the women's] dominance nor their sexual exploration will stop there."[8] When Taylor's women, then, use their lectures to persuade their husbands to stay home and tend to their needs or to criticize their occupational achievements, the disruptive power of women's speech extends out of the bedroom and into the wider domestic and social economy.

Despite their belonging to a genre largely concerned with women's behavior, Taylor's *Lectures* do not reserve the role of shrew specifically for women. Rather, the *Crabtree Lectures* clearly indicts wives *and* husbands for shrewish behavior. In fashioning men and women as shrews, Taylor (wittingly or unwittingly) invokes an older, and richer, understanding of the term "shrew." Medieval occurrences of the word were not specifically gendered in the way that early modern uses of the word would be. The term could apply to both men and women, and "medieval renderings characterize shrews as unable to rule the domestic body, both in spiritual and social terms."[9] Shrews posed a threat to

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[8] Kaplin, "Framing Wifely Advice," 135. The "topsy-turvy" nature of curtain lectures explains how imagery from shrew narratives and the public corollary, scold narratives (including punishment narratives), often depict women in a physically domineering position over men. For the standard discussion of such role-reversals, see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women On Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford University Press, 1965), 124-51.

[9] Holly A. Crocker, "Engendering Shrews: Medieval to Early Modern," *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, ed. David Wootton and Graham Holderness (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 49.

social order precisely because they threatened domestic order. "Shrewishness" could refer both to stereotypically feminine behavior and "masculine abuse." For example, Crocker notes that in Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Prologue," Alison describes her husbands' violence and mistreatment of her by calling them "shrews." Spiritual failings and venomous speech could earn men and women the label of "shrew," and unruly boys as well as unruly wives were equal candidates for such a title.

While "shrews" can certainly exhibit poor behavior outside the home, it is the domestic setting that most readily engenders the term as it develops throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Particularly in the Middle Ages, "gender difference could evaporate, since both wife and husband might be guilty of shrewish behavior in a disordered domicile."[10] Because the orderly domicile is a microcosm of the hierarchies of the larger society and a representation of spiritual order, the shrew who disrupts the home also represents disruption at both macro and micro levels—the social system, and the soul. Thus, according to Crocker, "men who shirk the responsibility to provide domestic order [are] socially and spiritually dissolute, labeled 'shrews' on account of their comprehensive misrule."[11]

Recovering the rich etymologies of "shrew" is crucial for interpreting Taylor's works because, whether Taylor had any direct sense of the narrowing of the term in his own time, he directly engages with this wider historical past in his

[10] Crocker, "Engendering Shrews," 52.

[11] Crocker, "Engendering Shrews," 55.

Lectures. In particular, when his shrewish wives accuse their husbands of mismanaging both their occupational and domestic duties, Taylor demonstrates what Crocker identifies as a crucial component of medieval shrewing: "men who fail to display rationality in their exercises of governance forfeit their presumption to wield masculine authority, becoming *male* shrews through feminized displays of frenzied misrule." In other words, when men fail to govern responsibly, they enable not only the stereotypically feminine "scolding" done by shrew-wives but in turn become shrew-husbands by creating the opportunity for their wives to usurp authority in the first place.

Other culturally significant understandings of shrews underpin Taylor's *Lectures*: the wives berate their husbands' domestic and occupational work, but they fail to demonstrate that *they* are themselves productive workers, substantiating the assessment that female shrews are "typically portrayed as reluctant producers within the household economy." [12] The wives' verbal assaults on their husbands reflect such common crimes against patriarchy that one scholar claims, "the veritable prototype of the female offender of this era seems to be, in fact, the woman marked out as a 'scold' or a 'shrew.'"[13] Equally important, "acting as shrews" did not necessarily indicate women's opposition to well-established patriarchy but rather their opposition to the reality that "authority in

[12] Natasha Korda, "Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in the *Taming of The Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.2 (1996): 110.

[13] Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds," 135.

marriage and the domestic polity was contested and unstable."[14] Thus, Taylor's stake in the lecture genre involves *how* he makes his women shrews, not that he *does*; and he makes women shrews by partnering them with shrew-husbands. Through his shrews, and, as I argue later, Long Meg, Taylor reveals how productive such women can be. The instability and contestation inherent in shrew narratives, combined with a historical tradition that put even the gender of shrews into question, enables Taylor's confrontation with, and ultimately, appropriation of, the shrew figure. And because shrewish women are characters so endemic to the controversy about women, Taylor's choice of mobilizing this figure within the debate about women, rather than within another genre, is especially appropriate.

The Rhetoric of Work: Leveling the Occupational Playing Field in the *Crabtree Lectures*

The *Crabtree Lectures* take part in the controversy about women primarily by portraying shrew wives who exhibit many of the vices that attacks on women levy against the female sex. The *Lectures* begins with a letter sent from a suspiciously named Mary Make-peace of the Mannor of Allwell that addresses female readers. Mary Make-peace encourages patience among her female audience, though she acknowledges their right to be angry, given the public shaming of women found in the *Juniper Lecture* (a sister-piece to *Crabtree*, the

[14] Graham Holderness, introduction, *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives,* 3. That the phenomena of "shrewing" highlights contested and unstable sites of power is unsurprising given that early modern English "social constructions of gender were not simply binary and static[,]" even though "the normative economy of gender in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was based on hierarchy, with the male as superior"; see Laura Lunger Knoppers, introduction, *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, 9.

Juniper Lectures feature wife after wife playing the role of the shrew, inviting readers' scorn and laughter at her expense). Taylor adds a short etymology lesson to the preface of the *Crabtree Lectures*, explaining that the terms Shrove Monday and Shrove Tuesday are merely misunderstandings of the proper labels Shrewes-Monday and Shrewes-Tuesday. A poor farmer originally named these days, after he had teased his wife about the pancakes she was making and found himself wearing both the pancake and the fat from the pan and rubbing a sore head. Taylor presumes that other such accidents "done by some curst Shrew or other came the next day," thereby creating Shrews Tuesday, followed by "weeping Wednesday, terrible Thursday, frowning Friday, and sullen Saturday,"[15] the days of the week according to the husbands of shrews.[16] This prefatory material places Taylor's work squarely in the same context as his other attack pamphlet, *Juniper Lecture*: they are humorous satires on women that capitalize on timeworn stereotypes and, occasionally, new jokes.

What is so striking about the *Crabtree Lectures,* despite the text's reliance on such commonplaces as painting females as frivolous, over-sexed, greedy, materialistic, and aggressive, is the role that men's work plays in the lectures. The

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[15] All quotations are from John Taylor*, Divers crabtree lectures Expressing the severall languages that shrews read to their husbands, either at morning, noone, or night. With a pleasant relation of a shrewes Munday, and shrewes Tuesday, and why they were so called. Also a lecture betweene a pedler and his wife in the canting language. With a new tricke to tame a shrew* (London: 1621), STC (2nd ed.), 23747. Subsequent references in parenthesis refer to page numbers; for quotation see pp. 8-9.

[16] Taylor also notes that this etymology is responsible for phrases such as doing someone a "shrewd turne" when one person crosses another or does damage to another in business or elsewhere.

rhetoric of work in the *Crabtree Lectures* clarifies the ways husbands inadequately execute the jobs they do in and out of the house, a maneuver that unsettles the "lowliness" of Taylor's oft-criticized occupation as waterman by identifying other occupations as equally prone to shoddy laborers.[17] By making the flaws of watermen less unique than contemporary critics allow, Taylor may not elevate his occupation but he certainly normalizes its imperfections. Throughout the lectures, a husband's incompetence at work severely disrupts the domestic sphere, interfering with the man's ability to satisfy his wife sexually and materially. Thus, Taylor's lectures posit women *and* men as equally at fault for a disordered home: women's scolding drives men away from home and men's incompetence as laborers compromises both the economic and sexual stability of the household. Framing women *and* men as shrews makes it possible for Taylor's *Lectures* to use the controversy genre as a vehicle for addressing the wider social issue regarding valuable labor in London society. Nearly every lecture in *Crabtree* showcases the wife criticizing her husband's career skills, thus dispersing across many vocations the criticisms often levied at Taylor's vocation.

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[17] For a brief summary of contemporary attitudes towards watermen, see Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 9-11. Apparently, watermen were a rowdy bunch even before Taylor's lifetime. Queen Mary had to issue a proclamation in 1558 forbidding watermen, mariners, and sailors from abandoning their service to the Queen (thus rendering her Navy feeble in the face of such disobedience) in favor of setting forth on ships of their own to seek out profitable merchandise to buy and sell. See Queen Mary I of England and Wales**,** *By the Kynge and the Queene the Quenes moste excellent majestie, being credibly enformid, that not withstanding dyvers of Her Highnes restraintes, and proclamations lately made and sette furthe, as well for the stay from goynge to the sea of shyppes* (London**:** 1558), STC (2nd ed.), 7883.

The wives of the *Crabtree Lectures* drive home one particular point: their men are not very good at their jobs, or at doing their jobs honestly. The husbands are even worse at doing the jobs expected of them at home. For instance, the Sadler's wife complains that her husband is, at best, a mediocre Sadler: he "bobst [his best customers] off with the coursest hey [hay] bought in Smithfield for nine-pence a trusse, but . . . what care [the wife] how [he] cheatest abroad?" (35).[18] Her problem, she makes clear, is that he cheats abroad *and* fails to "give the divell his due at home" (35). She claims that her husband lacks the ability to execute competently his deeds at home: he "never thinkest of mending the patch [he] shouldest most mind" (33); rather, "all [his] care is to see other folkes jades made fine, neat, and handsome, whilst [his] owne beast at home can neither bee comb'd, rub'd, nor curried, so that for want of a good dressing [his beast] is readie to fall into the disease of the scratch" (33-34). Here, the wife makes use of multiple connotations for "patch" to make her point. The husband, who makes and sells saddles and thus spends quite a bit of time "patching" in the literal sense is also a "patch" (a simpleton)[19] full of "patcherie" (trickery)[20] that distracts him from tending to his patch (his homestead).[21] Thus, he dresses other horses, but not his own, and as an untended horse, his wife is wasting away.

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[18] To "bob off" means to get rid of someone or something by way of fraud. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "bob, v.1."

[19] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "patch, n.2."

[20] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "patch, n.1."

[21] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "patch, n.1." esp. II.7.

Comically, the wife reveals that her complaint about the poor un-curried horse is actually a complaint about her own state at home when she uses equine diction to describe how the husband "thinkest to curbe [her], and snaffle [her], to bridle [her], and to feede [her] with a bit and a knocke" (33). This wife cements the humorous conflation of herself and their horse by threatening her husband, "I could serve thee in thy kind, and shew thee a trick for thy learning, for where thou keepest thy owne saddle-tree bare, I know how, and where to have it covered with plush and velvet, and yet thou neither the wealthier nor the wiser" (34-35). Here, the bare "saddle-tree" not only refers to the wife's sense that she is improperly attired but also operates as a euphemism for the wife as sexual object. The saddle-tree, the base of the saddle, is here "bare," or uncovered, suggesting both the wife's uncoupled sexual body and un-curried material body.

In the wife's claim that she knows where to acquire proper covering for her saddle-tree lies a threat of cuckoldry in which the wife also metaphorically threatens to impinge upon her husband's occupation and role as husband: as the un-curried horse with a bare-saddle tree, she will find another saddler to provide the "plush and velvet" appropriate to her worth, and presumably she will exchange sex for the material goods she desires. She suggests that she can find a way to have her husband's job as sexual partner and material provider performed better than he performs either himself. Here we see the genderless "frenzied misrule" that characterizes the shrew in medieval literature, rendering the husband as much a shrew for his mismanaging of affairs as is his wife for scolding him. In addition, the wife's threat of cuckoldry invokes the husband's low class status:

while he is busy doing a shoddy job at work, those men of higher class, of "plush and velvet," will perform his work at home. Whether the husband is *actually* as bad a saddler and husband as the wife suggests is beside the point. In this case, Taylor constructs a shrew-lecture that need not, but does, imagine the man as occupationally and domestically challenged.

The explicit connection between faulty occupational conduct and questionable domestic and sexual conduct is strikingly painful in the Horse-courser's wife's lecture (37-47), where the rhetoric of work both implicates the man in the woman's propensity for shrewishness and identifies his culpability in creating an unruly home. A Horse-courser is a man who buys and sells horses, presumably testing and examining them prior to sale. The wife accuses her husband of acting the part of horse-courser, but with "Gills"—wenches—rather than "Jades"—actual horses. In other words, the only "testing" he is doing is of a sexual and extramarital nature, ensuring that he is also mismanaging both his working hours and his marriage. Thus, when the wife avers that "for [his] cheating in horses [he] better deservest to bee burnt in Smithfield than any women for poysoning her husband" (39)[22] she suggests that he has allowed his business incompetence to spill over into domestic incompetence, and this marital betrayal is a greater crime. The husband spends far too much time working, presumably to conduct his affairs, and the wife is sexually frustrated: "thou goest from Hostry to

[22] The reference to a woman burned at Smithfield for poisoning her husband seems to refer to a popular story in the mid-seventeenth century, though no particular woman has been absolutely identified; see Frances E. Dolan, "Tracking the Petty Traitor across Genres," *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500-1800*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 149-71.

Hostry," she argues, "but it will be long enough before thou wilt set up thy Nagge in my Stable" (40). Here, the collision of the domestic critique and occupational critique occurs through the word "nagge," which refers to a small and feeble horse and is a slang term for "penis."[23]

Even when actually working, however, the husband still finds himself victim to his wife's criticisms. She accuses him of bringing old horses up for sale only to swear to a potential buyer that the horse is in its prime; he handles his horses, she claims, with too much physical force in order to convince customers that the horses "are full of mettle" (44). Most damningly, she asserts that he keeps his horses—and his whores—in more commodious accommodations than he keeps his own wife. Since the husband's faults on the job and in the home mutually inform one another, the wife deems him worthy to "bee hanged in the very halter that [he] leadest [his] horse in" (41). Here, the wife's use of the image of a man in a horse's bridle, the corporeal punishment regularly reserved for scolds, or shrews who disrupt the public peace, cements the implication that men are also shrews.

Sexual jealousy combines with sartorial arrogance in the Tailor's wife's lecture; the rhetoric of work in this lecture reveals both the husband's shortcomings and the lengths to which the wife is willing to go to remedy them.[24] The play on "Tailor," one who handles clothes, and Taylor, the water poet,

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[23] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "nag, n.1."

[24] The text reads "Taylor," but for the purposes of distinguishing between the author John Taylor and the literary character of the Taylor, I will refer to the latter as "Tailor."

enhances the collective force of these lectures towards equalizing occupational hierarchies. John Taylor reminds readers that he is not exonerating waterman through this controversy text but rather indicting other laborers of their own crimes. The wife accuses her husband of talking of "nothing but his yard, and his yard" (47), yet he remains unable to buy his wife "London measure" (48). Here, "yard" is a unit of measurement and slang for penis;[25] combined with the wife's unmet desire for "London measure"—referring to London drapers' use of non-standard, longer measurements for a yard—the accusation cements the husband's failure as tailor and sexual partner.[26] He provides his wife only with clothes made out of what he has "filtch[ed]" from his customers (52). In his attempts to be part of London high society, he ends up in Court well-dressed, only to accidentally pull thimbles, buttons, and bodkins out of his pocket instead of a handkerchief, signaling how out of place he is among the courtly crowd.

He is not, however, too clumsy to deceive his customers. The wife accuses him of skimming off pieces of cloth as he makes a garment; when the customer asks for the remnants, he protests vehemently that not a scrap is left (and presumably charges the customer accordingly, while stashing endless remnants in his cutting house). To add insult to injury, the Tailor's vested interest in cheating his customers combined with his own desire to "pass" as courtly leaves the wife home, lonely, "crossing [her] armes in [her] bed" while he sits "crosse-legg'd

[25] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "yard, n.2."

[26] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "London, n."

upon [his] boord" (48).[27] He ensures that other men are well dressed, but "canst afford no stuffing to [his] owne breeches" (56-57), and even though he spends day after day "basting and basting" (57), he provides her "no roast-meate all the weeke long" (57).[28] She clearly resents both his mediocre job performance—"when he thinks to doe his best, it is but so so" (48)—and his absence from home.

The wife's criticism of her husband is rich with double entendres that signify how the husband contributes to a disorderly domicile and is thus also shrewish. The double entendres underscore the wife's connection between her husband's paltry occupational work and paltry domestic work: she describes him as "so simple a seaming mate" and "so purblind a Coxecomb" that he "cannot see in the darke to find the eye of his owne needle which any other could do blind foulded" (48-49). He is a "worke man" who "busiest [his] self in gathering other mens rents" (56), yet he cannot fix a stitch in his wife's side (56), an insult to both his skills as a Tailor and a man. If the wife cannot make her husband perform his husbandly duties (surely *she* is the "needle" that he cannot "thread" in the dark), she will at least blackmail him into dressing her better. She threatens to put his scandals "in print to the view of all men" (53) if he does not provide her with a new dress. The Tailor falls short as a laborer, as a husband, and as a sexual

[27] That both spouses separately cross their own limbs rather than crossing each other's limbs in bed perhaps indicates the wife's sexual frustration.

[28] The pun here turns on "basting" meaning both a sewing technique and a cooking technique, and "roastmeate" signifying food. Given the sexual overtones of the lecture, both phrases might be euphemisms.

partner, and Taylor's connecting of these three roles together through a rhetoric of work amplifies the criticism levied against each role.

By focusing on their husbands' public misdeeds and the way that public behavior seeps damagingly into the more intimate space of home, the wives legitimize their scolding. Taylor's shrews must not be easily dismissed figures if Taylor is to use them as he does in the *Sharpe Revenge*; thus, it is crucial that Taylor authorizes the shrew-wives in the *Lectures*. Women are shrews because *they have to be*. The Tailor's wife's actions clearly indicate that she thinks she can exploit her husband's occupational behavior to improve her domestic situation. By likening his failures in the business arena to his failures in the domestic arena, and acting on the assumption that he would rather maintain his reputation out of doors than simply be a better husband, the wife seizes a degree of control over her husband and at least partially remedies her situation.[29] Shrewishness represents an attempt to control an otherwise uncontrollable situation. Equally important, the various occupations and marital situations invoked in the lectures imply that no home is free from such disorder, and no occupation (at least, no occupations comprising the lower class or the middling sort) is free from the shady enterprises of men similar to those identified by the wives.[30] The shrew-wives, Taylor

[29] This manipulation has force because, as Stephanie Chamberlain argues, wives who were scolds and shrews damaged a husband's public credit—both the credit that established his reputation and the credit needed to do business in an evolving economic landscape; see "Domestic Economies in *The Taming of the Shrew:* Amassing Cultural Credit," *The Upstart Crow* 28 (2009): 50-69.

[30] The sense that corruption is pervasive among high and low occupations alike also informs Taylor's comic piece *A shilling or, The travailes of twelve-pence* (London: 1621), STC (2nd ed.), 23793. Here, Taylor anthropomorphizes money

indicates, have all sorts of ways to legitimize and normalize their shrewishness. Surely this is part of the popular appeal of shrew narratives within and outside the controversy genre—it is entertaining to read the women's verbal gymnastics marshaled in defense of their noxious actions. Thus, the role of the shrew-wife becomes necessary even as it remains an object of scorn, mockery, and laughter.

Through a rhetoric of work voiced by shrew-wives and shrew-husbands, Taylor destabilize hierarchies in an important way, reminding modern readers of the fluidity of the boundary between the home and the shop, between work and wives. Viviana Comensoli explains, "obedience to husbands, fathers, and masters was considered the principal duty of women, children, and servants, and rebellion within the family was viewed as synonymous with rebellion against the state."[31] When Taylor divides the burden of a disordered domicile equally among men and women, and then grounds that division in a discussion of men's work, he undercuts the established hierarchies within and outside the home. In Taylor's *Lectures*, the reader uncomfortably confronts a domestic model that lacks a figure, male or female, who deserves obedience. Rather, all parties are flawed. The *Lectures* specifically invite readers to make the analogy between family and state that Comensoli notes because the men come and go fluidly from home to work to tavern to city to home, and their occupational duties are explicitly tied to

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and tells of its journeys throughout its life. The money serves masters "of all degrees and trades," and where it found "one good, [it] got ten bad," "where [it] had one Master lov'd the poore, / [it] had ten Drunkards, that did love a Whore" (71).

[31] Viviana Comensoli, *'Household Business': Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 17.

their duties at home. Thus, the early modern workplace, with its hierarchies and systems, is as plagued by disrepute as is the home, and no singular person can carry the blame for dysfunction in either sphere. Wendy Wall explains that the early modern household "[is] also a space of considerable. . . anxiety and fantasy for its residents," and the shrew-wives display that anxiety as they articulate the disorder of their home and their husbands' work.[32] Taylor's rhetoric of work articulated through the voice of the shrew allows him to reactivate controversy commonplaces—such as the shrew herself—for new meanings. In doing so, Taylor revises marginalized shrews into voices that matter.

A Rhetoric of Work in Defense of Watermen

The *Crabtree Lectures* legitimize the shrew-wife's actions by pairing her with a shrew-husband, and the interdependence between these two figures enables the poet Taylor to criticize men of lower-class occupations the way watermen are often criticized. Situated within a controversy work, the literary convention of the shrew—both male and female—provides Taylor an avenue for addressing a real-life concern: the degradation of his occupation. Works from Taylor's lifetime are littered with references to watermen as scurrilous characters who lie, drink, and are prone to violence. The number of references suggests that watermen were the socially accepted butt of jokes about miscreants.[33] For example, Richard Brome

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[32] "Women in the Household," *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing,* 98.

[33] Bernard Capp explains that waterman were considered a "rough breed"; and rumors abounded in seventeenth-century England that waterman were often drunk, demanding one fare at the start of a voyage only to increase the fare at the end, holding customers or their belongings hostage until payment. See *The World*

casts watermen as gentle, well-spoken, and learned in his comedy *The Antipodes,* but that is decidedly part of the joke of this play built on reversals: only in the play "Tis common here sir, for your watermen / To write most learnedly, when your Courtier / Has scarce ability to read."[34] Thomas Dekker describes the shoddy characters of the Foyst and the Nip ("that is to say the Pocket diver and the cut pursse") as significant evils in the English landscape but adds, "watermen ply not their fares more nimbly then [sic] the *Nips."*[35] Dekker's use of the waterman as the foil for the deceptive Nip indicates just how lowly waterman were perceived to be, and he accuses watermen elsewhere of changing their fees once a customer has engaged their service. The same sentiment occurs in William Fennor's defense of cuckolds: he describes watermen as stubborn, prone to violence, and "of wit deprived."[36] Samuel Rowlands explicitly names watermen

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of John Taylor the Water-Poet, 10. Laurie Ellinghausen explains, "If it occurred to Elizabethans to write tales in praise of watermen, they would have had little on which to draw"; "The Individualist Project of John Taylor 'The Water Poet'." *Ben Jonson Journal* 9 (2003): 148.

[34] Richard Brome, *The antipodes a comedie* (London: 1640), STC (2nd ed.), 3818, sig $I1^{v}$.

[35] Thomas Dekker, *The belman of London Bringing to light the most notorious villanies that are now practised in the kingdome. Profitable for gentlemen, lawyers, merchants, citizens, farmers, masters of housholdes, and all sorts of servants to mark, and delightfull for all men to reade* (London: 1608), STC (2nd ed.), 6482, sig. $H3^{r-v}$.

[36] Wiliam Fennor, *Cornu-copiae, Pasquils night-cap: or, Antidot for the head-ache* (London: 1612), STC (2nd ed.), 10782.5, p.54. This comment is before Fennor's public feud with Taylor, at which point his condemnation of watermen grows. Taylor and Fennor were to engage in a dramatic contest at the Hope theater, but Fennor never showed up, causing injury to Taylor's reputation and wallet; see Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 14-15. In his attack on Taylor, Fennor insists that Taylor is "no scholler" but only a sculler. See Fennor, *Fennors*

(along with butchers, cooks, and carriers) as a social group prone to containing "dogges"—a waterman is "a dangerous man, and not to be dealt withall."[37]

One of the most colorful summaries of a waterman's faults appears in Wye Saltonstall's *Picturae loquentes[,] Or Pictures drawne forth in characters* (1631).[38] A waterman

> Is . . . the embleame of deceite, for he rowes one way & looke[s] another. When you come within ken of them, you shall heare a noyse worse than the confusion of Bedlem. . . . Though hee bee ne're sober yet hee's ner'e drunke, for he lives by water, and is not covetous to get any great estate, for hee's best contented when hee goes most downe the winde. A fresh water Souldier hee is, and therefore gets to weare some Noblemans badge to secure him from pressing. He knowes all newes, and informes men of the names of noble mens houses toward the Thames. . . . Thus he lives and when he dyes, hee's sure his soule shall passe to the *Elisian* fields, for if *Charon* should deny him passage, hee meanes to steale his Boate, and so ferry himselfe over. ($D9^{v}$-$D10^{r}$)

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defence: or, I am your first man Wherein the Water-man, John Taylor, is dasht, sowst, and finally fallen into the Thames: With his slanderous taxations, base imputations, scandalous accusations and foule abhominations, against his majesties ryming poet: who hath answered him without vexatione, or [...] bling recantations. The reason of my not meeting at the Hope with Taylor, is truly demonstrated in the induction to the [...] udger. Thy hastie gallop my milde muse shall checke, that if thou sit not sure, will breake thy necke (London: 1615), STC (2nd ed.), 10783.

[37] Samuel Rowlands, *Greenes ghost haunting conie-catchers wherein is set downe, the arte of humouring* (London: 1602), STC (2nd ed.), 12243, $D3^{V}$.

[38] Saltonstall, *Picturae loquentes* (London: 1631), STC (2nd ed.), 21645. Parenthetical citation refers to signatures.

Watermen are deceitful, noisy, content among the low-born; and they are cowards who escape the real "press" of martial service. Like female gossips, they know "all the news" and traffic in such social business.

Taylor is well aware of the reputation of watermen, and he rehearses it in his *Motto*, describing how watermen are "most like unto a Whore" because "both are most ready for their trade, we see: / The Watermen in shirts, and Whores in *smocks*, / Both ship and fall to worke, t'increase their stocks."[39] Even this rehearsal, however, contains hints that Taylor scorns such characterizations: he reworks the unfavorable epithets cast upon watermen in order to render them less harmful. Watermen are ungrateful, he claims, because they regularly "cross" their best friend; but since this "friend" is actually the River Thames, this "crossing" is innocuous (Ee5^{v}). Similarly, scullers are charged as "Hypocrite[s]" who "[speake] fairest when / [they] most [deceive]," but this hypocrisy is only because the nature of the sculler's work is to "goe backward when we doe goe forward still, / and forward, we goe backward with good will, / thus looking one way, and another rowing" (Ee5^{v}).

The status and value of watermen were unquestionably low. Early modern London's social and political hierarchies invested in the ideals of propertied gentlemen, leaving watermen far down the social ladder. With neither lineage nor occupation to redeem him, Taylor firmly occupied a lower stratum. The reign of

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[39] John Taylor, "Taylors Motto. Et Habeo, Et Careo, Et Curo. I Have, I want, I care," *All the workes of John Taylor the water-poet Beeing sixty and three in number. Collected into one volume by the author: with sundry new additions corrected, revised, and newly imprinted, 1630* (London: 1630), STC (2nd ed.), 23725, sig Ee5^{r}. Subsequent interlinear citations refer to signatures.

King Charles I, years that coincided with much of Taylor's poetry and the publication of his Folio, especially reinforced the differences among individuals occupying the respective ends of the ladder. For example, the King's obsession with order led not only to a demand that people take "greater care concerning the distinctions and degrees of rooms and persons" in a household but also to his endowing nobility with greater rights to enforce local authority throughout the kingdom to maintain the order he desired.[40] This overt interest in orderly social hierarchies—in maintaining the differences between high and low persons—influenced family systems as well, with King Charles declaring, " 'every man should be a rule of order and abstinence in his own house.'"[41] Scholars have established that this period of English history (in addition to other periods) experienced great social unrest, as increased mobility and urbanization "contributed to an apparent disintegration in the social order."[42] Whether or not Charles's dicta about order inspired this phenomenon of unrest, Taylor's poetry spans years plagued by a city's continuous struggle to draw lines in shifting social sands. Thus, this is the context in which, as Capp claims, Taylor experienced backlash from friends and foes alike who "continued to harp on his lowly origins

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[40] Kevin Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas in Early Stuart England: Essays and Studies* (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1989), 106; see also p. 108.

[41] Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas,* 47.

[42] Comensoli, *'Household Business,'* 9. Comensoli explains that social groups shifted and expanded, and "faced with unprecedented social mobility, the English authorities sought to inculcate the respect for order in the population by appealing to traditional notions of stability and hierarchy" (10).

throughout his career."[43] By filling his *Crabtree Lectures* with illustrations of the baseness of men in other occupations, Taylor disperses and thus diffuses the criticism so often levied against his own. Furthermore, he shows that the controversy genre is malleable enough—and valuable enough—to house critical metacommentary on London's division between the high and the low, the worthy and the unworthy.

Taylor remains concerned with his vocational legitimacy as a waterman, and the extent to which his oeuvre engages this topic is well established. Mardock explains: "as a result of his ambivalent social position—at the margins of the educated urban elite but firmly tied to the world of tradesman and artisans—an anxiety about his cultural place can be traced throughout all of Taylor's writings."[44] Taylor regularly defends the honesty of his own profession, despite the popular belief in the degeneracy of watermen, so much so that he "refused to rely on patronage for income, feeling that his satires would thereby be free from undue influence and preferring the 'honest' labor of a waterman."[45] Laurie Ellinghausen argues that he considered his work to provide a service rather than goods, and therefore he could rhetorically fashion the work of watermen as more "honest" than other occupations. Ellinghausen explains: "To Taylor, scullery is an honest trade because it deals in *services* and not goods; services are transparent,

[43] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 77.

[44] Mardock, "The Spirit and the Muse," 2.

[45] Panek, "John Taylor," 263.

whereas goods hide the intentions of their producers and thus hold an infinite capacity to deceive."[46]

In calling himself the "Water-Poet," Taylor merges his occupational and literary identities, a "literary amphibiousness" that casts him at once in the world of "lowly professions" and also in the world of poets, suggesting that both identities require careful justification of their work.[47] Andrew McRae describes Taylor's fusion of his working and writing selves as an "audacious and relentless exercise of self-fashioning."[48] McRae argues that Taylor ultimately uses his domestic travel writing to begin defining a "generic, and cultural, place for his work," and I argue that we can see Taylor's foray into the controversy about women as part of this task as well. In choosing the controversy genre to participate in his "self-fashioning," Taylor implies the agency and import of the debate about women. Likewise, making the feminine apologist the specific voice to articulate his value as a writer and worker grants the apologist agency beyond even her role in the controversy.

The occupational anxieties that abound in Taylor's attack on women find explicit expression in Taylor's non-controversy poetry, especially in his poetic

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[46] Ellinghausen, "The Individualist Project of John Taylor," 154.

[47] P.N. Hartle, " 'All His Workes Sir': John Taylor's Nonsense," *Neophilologus* 86 (2002): 166. Ellinghausen also describes the way Taylor merges his authorial and occupational work in the woodcuts accompanying his works; see pp. 153-54. She argues that part of Taylor's distinction is the way he actively forges an authorial persona that is merged with his occupational persona; see "The Individualist Project," 147.

[48] Andrew McRae, "The Literature of Domestic Travel in Early Modern England: The Journeys of John Taylor," *Studies in Travel Writing* 12.1 (2008): 86.

defenses of watermen, snippets of which occur throughout his poetry. Examining such references furthers my argument that Taylor's controversy works must be read in the context of his other writings. In early works such as *The Sculler*, Taylor "characteristically . . . [is] both combative and defensive about his efforts, apologizing for his 'harsh unlearned rhymes' but also threatening to hurl any 'snarling' critics overboard."[49] In this collection of poems, he constructs his position as an "honest sculler" in order to praise Ben Jonson ($A2^{v}$).[50] Taylor aligns himself with others who praise Jonson's skill but denies himself the "worth" required for offering such praise. He phrases this denial in terms of his occupational status: he is merely an "honest sculler," and even that is a troubled description, he admits, given the reputation scullers had for dishonesty. Thus, the best Taylor can do, he implies here, is be as worthy as his laboring status will allow, offering only "worthless" praise while "all the Worthies of this worthy land, / Admires [*sic*] thy [Jonson's] wondrous all admired worth" ($A2^{v}$). Samuel Rowlands acknowledges the absurdity that a waterman could be such a great poet, writing that Taylor's journeys on the River Thames lead to "Parnassus Mount." The absurd geography of the lines—that the Thames could lead to Parnassus—mirrors the absurdity of poetic wit in a sculler, yet Rowlands admits to such literary skill in John Taylor.[51]

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[49] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 12.

[50] John Taylor, *The Sculler* (London: 1612), STC (2nd ed.), 23791. References refer to signatures.

[51] Other authors similarly register a sense of surprise or curiosity at poetic skill manifesting itself in a sculler. See the epigrams in *Taylor's Urania, or His*

An extended defense of scullers appears after Taylor's defense of poetry in *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses*. The poet confronts critics who deem watermen knavish, dishonest, unmannerly brutes by arguing that "a waterman's a man by sea or land" (L2^{r}); in other words, watermen serve their King, guard their country, and help soldiers and sailors as much as any other occupation.[52] He rationalizes that if the watermen's company seems overrun with knaves, it is only because there are proportionally more men in that occupation than others. Taylor exclaims that the watermen have rules to govern them—as do men of other trades—even as they need to "ply" their trade as many other tradesmen do. In these two areas—working under specific rules and actively searching out customers—they are no different than all other trades that attempt to strike a balance between overseeing their workers and making a profit. In any marketplace, Taylor suggests, a merchant will ply his wares with the same gusto that a waterman uses to solicit riders. The implication is that any worker can offend a customer with such forward advances.[53]

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heavenly muse With a briefe narration of the thirteene sieges, and sixe sackings of the famous cittie of Jerusalem. Their miseries of warre, plague, and famine, (during their last siege by Vespasian and his son Titus.) In heroicall verse compendiously described (London: 1616), STC (2nd ed.), 23806, sig. A4^{r}.

[52] *The nipping and snipping of abuses: or The woolgathering of witte With the Muses Taylor, brought from Parnassus by land, with a paire of oares wherein are above a hundred severall garments of divers fashions, made by nature, without the helpe of art, and a proclamation from hell in the Devils name, concerning the propogation, and excessive use of tobacco* (London: 1614), STC (2nd ed.), 23779.

[53] See *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses*, L2^{r}-L4^{r}. See also *Taylors Motto* for additional defenses of watermen and of Taylor's poetry.

We cannot know whether Taylor actually felt anxiety regarding his poetic or occupational roles; but importantly, he consistently positions himself against the learned, scholarly poets and the wealthy, respected elite. Michelle O'Callaghan aptly notes that Taylor may simply have found such rhetorical positioning useful for distinguishing himself in both spheres: he essentially made himself a novelty by being a "natural born" poet and by engaging with and appealing to the common and elite classes through publication of his works.[54] Numerous encomia (both those Taylor writes and those written to Taylor), as well as his own prefaces to readers, regularly claim Taylor's lack of formal poetic training. In doing so, these encomia and prefaces also highlight his social position as a lower-class laborer (in an often disrespected trade), and his sense that both of his identities—poet and waterman—are continually under attack. In positioning himself as an underdog, as a contentious subject, Taylor aligns the category of low-born poet with the category of woman, because both require defense of their values and abilities.

When Taylor transfers these occupational apprehensions into his controversy texts through the rhetoric of work in the *Crabtree Lectures*, he shows that the controversy genre is viable—and appropriate—for such articulations. In putting these concerns directly in the mouths of shrews, he makes this marginal figure a useful agent of social criticism because the shrew's voice is a voice

[54] See " 'Thomas the Scholer' versus 'John the Sculler': Defining Popular Culture in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 45-56.

unbounded by notions of propriety. The very quality that makes the shrew marginal—her uncontrollable voice—makes her a prime instrument for appropriation into a new context. Her verbosity makes it easy for Taylor to depict the cracks in the facades of others' occupational work, rendering those in his own far less remarkable. In the same way that every home has a nagging wife with a good reason to nag, every occupation has its shoddy character and cranky clientele, Taylor implies. Watermen are no different, and thus undeserving of the scorn they so often receive. Taylor may be lowly, his *Crabtree Lectures* suggest, but so is practically everyone else who works for a living. The nagging voice of the shrew becomes Taylor's way of removing the spotlight of scorn from watermen.

The *Crabtree Lectures,* however, is not Taylor's last contribution to the controversy. In the *Womens Sharpe Revenge,* the responding defense of women, Taylor envisions a way in which the lowly, the marginal, and the scorned can be useful and valuable. Taylor's defense of women makes this vision possible by highlighting the social utility of the marginal figure; just as he does in the *Lectures*, he activates the voice of the shrew to help his cause. It is from this carefully wrought marginal position that Taylor involves himself in the English controversy about women. Attending to this phenomenon significantly illuminates the poetic importance of the controversy genre generally and the apologist's voice specifically. The recuperative task begun by the shrew-wives in the *Lectures* would be irrelevant without its completion by the shrew Long Meg in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*.

John Taylor the Shrew: Making Use of Marginal Women in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*

In *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*, Taylor creates analogies between his own poetic and occupational identities and the identity of the accused shrew, especially through the particular figure of Long Meg of Westminster, who voices a small portion of the *Sharpe Revenge*. In defending women, then, he finds new ways to defend himself and his work as poet and waterman, demonstrating that society needs the lowly author, the scurrilous sculler, the garrulous shrew, and the deviant woman.

Making my case about Taylor's use of the controversy genre requires assigning authorship of *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* to John Taylor. A handful of scholars attribute the pamphlet to Taylor, generally on grounds such as those presented by Bernard Capp*:* both the *Crabtree Lectures* and *Sharpe Revenge* were "entered together in the [Stationer's Register] on 24 April 1639," and "Taylor gave advance notice of the *Revenge* in *A Juniper Lecture,*" a fact that Capp points to in order to support his claim for Taylor as author.[55] Capp also suggests that "stylistic evidence" and a lecture by Hannah Hit-him-home in *Crabtree Lectures* point "the same way."[56] Simon Shepherd insists that Taylor is the author, largely

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[55] *The World of John Taylor*, 119, n. 115.

[56] See *The World of John Taylor,* 117-20, especially p. 119, note 115. Henderson and McManus suggest that the shift in style between the first and subsequent parts of the defense indicates a shift in author, though they do not offer suggestions as to who the author is; see *Half Humankind*, p. 325, n. 94. Pamela J. Benson suggests that the work was probably by Taylor, noting that *Crabtree Lectures*, *Juniper Lecture*, and *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* were all printed by J. Oakes; see her introduction, *Texts from The Querelle, 1616-1640*, *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works,* Series III, Vol. 2, x.

because of the advance notice also pointed out by Capp, though as additional evidence supporting his attribution he cites "links between style, language and subject matter."[57]

Other scholars take the female pseudonyms—from *Sharpe Revenge* and other controversy texts—as fronts for female authors, indicating there is "no compelling reason to discount [the authors'] claims to be women."[58] Patricia Crawford eloquently summarizes the current state of conversations about attribution in a note to her discussion of seventeenth-century women's writing: the *Short Title Catalogue* suggests Taylor as the author, an attribution accepted by others on the grounds, mainly, of the simultaneous entry in the Stationer's Register. Still, as Crawford rightly notes, "This is not conclusive."[59] Scholars often cite stylistic features such as alliteration, sharp wit, and callous humor to attribute the pamphlet to Taylor, but Crawford argues that stylistic evidence points towards a female author. But, recourse to style affords little certainty in either direction: features identified as similar to those appearing in Taylor's other works are not *unique* to Taylor, and qualities suggesting female authorship unconvincingly conflate feminine subject matter with female voice and thus female authorship.

The remainder of this chapter analyzes in *Sharpe Revenge* a series of allusions to the work and plight of watermen combined with the role of the

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[57] See his preface to the defense pamphlet in *The Women's Sharp Revenge*, 160-61, and especially his notes to the pamphlet, which identify similarities between the pamphlet and Taylor's other works.

[58] Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind,* 21.

[59] Patricia Crawford, "Women's Published Writings 1600-1700," *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 281, n. 166.

marginal author, both specific concerns of Taylor's non-controversy poetry. In doing so, I contribute to the discussion of attribution regarding the *Sharpe Revenge*, identifying Taylor as the author. Although it remains possible that another writer, extremely familiar with Taylor's work and sensitive to its overriding interest in occupational and poetic identity, may be behind the *Sharpe Revenge*, the most logical conclusion, given the evidence discussed below, is that Taylor holds the pen behind the voices of Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home.

The Womens Sharpe Revenge opens with an epistle to beneficent male readers, those who are "affable, loving, kinde, and courteous"(*Sharpe Revenge,* A3^{v}); and the opening of the pamphlet seeks to establish the occasion for the women's writing.[60] The female speakers (putative authors Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home) state that men slander women publicly while praising them in private. Mary and Joane warn their male readers to cease and desist from such hypocrisy, lest the women "divulge [such men], for the onely dissemblers" (A4^{v}). Tattle-well and Hit-him-home are horrified that, given the way men consistently pursue women, not a single man will stand up in their defense. Instead, men suffer women "to be reviled, and railed at, taunted; terrified, undervalu'd, and even vilified": amid the throngs of men who will court women, there is not "one Champion to oppose so obstinate a Challenger" (A6^{r}) as the author of the *Juniper* and *Crabtree Lectures*. The women claim that this masculine failure has forced

[60] Citations refer to signatures from Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home, *The womens sharpe revenge*.

them to "call a Ghost from her grave, to stand up in the defense of so proud a defiance" ($A6^{r}$-$A6^{v}$); this ghost is the formidable Long Meg of Westminster. The drastic measure of conjuring up a spirit points comically in two directions: first, at the men, who are such impotent defenders of women that even the ghost of a dead woman is more efficacious than they are; and second, at the women, who must resort to the sheer fiction of a speaking ghost to exemplify the "good women" the authors purport to defend. As the most original part of the defense,[61] Long Meg's address to the reader most clearly reveals Taylor's project as one invested in declaring the worth of his poetic and sculling work. Long Meg makes it possible to imagine the social utility of marginal figures—such as masculine women, lowly watermen, and non-erudite poets—and her narrative provides a uniquely English literary tradition to counter ideals of poetic authority that privilege classical poetic traditions.

Long Meg is not merely a clever pseudonym like Tattle-well or Hit-him-home. Instead, the name belongs to a heroic figure drawn from decades of folk tales and popular literature. As one historian notes, Meg is "one of the best-loved figures in the popular literature of Renaissance England."[62] Her fictionalized biography—a well-known work likely familiar to readers of the *Sharpe Revenge*—was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1590.[63] She appears as a

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[61] The defense eventually devolves into a tirade against drunkenness.

[62] Bernard Capp, "Long Meg of Westminster: A Mystery Solved," *Notes and Queries* 45.3 (1998): 302.

[63] Editions were printed in 1620, 1635, 1636, and well into the nineteenth-century; see Frederick Waage, "Meg and Moll: Two Renaissance London

figure in Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (1598) and in ballads throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A lost play, *Long Meg of Westminster,* perhaps reflecting the details of her jest biography, saw eighteen performances by the Admiral's Men from 1595-1597. The play was apparently so successful that it brought in more revenue during its first run than either of Marlowe's plays performed at the same time.[64] According to Bernard Capp, Long Meg's literary history stems from the story of the historical woman Margaret Barnes, a young woman who relocated to London from Lancashire, worked in a victualling house, and cultivated a reputation for incredible strength. In 1544, Barnes accompanied Henry VIII's soldiers to Boulogne, where she decapitated a "champion" soldier from the French army. After returning to England, she married and opened her own lodging house. Capp reads this moment as one that began the downward spiral of her reputation. Eventually, Barnes was suspected of running a bawdy house; according to actual historical records, Barnes tried to clear her reputation

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Heroines," *Journal of Popular Culture* 20.1 (1986): 105-17. See also Capp, "Long Meg," 302-303. A brief introduction to and readable reprint (with slight modernizations) of the 1635 *Life* may be found in *Short Fiction of the Seventeenth Century,* ed. Charles C. Mish*, The Stuart Editions* (New York: New York University Press, 1969). Mish's text is based on the copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library; see also *The Life and Prankes of Long Meg of Westminster* (London: 1635), STC (2nd ed.), 17783.

[64] Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company 1594-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 194; Holger Schott Syme, "The Meaning of Success: Stories of 1594 and Its Aftermath," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.4 (2010): 504. Syme calls *Long Meg of Westminster* "the most successful 'old' play" (505). Roslyn Knutson also briefly discusses this lost play in "What Was James Burbage *Thinking*??"; see *Thunder at a Playhouse: Essaying Shakespeare and the Early Modern Stage*, ed. Peter Kanelos and Matt Kozusko (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), 116-30.

but to no avail (in part because, Capp argues, Barnes's female friends were actually seedy characters). There are no surviving records of Barnes's life after about May of 1561, though it seems that accusations of scandalous behavior followed her.[65] Regardless, Meg enters into popular culture as a remarkable woman, whose "physical prowess, wit, sense of natural justice, and generosity to the poor and weak" make her a folk hero.[66]

Tattle-well and Hit-him-home explain that the legendary Long Meg rises from her grave because she is so angered by "hearing the abuse offered to Women" ($A8^{r}$). Meg's opening address—particularly the serious tone, suggestion of humility, and invocation of universal motherhood—suggests its participation in a well-worn tradition of defenses of women. Meg is clearly perturbed, asking rhetorically what "peevish Knave" has "wakned [her] dead ashes" and "breath'd fire / into colde embers" ($A8^{v}$). The specter of the ghost at this moment adds a degree of *gravitas* to the defense by suggesting that the crimes against women perpetrated by the *Lectures* are so serious as to require other-worldly intervention. But the role Meg plays here—despite her ghostly status—is not entirely without

[65] If Barnes was the inspiration for Meg, this later "decline" of Meg from valiant virago to woman of questionable repute, as well as her tendency to cross-dress, makes Meg a keen literary sister to Moll Cutpurse, and the two are often mentioned together; see Waage, "Meg and Moll," 105-117; and Anthony B. Dawson, "Mistris Hic & Haec: Representations of Moll Frith," *Studies in English Language* 33.2 (1993): 385-404. Perhaps Taylor and his contemporaries had access to the historical Margaret's life story, for the women of *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* explain all too aptly: "And whereas a Womans reputation is so poore, that if it be but so much as suspected, it will belong [*sic*] before the suspition [*sic*] will be cleared: but if it be once blemished or tainted, the staines and spots are of such a tincture, that the dye of the blemishes will sticke to her all her life time" (B4).

[66] Capp, "Long Meg," 303.

precedent: she sounds like many female apologists of the tradition (such as Jane Anger, Constantia Munda, Rachel Speght, and Ester Sowernam) who are coerced into speaking because of the attacks of men. Meg is "so forc't now" ($A8^{v}$) to speak; and as she casts the blame for her resurrection on the "peevish knave," she enacts a common humility *topos*. Meg also invokes one of the privileges of women—motherhood—to begin her castigation of men who slander women: "What have wee women done, / that any one who was a mothers sonne / should thus affront our sex?" ($A8^{v}$). Such a man, she suggests, has surely "forgot / from whence hee came" ($A8^{v}$).

Meg portrays herself as an aberrant and deviant woman, but she nonetheless acts secure in her authority to chastise men who write ill of women. Meg defends women from a position on the outskirts of femininity. She quickly describes her origins and defends her right to speak on behalf of women. She is "sirnam'd Long Megge" because of her "upright stature"; she is "of well disposed nature"; she is known for her honor; she hails from Westminster ($A9^{r}$). Long Meg confers additional speaking authority on herself by using a third-person structure to refer to her role in the current controversy, claiming that "Long Megge of Westminster . . . / . . . Could no way forbeare" ($A8^{9}$) the slanders against women. Hence, she reanimates herself in order to intervene. She implies that her reentry into the world of the living from the world of the dead gives her a special capacity for identifying the ills of those "poore Poet[s]" ($A9^{r}$) who write against women. As Meg demands that the erring poet kneel and beg a pardon for his

transgressions, she reveals the authority she has over such men, an authority that she derives from her heroic deeds while living:

> Confess thane errour, fall upon thy knees,
> From us, to begge thy pardon by degrees.
> Else, I that with my sword and buckler durst
> Front swaggering Ruffians, put them to the worst.
> Of whom, the begging souldier, when he saw
> My angry brow; trembled, and stood in awe.
> I that have frighted Fencers from the Stage,
> (And was indeed, the wonder of mine Age),
> For I have often, to abate their prides,
> Cudgeld their coats; lamm'd their legs and sides.
> Crosse mee no Tapster durst at any rate,
> Lest I should break his Jugs about his pate. ($A9^{r}$-$A9^{v}$)

Meg's uncanny ability to persuade men to do her bidding is buttressed by a willingness to do violence. She stops men in their tracks, so to speak, with her "angry brow" and physical aggression. Her feats are, Meg acknowledges, mythic: she was "the wonder of [her] Age." But her feats, by her own report, also sound a lot like the verbose aggression of shrews amplified by skill with weapons and the chance to put such skills to use in an official capacity. In other words, the "work" that lends Meg her power is not typically feminine work. The marginality of her labor, however, is what gives Meg the authority to defend women, much as Taylor reframes his marginal identity to create his poetic authority. Meg's

engagement with and revision of the conceptions of work enable her to become a representative figure for a defense of women, delighting both men and women alike.

Taylor invokes the popular literary manifestations of Long Meg's life, highlighting the heroic, masculine feats of military prowess that are part her mythos. She reminds the readers of her "service" fighting the King's enemies at Boulogne, "beating their French armes close unto their woollein," making "their bones ake, worse then did the Pocks" (*Sharpe Revenge,* A9^{v}). In battle, Meg is a force greater than that of a single person—she is a veritable epidemic worse than "the Pocks." Lest her readers view such a violent female with disdain, Meg reminds us that her actions were well respected and honored by King Henry, who said of her, she claims, "amongst my brave and valiant men, / I know not one more resolute, or bolder" (A10^{r}). She is so resolute and bold that King Henry would have knighted her had she only been a man. Meg is "fam'd in field," "noted in the Trenches," and a "president to all our British Wenches" (A10^{r}).

Long Meg is a fitting figure for the prolocutory material of Taylor's defense. She represents physical and mental strength, demonstrates for women the ability to take on traditionally masculine roles and enact them well enough to earn praise, and evinces the seriousness with which female apologists regard their roles as defenders of the fairer sex. Long Meg presents herself as a woman with such skills and reputation that she would hardly hesitate to confront the measly actions of the poets who scorn women and "dare in any termes, thus [to] taunt [the female] sex"(A10^{r}). Defender of country merges with defender of women, and the

feeble misogynist poet, she implies, will suffer the same fate as the poor French soldiers who came across her path. Meg's reminder of her personal feats becomes a threat when she promises that she will "inquire . . . out" any man who fails to "relent" and reform his erroneous ways of slandering women (A10^{v}, A10^{v}). No such man is safe from Long Meg, to whom she makes a stern promise:

> . . . if thou should
>
> take on thee all those figures Proteus could,
>
> it were in vaine . . .
>
> Even to the grave, I vow my ghost shall haunt thee. (A10^{v})

Taylor fashions the ghost of Long Meg as the shrew of all shrews—she will give an endless curtain lecture as men venture off to their final resting place—backed by incredible physical strength and skill and an ability to traverse the boundaries between the living and the dead. In every way, she is a threat to men who seek to offend women; she is omnipresent and cannot be silenced. Like the shrews of the *Lectures*, Long Meg's aberrant behavior is legitimized by the aberrant behavior of men; implicitly, her deviation from normative feminine behavior is a result of a disordered world.[67]

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[67] Kathleen E. McLuskie and David Bevington identify Long Meg with a cast of "legendary cross-dressed women" who "[promise] to become fully integrated into society only when the city itself becomes utopian" (27); see *Plays on Women* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999). Women's deviation from sumptuary standards as a result of male ineptitude is not entirely threatening in the presence of this promise, as the unstated assumption is that such women will cease to deviate from the norms once the reparations their actions seek have been achieved.

As a marginal figure who proudly portrays her life's work as legitimate and valuable—even if readers identify it as marginal—Long Meg is an apt persona for voicing Taylor's personal agenda. Both Taylor and Meg must articulate the value of their work to the social order, and both face the risk of confirming social stereotypes as they embrace their chosen work in order to defend those same vocations. Long Meg and Taylor should, presumably, be excluded from precisely those roles that, through careful cultivation, have made them prominent figures in their time and place. Long Meg's masculine, martial prowess at once enables others to criticize her as unfeminine, and those same skills are also admirable precisely because they are wielded by a woman. Simultaneously, Taylor's work as a common waterman and his lack of elite education and money make him an unlikely social commentator and poet, yet he capitalizes on the marginality of "common poet" in order to make something of himself.

In defending themselves, both Taylor and Long Meg also engage in the task of defending the groups they represent and confronting the established hierarchies that threaten those groups. Long Meg defends women in general and un-domiciled women in particular, and Taylor defends watermen and less-educated poets. Meg's life is rich with stories of her insisting upon the social utility of the marginal figure: she defends the weak and attacks the strong, chiding the rich and assuaging the poor without regard to social hierarchy.[68] She is motivated by her

[68] See, for example, the following chapters from her 1635 *Life*: Her attack of the carrier in defense of the women riders, ch.1; her conquering of the lusty and greedy vicar in ch. 3; her propensity for bestowing "liberally on them that had need" (92), ch. 5; her avenging of a man set upon by thieves, ch. 9; her correction of an irreverent waterman in his place, ch. 15; her correction of the liberality of a

own intrinsic sense of what is worthwhile and valuable. For example, "when she fights a man Meg wears the coat of the servant over the doublet of the rich; when she leaves her proper sex status her clothes deliberately evoke a social hierarchic muddle."[69] Appropriately, this "muddle" of hierarchies appears throughout Taylor's poetry and might even be identified as a chief feature of his works.

Long Meg's exceptional life history makes her an apt spokesperson for the defense posited in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* because this defense, like Taylor's attacks, attempts to reroute broader discussions of gender through the issue of work. Long Meg, in Simon Shepherd's characterization, rejects symbolically feminine work for work that is both symbolically masculine and also more productive.[70] Thus, her brief appearance in Taylor's defense calls up a biography brimming with alternative figurations of work. The women speakers of the *Revenge* amplify this attention towards what constitutes valuable work. For example, the speakers take Taylor to task for his poetic abilities, a move that is delightfully ironic for readers who recognized Taylor as the man behind the defense: "A poet sure hee could not be: for not one of them but with all his industry strived to celebrate the praises of some Mistris or other" (*Sharpe*

Constable who desired to search her Islington house, ch. 16; and her violent retaliation against a "Huffing Dick" who causes trouble in the tavern, ch. 17.

[69] Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women*, 73.

[70] Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women,* 70-72. We can see this rejection of "women's work" in Chapter Two of Meg's *Life,* when her response to inquiries about the kind of work she can do is met with, "little . . . but handy labor, as to wash and wring, to make a clean house, to brew, bake, or any such drudgery. For my needle, to that I have been little used to" (87).

Revenge, B11^{r}). The marginal gloss accompanying this line clarifies, lest the reader misunderstand: "He is no poet" (B11^{r}) because the *real poets* use their poetry to praise women, not to condemn them. Given Taylor's own life-long preoccupation with his status as poet, the women's questioning of Taylor's poetic identity is amusing and ironic. Taylor's numerous works certify that he is, indeed, a poet.

The portion of the defense voiced by Tattle-well and Hit-him-home continues Long Meg's revision of notions of valuable work. The women claim that by being limited to certain types of work and conduct, they are robbed of opportunities for self-improvement (C8^{v}-C9^{r}). Despite having a "temper most capable of the best impression," women "have not that generous and liberall Education, lest [they] should bee made able to vindicate [their] own injuries" (AC8^{v}). Instead, women are left to needlework or spinning, "or perchance to some more durty and deboyst [debauched] drudgery" (C9^{r}). Women of certain classes are taught to read but are also restricted to English, and instruction in music limits their singing and dancing skills only to "please and content" the "licentious appetites" of men (C9^{v}). These comments align with Taylor's criticism elsewhere of contemporary valuations of certain work over others. Though Taylor was educated as a young man, he apparently abandoned further education when he was unable to progress with Latin studies, leaving him largely confined to the same "Mothers tongue" that limits the female speakers here. Meg's work as soldier, defender of the downtrodden, and aggressive alehouse hostess serves the purpose of consistently correcting the social ills she encounters; even though

much of this work falls outside the bounds of "proper" female work, rendering her a marginal and deviant woman, her biography portrays this work as absolutely necessary. Likewise, Taylor's work as poet and sculler renders him marginal (the latter because it is lowly work, the former because he performs this work without conforming to established expectations for it), but he clearly envisions this work as both necessary and valuable.

In the Language of His Own Generation: Poetic Anxiety

The transition from the rhetoric of work that imbues the *Lectures* to the recuperation of marginal labor that occurs in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge* is best understood in the context of contemporary anxieties about watermen, which I have already discussed, and early modern anxieties about poets. In addition to his preoccupation with his vocation as a waterman, Taylor was overtly preoccupied with his work as a poet and whether and how his peers would value such activity. In his study of what he calls "self-crowned laureates" in the English Renaissance, Richard Helgerson claims that "a laureate's self-presentation will be couched in the language of his own generation."[71] Although Helgerson focuses on poets with laureate ambitions, his observation holds true for Taylor, as well. Taylor's self-presentation throughout his poetry, however motivated by his overwhelming economic interests, is couched in the language of his own generation; and it is a language especially marked by tensions concerning the nature and value of the poet and the utility and necessity of social hierarchies.

[71] Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 188.

Although Taylor's poetic career spans many decades and multiple monarchs, a common thread runs through it: Taylor and his contemporaries inherited a skepticism about poetry and poets from the previous century, when the term "'poet' had . . . been taken over by lesser men performing a lesser function, and there seemed no way of getting it back."[72] Poetry was the playground of youngsters, a "wasteful folly" that men abandoned as they matured. This view of the low status of poetic activity accompanied the observation that men who dabbled in the occupation were poetasters, hacks, and dilettantes.[73] This perspective persists through the early seventeenth-century, through Ben Jonson's career and Taylor's.[74] Skepticism about poets might have hit Taylor even more acutely because of his low status as waterman: aside from brief engagements with the Royal Navy (engagements undertaken by nearly all watermen) and as a rower for the court of James I, he remained merely a water-taxi driver. Ben Jonson's tenure as the major poet during Taylor's life also contributes to the Water-Poet's position of poetic (or actual) anxiety. As a bricklayer, Jonson may be near Taylor on the social ladder of early modern England, but he made clear attempts to

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[72] Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates,* 3. Taylor is by no means the only poet forced to negotiate the cultural devaluing of poets. According to Tom MacFaul in *Poetry and Paternity in Renaissance England: Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Jonson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Sidney's appropriation of childbirth figurations in his poetry reflects an attempt "to give a *natural* validity to poetic creation" (71).

[73] For this reason, Helgerson notes, the poets in his study *had* to self-fashion a new conception of the poet laureate. If poets were all understood as lowly versifiers, to be a poet laureate required reimagining the status of both the poet and the poetry he was writing; see *Self-Crowned Laureates.*

[74] Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates,* 23.

distinguish himself from this background by calling attention to his extensive knowledge of the classics.[75] As James Bednarz notes, Jonson liked to claim that "he alone possessed a credible form of poetic authority, based on neoclassical standards that demolished his rivals' literary pretensions."[76]

This cultural skepticism towards the work of poets began to abate after the English Civil War as the cavalier writers began the work of representing poets "as men in society, men whose pursuit of business or pleasure and whose activities as courtiers, soldiers, or scholars [were] continuous with their literary engagements."[77] Nonetheless, Taylor's later poetry, developing alongside the work of the cavalier poets of the mid-seventeenth century, still reflects anxiety about the cultural devaluing of poets and poetry. When Long Meg, Tattle-well, and Hit-him-home thus make moves to show the value of marginal or traditionally unvalued work, they contribute significantly to Taylor's larger poetic project; they recuperate the lowly woman in the same way that Taylor's works recuperate the lowly poet and waterman.

An overwhelming number of Taylor's references to his work and status as a poet are defensive, suggesting that Taylor either actually felt anxiety over his

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[75] See Helgerson's chapter on Jonson in *Self-Crowned Laureates*, pp. 101-84.

[76] James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 2. Bednarz observes, "Jonson's autobiographical personae are interesting not only in themselves as symbolic acts of self-fashioning but also as the first example in the history of English drama of a playwright self-consciously defending his status and explicitly defining the literary principles upon which his art is based" (3).

[77] Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Poets' War,* 201.

worth as poet, or that he found the humility *topos* especially useful for fashioning his poetic identity regardless of any actual anxiety. In *The Sculler*, Taylor positions himself as a lowly poet through a series of encomia that preface the sonnets, epigrams, and satires comprising the collection. To John Moray, he mentions his "worthless wit" ($A2^{v}$); he asks Ben Jonson to "beare the boldness of the honest Sculler, / whose worthlesse praise can fill thy praise no fuller" ($A2^{v}$).[78] Taylor often pairs his praise of others, in *The Sculler*, with verses written in praise of himself. Henry Taylor admires John Taylor despite his "unpractisd Pen" and "toylesome Oare" ($A3^{r}$); an "I.P." says of Taylor, "thy Muse is plaine; but witty, faire, and rich" ($A3^{r}$); Samuel Rowlands fuses Taylor's water-taxi labor with poetic inspiration, explaining how Taylor has gone "from the Tower" to "the Hellicon" and "so arrived at Pernassus Mount / and back returnd laden with Poets wit" ($A4^{r}$). Rowlands adds that there is "not such another on the Thames doth rowe" ($A4^{r}$). Taylor's friend John Moray addresses the issue of Taylor's reputation directly, claiming that readers should not judge his poetry harshly simply because it comes from a waterman: "thy name makes not thy verse the worse" ($A4^{v}$).

[78] Taylor, *The Sculler*. Taylor explicitly references his position as marginal waterman and/or unworthy poet throughout *The Sculler*, thus providing the rhetorical position against which he defends himself elsewhere; see especially Epigrams 1 and 29 in the first half of the poem, and Epigram 5 and the Epilogue that conclude the work. Other poems, such as *The Eighth Wonder* (1613), *Heavens Blessing* (1613), *Odcombs Complaint* (1613), *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* (1614), *Faire and Fowle Weather* (1615), *Taylors Urania* (1616), *Superbiae Flagellum* (1621), and *Taylors Motto* (1621), feature similar rhetorical positioning of Taylor as unlearned, lowly-employed, and unworthy. For these poems, see his Folio, *All the workes of John Taylor.*

Taylor directly addresses the reader and the critic who might say that he "should deale no further then [his] boat," arguing that although he may "sweat it at [his] Oare" and "with labour [he his] living purse, / yet doe[s] [he] think [his] lines no jot the worse" (B1^{r}). Poets and watermen, Taylor claims, are such members of society "which neither king nor common-wealthe can misse" (Ee5^{r}).[79] Similar to Long Meg, who served country and King by acting most unwomanly on the fields of Boulogne, Taylor has an important role to play in London society even if he is lowborn and unlearned. Indeed, his very value, like Long Meg's worth, derives from the odd combination of marginality and productivity. The implied conclusion is that Taylor's peers should celebrate his aberrant contributions to both poetry and society in the same way that the King celebrated Long Meg's unfeminine victory on the battlefield.

In *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* (1614), Taylor's anxiety about his status as poet in particular and the legitimacy of poets in general appears in full force, evidenced by the work's inclusion of "an Apologie in defence of Natural English Poetrie" (B1^{r}-C1^{r}). Taylor explains that his "natural"—as opposed to learned, and thus artificial—gift of verse can move minds to virtue, as poetry does in the hands of authors such as Sidney, in the mouths of virtuous preachers, and in the hands of benign monarchs such as King James. "Twix poetry and best divinity," he argues, along the lines of Sidney, "there is such neere and deere affinity" (B1^{v}). Taylor defends English poetry against those who would find it inferior to poetry in other classical languages, claiming that such critics are akin

[79] John Taylor, "Taylors Motto," *All the workes of John Taylor.*

to birds fouling their own nests (and perhaps here we sense echoes of the feminine apologists who remind misogynists that they are the sons of women). Translators, especially, merely steal from other languages, passing off foreign poetry as their own; one benefit of Taylor's ignorance of Greek, Latin, and other languages is that he cannot thus be such a thief (the extent to which Taylor's ignorance is also another *topos* is worthy of debate).

In the same way that Long Meg is confident in her own authority and skill yet defends it nonetheless, Taylor writes from a defensive position to both counter those skeptical of his literary talents and establish his right to be regarded as a poet. Regarding his own efforts, Taylor claims, "my skil's as good to write, to sweat, or row" ($B3^{r}$), and he insists that the scholars who study poetry are not necessarily superior to such "artless creature[s]" ($B4^{v}$) as himself. Taylor is convinced that he is as much a poet as other more erudite poets even if he has no formal education or training. We briefly glimpse his confidence in his poetic skills when he claims, "the land yeelds many poets, were I gone / the water sure (I durst be sworne) had none" ($I3^{v}$). Unlike other literary forms, the controversy about women is necessarily polemical, so when Taylor uses the genre for his personal and poetic agendas, he finds an established argumentative tradition that becomes useful to him.

Taylor was very much aware that his literary skills were not the same as those of his better-educated and highly praised peers: Panek observes, "unable to compete with the classicism of poets such as Ben Jonson and unwilling to attempt the artificial style of the Metaphysical and lyrical poets, [Taylor] chose instead to

write simply about everyday life."[80] Although Taylor excelled at satirical verse, his ongoing display of his facility with traditional forms such as the sonnet and the epigram "suggest[s] that Taylor hoped initially to be considered a serious poet."[81] His decision to publish a folio edition of his works also reflects a desire to be considered among the ranks of "real" poets such as Jonson and Shakespeare,[82] even if, I would add, it also reflects his desire to benefit from his poetry. His first publication fervently defends his writing while simultaneously apologizing for his "harsh unlearned rhymes" (*The Sculler*, $F4^{v}$). Biographer Bernard Capp argues that Taylor's writing "reveals a lasting unease about his social and cultural identity," an unease Taylor capitalized on in order to build his literary career.[83]

Taylor's 1621 *Superbiae flagellum, or, The whip of Pride* provides a full defense of his own poetic ambition. Taylor enumerates the criticisms levied against poets and poetry: poets' best inventions are "threed bare," unoriginal (and perhaps even plagiarized), poorly modeled on or stolen from other languages (or worse, translated and deemed a poet's own invention) ($A6^{r-v}$). Taylor, the honest sculler, could never commit such "robbery" because he "understand[s] no forreigne speach" ($A6^{v}$). Furthermore, Taylor and other poets criticized for their

[80] Panek, "John Taylor," 256. I would qualify Panek's observation with the suggestion that Taylor's "inability to compete" with other poets is a rhetorical position aimed at enabling a profitable—because anomalous—poetic identity.

[81] Panek, "John Taylor," 257.

[82] Panek, "John Taylor," 261.

[83] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 12, 54.

weak skills in poetic invention are merely products of their time. "Tis because bounty from the world is fled, / True liberality is almost dead" ($A7^r$), he claims, that poets don't bother (or cannot bother) with original conceits. If a poet can hardly make enough money to feed himself, Taylor argues, how can he be expected to produce original verse? In order for poets to produce worthwhile poetry, Taylor claims, they must be compensated generously for their work. A well-compensated poet "with rare lines [will] inrich a world of paper, Shall make *Apollo,* and the Muses caper" ($A8^r$). Furthermore, Taylor argues, the lack of good poetry reflects a lack of good readers rather than a lack of "good poets": poetry is as good now as it ever was, but readers, facing an excessive amount of verse,

> Hold Good lines in a loath'd saciety,
> Whilst paltry Riming, Libells, Jigges, and Jests,
> Are to their appetites continuall feasts.
> With which their fancies they doe feed and fill,
> And take the Ill for good, the Good for ill. ($A7^v$)

Thus, poets are not to blame for the current state of literary affairs because readers have lost the ability to discern what *good* poetry actually is. Perhaps this last point ultimately explains Taylor's attraction to the controversy genre as a weapon in his arsenal for defending himself: as popular, "low" literature, the debate about women is in an analogous position to traditional literary forms as Taylor is to learned poets.

For a man preoccupied with his poetic worth in a time preoccupied with social hierarchies, Taylor's turn to the controversy genre as a location for

expressing and resolving these preoccupations is undeniably surprising but ultimately resourceful. In his non-controversy poetry, Taylor acknowledges his own position as unlearned and non-elite, and his attack on women establishes equilibrium between the shrewish actions of men and women and the faulty nature of diverse types of labor. This attack on women, however, also legitimizes the shrew, making her a valuable part of society because she articulates the erroneous ways of her shrew-husband. Such poetic moves make it possible for Taylor, in *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*, to return to both the concept of the shrew and the concept of productive work and reimagine both for his own benefit.

Taylor, Meg, and English Poetic Authority

Taylor regularly notes his position as "other" to the swarms of poets educated in classical literature and philosophy, claiming that this lack does not negate his potential as poet.[84] In doing so, Taylor juxtaposes a learned, non-

[84] In the epistle dedicatory to his Folio, for example, Taylor bemoans how poetry is too often judged not by its own merits but by the name of its author: "An anthem was once sung before the Dutchess of *Urbin*, and but slightly regarded; but after, beeing knowne that *Jaquin de pris* made it, it was extolled" (A4r); see *All the workes of John Taylor.* Taylor prefaces *The Life and Death of The Most Blessed Amongst All Women, The Virgin Mary, The Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ* with a standard expression of humility that points up Taylor's lowly status: "I confess my selfe the meanest of men, and most unworthy of all to write of her, that was the best of Women: but my hope is, that Charity will cover my faults" (C3v); see *All the workes of John Taylor*. Taylor begs the readers of "The Whip of Pride" to pardon his ignorance and "bear with [his] bad schollership" (A3^{v}); see *Superbiae flagellum, or, The whip of pride.* In his ode to Beggars (a condition he notes will eventually apply to all poets), he uses a line from Sidney to describe himself as an unlearned poet, who "ne'r dranke of *Agganippes* Well," and "never tasted the *Pegasian* Spring, / or Tempe, nor e're heard the Muses sing" (I6^{v}); see *All the workes of John Taylor.* In a prefatory poem to "Odcombs Complaint," Taylor remarks that he knows the conventions of poetry "like a Sculler not a Scholler," but this should not stop readers from actually giving his poetry a chance to delight them before levying criticism (Ee6^{v}); see *All the workes of John*

English tradition of poetry with his own, natural, vernacular English art. Indeed, he tries to capitalize on his position as anti-scholar, explaining that it can even make his poetry clearer and more pleasurable. He claims he will not "[his] sense or meaning marre, / with tearmes obscure, or phrases fetcht from farre, / nor will [he] any way equivocate, / with words sophisticall, or intricate, / *Utopian-Fustianisme*, poore heathen Greeke, / to put [his] Readers wits to groape and seeke."[85] Taylor finds (or makes) himself an "other" to the more established British authorities of his time. In the *Pennyless Pilgrimage*, he juxtaposes his mock-travel narrative, for example, with the works of Camden and Speede:

> That I should write of Cities situations,
>
> Or that of Countries I should make relations:
>
> ……
>
> ……
>
> Of Shieres, and Pieres, and memorable things,
>
> Of Lives and deaths of great commanding Kings,
>
> I touch not those, they not belong to mee:
>
> But if such things as these you long to see,
>
> Lay downe my Booke, and but vouchsafe to reede,

Taylor. Throughout his poetic feud with Thomas Coryate, Taylor uses his position as lowly sculler to reinforce his use of the humility *topos*, pleading to the reader in his preface to "The Worlds eighth Wonder," "as my lines are somewhat defective in their shape, so I pray thee do not hacke them, nor hew them with thy stammering, to make them worse, nor Buzzard-blast them with thy calumniating mewes, tushes, and scurvies" (Ff3^{v}); see *All the workes of John Taylor.*

[85] John Taylor, "A bawd A vertuous bawd, a modest bawd: as shee deserves, reproove, or else applaud," *All the workes of John Taylor,* Hh5^{v}.

The learned *Camden*, or laborious *Speede.*[86]

Similarly, in *A Memorial of Monarchs*, Taylor's collection of brief verses chronicling the history of the English Kings, Taylor acknowledges that readers wishing to know more about the various kings' actions or "how former times doe runne" should consult other sources, such as Holinshed, "Boetius," or "the laborious paines of Middleton."[87] In both of these poems, *Pennyless Pilgrimage* and *A Memorial for Monarchs*, Taylor acknowledges the perceived "un-Englishness" of his work in comparison to the learned, classically-based works of other authors.

Crucially, this conflict between the vernacular and classical—between the "other" that is Taylor and the high-born, educated poet—finds articulation and resolution in Taylor's controversy texts, namely, the *Sharpe Revenge.* A figure fit for English Chronicles and a "[bearer] of nostalgic nationalism"[88] whose posterity is earned on the battlefields as England strives to preserve its national interests, Long Meg represents a native alternative to the distant, erudite traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. Taylor's use of Long Meg to authorize and introduce his defense of women suggests that Taylor finds a way to imagine a new poetic authority to ground his efforts. Long Meg provides a strictly English authority to replace the Latinate authorities to which Taylor's lack of education limits his access. His recourse to Long Meg, a woman whose life is from "a golden time

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[86] *All the workes of John Taylor,* M1^{r}.

[87] *All the workes of John Taylor*, Ddd4^{v}.

[88] Waage, "Meg and Moll," 106.

when England *was* England,"[89] suggests his recognition that English folkloric history—the mythical, legendary, and marginal—is an authoritative source of poetic inspiration and invention. As a fighting woman, she also represents an alternative history to those regularly found in sources such as Camden and Speede. In instrumentalizing Long Meg for his personal agenda, then, Taylor rewrites the utility of the marginal figure, claiming her as central and necessary. From the pages of English popular culture, Long Meg represents a surprising and delightful source of national pride, even if she also represents woman unbridled.[90]

That Taylor weaponizes Long Meg to further his personal agenda is even more appropriate in light of the other moments in the *Sharpe Revenge* that make it possible to read Taylor's plight as similar to that of maligned women.[91] The women note that they, unlike men, do not engage in "inhumane" and treasonous

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[89] Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women,* 72.

[90] Three key episodes from Long Meg's *Life* associate her with a very special sense of English pride. These include her battle with the Spanish Knight James Castile (ch. 4), her exploits in France (chs. 10-12), and her revenge upon a Friar who takes advantage of Meg's illness in her later years (ch. 18).

[91] For the delightfully appropriate phrase, "weaponizes Long Meg," I am indebted to Kellie Robertson. The *Sharpe Revenge* is not the only work in which Taylor fashions himself or his poetry as a marginal woman; see the poem "A Whore," in which Taylor blurs the boundaries between his poetry and his personal identity, and that of the honest Whore who, though devalued by society, has merits worth considering (Kk1-Kk5^{r}). The connection becomes explicit in the first line of the poem: "my booke, an honest *Whore* I fitly call, / because it treats of *whores* in generall: / Then though this Pamphlet I doe name a *Whore,* / let no man shun her company therefore" (Kk1^{r}). The poem ends with verses on "a comparison bewixt a Whore and a Booke." The poem following this one in the Folio continues Taylor's interest in aligning his work with the marginal, comparing "a thiefe and a booke."

acts, such as the Gun-Powder plot (*Sharpe Revenge,* D4^{v}). Nor are enterprising women like those "Masculine milke-sops [who] dare doe nothing" (D4^{v}). In his *Motto,* Taylor similarly positions himself as a faithful servant of the King:

> *I have* a King whom I am bound unto,
>
> *To doe him* all the service, I can doe:
>
> To whom when I shall in Alegeance faile,
>
> Let all the Devills in hell my soule a[ss]aile;
>
> If any in his gouernment abide,
>
> In whom foule Treacherous mallice doth recide
>
> 'Gainst him, his Royall offspring or his friends,
>
> I wish that Halters may be all their [en]ds. (Ee1^{r})

Women—and by analogy, Taylor, because of his class status—may not participate directly in matters of Court or governance, but they participate in upholding society by not threatening the powers that be. Justifying the existence of women such as Long Meg, Tattle-well and Hit-him-home rhetorically ask,

> [D]id you heare that ever any women ran away from their Captaines Colours: but whatsoever they did undertake, they went through stich with it, and not flye like Cowards, or fight in private Armour, or Coates of Male, as you men have done? [B]ut women you have heard of, who have been forced to lye and fight it out, and endure the brunt, when you men were not able to stand to it. (*Sharpe Revenge,* H1^{r})[92]

[92] The phrase "through stich" refers to the figurative phrase "through-stitch" or "thorough-stitch," meaning to complete or carry out a task completely. *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "through-stitch."

Tattle-well and Hit-him-home legitimize women's unconventional behavior by positioning it as a corrective to the behavior of socially privileged men, as the shrews in the *Lectures* legitimize their own shrewing by imagining it as a corrective to their husbands' actions. Similarly, Taylor legitimizes his own work as a waterman by positioning it as superior to other trades. His *Motto* explains:

> I have a trade, much like an Alcumist,
> That ofttimes by extraction, if I list,
> With sweating labour at a woodden Ore,
> Ile get the coyn'd[,] refined silver Ore.
> Which I count better then the shaking tricks,
> Of cuz'ning Tradsmen, or rich Politikes,
> Or any proud foole, ne're so proud or wise,
> That doth my needefull honest trade despise. (Ee2^{v})

With the heroic biography of Long Meg fresh in their minds, Taylor's readers are likely to grant some room for the Tattle-well and Hit-him-home's claims to be true even if they would also mark such women as unfeminine and thus fit for scrutiny. If women can be recuperated through such logic, so, too, can the waterpoet.

The female speakers of Taylor's defense also articulate sentiments that, I suggest, represent Taylor's poetic work. They claim that their intent in defending women is not to "menace the men, but their mindes; not their Persons, but their Penns; the horridness of their humours, and the madness of their muses" (*Sharpe Revenge* F7^{r}). Furthermore, they will not even deign to deal with the "pittifull

Poetry, and rime Dottrell, borrowed out of Ballads" (G1^{v}) that comprise the *Lectures*. The women quickly and comically amplify this disparaging comment towards "borrowed" material:

> Though borrowing now be
> into fashion growne,
> Yet I dare swear, what
> thou writst was thy own.
> For indeed I know none who else will Challenge them. (*Sharpe Revenge* G1^{v})

Here, the women raise the possibility that Taylor "borrowed" his shoddy verses, and then they humorously suggest that the verses *must* be Taylor's because no one else would claim them. Behind these comments, surely, is a reference to the critics—particularly Richard Coryate—who claimed Taylor was a master plagiarist, claims that Taylor took great pains to counter.[93] In the *Nipping and Snipping of Abuses*, for example, he defends himself against such attacks. To those who "with foule and false calumnious words belie [him]: / With brazen fronts, and flinty hard beleefe / Affirming or suspecting [him] a theefe" (B3^{v}), he counters: "I know I never any thing have done, / But what may from a weake invention runne" (B4^{r}). By placing his assertions of innocence in the mouths of women who "dare swear, what [he] writst was [his] own," Taylor implies that

[93] Taylor's feud with Coryate is described in Capp's *The World of John Taylor,* 13-14. According to Capp's account, Taylor initiated the feud in *The Sculler* with "a gratuitous attack" (13) on Coryate, and the two butted heads back and forth for nearly eight years.

accusations of plagiarism are so absurd even women won't believe them. Additionally, Taylor aligns the poetic voice of *The Nipping and Snipping of Abuses* with those of the female apologists, reinforcing the notion that objective truth does not belong solely to those of the privileged classes and genders. As an added bonus, he gets to repeat in two very different discourses—in the controversy text *Womens Sharpe Revenge* and the poem *Nipping and Snipping of Abuses*—his promise that he is not a plagiarist.

In addition to capitalizing on the marginal positions of waterpoet and shrew, Taylor also uses the female speakers of *Sharpe Revenge* to ventriloquize his opponents. In doing so, he takes advantage of the possibility that putting his opponents' opinions in the mouths of harping women serves to discredit those opinions. As Tattle-well and Hit-him-home claim that slanderous men must surely forget their mothers, they argue that their anger is not with all men in general but only with scurrilous poets in particular. They decry those men with "sweet stinking Poetical verses" covering all manner of "feete without measure, rime, or reason" (*Sharpe Revenge,* E9^{r}). Not all poets fall under this category of the accused, though; only those "mungrill Rimsters" who "cough Logicke, speake Rhetoricke, . . . Belch poetry . . . And squirt Oratory" are "the most furious and fierce Pendragonists" who "blow and blast the fame of women" (E9^{v}-E10^{r}). Here, we must recognize that Taylor's poetry—sometimes full of nonsense, often purposely low—is the poetry described by the women, and their attacks on such work parrot those who found Taylor's poetry to be simple at best and "stinking" at worst. It becomes even clearer that Taylor's female speakers are

ventriloquizing his own nay-sayers when they explicitly question the type of poet who slanders women: "Now concerning your very passionate, but most pittifull Poetry, a question may be made, whether you be a Land Laureate, or a Marine Muse; A Land Poet, or a Water Poet; A Scholler, or a Sculler; Of Pernassus, or puddle Dock; Of Ionia, or Ivy Bridge" ($F7^{v}$-$F8^{r}$). The women paint misogynist poets into ambiguous positions in order to question the authority of such poets, and any reader of Taylor would recognize these lines as a humorous ventriloquizing of the way his own poetic status is questioned.

We should not find these two tactics of Taylor's—using maligned women to further his poetic agenda *and* using them to parrot his opponents—as conflicting or mutually exclusive. Rather, Taylor recognizes in the controversy genre, as he does in nearly every other genre in which he writes, the great elasticity and play of which he can take advantage. Furthermore, he realizes that the position of apologist, especially when occupied by a marginal figure such as the shrew, is a position whose voice is useful because of its marginality. His "double speak" in this defense of women, then, merely parallels the "double speak" afforded by the common practice of writing on both sides of the question. Taylor seizes the mutability of the genre and pushes it to its limits, all the while creating a new space in which he can continue his own self-authorizing project. The "individualist project" of Taylor—his relentless self-fashioning—is a project scholars impute to Taylor's travel writings and other work without question. But it cannot possibly be one that he merely leaves on the doorstep of the controversy genre. Rather, if we look closely at the issues and concerns that unite the *Divers*

Crabtree Lectures and *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*—such as what constitutes legitimate work and a respectable social position—we see that Taylor's self-fashioning continues in his foray into the controversy genre, even if it looks slightly different. Finally, we learn from Taylor's use of the controversy genre the extent to which discourses regarding the controversy about women were seen as available for appropriation into very different social and personal conversations. In his defense of women, the feminine apologist's voice becomes a voice through which Taylor and his readers can reimagine the social and poetic landscape of Renaissance England. Here, in this imaginative space, individuals retain their social value regardless of their social position, and England maintains a literary tradition fit to rival those of the Greek and Latin past.

Conclusion

In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina vows to confront King Leontes and tell him of the "unsafe lunes" (2.2.28) that have made him accuse Queen Hermione of adultery.[1] She anticipates that this moment of tense articulation will be quite fraught, but Paulina imagines it is necessary if there is to be any hope in correcting the King's unfounded accusations. As she readies herself to confront Leontes, she rationalizes that the role of telling truth to power—particularly a dangerous and accusatory truth—is a role appropriate to women: "he must be told on't, and he shall. The office / becomes a woman best" (2.2.29-30). Paulina never explains exactly why, as a woman, she is especially suited for confronting Leontes and pointing out his errors to him. But her vow to "beshrew" (2.2.28) the lunacy of the King suggests the logic behind her behavior. To "beshrew" the King's lunacy means to curse or blame his unwise behavior, and the verb has etymological roots in the action of "shrewing," a verbose cursing or scolding of someone.[2] To Shakespeare's audience, however, the word likely invoked the specifically feminine figure of the shrew, the garrulous woman of popular literature whose verbal aggression is most often turned towards her husband.

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[1] William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.vv. "beshrew" and "shrew."

Paulina's word choice indicates that perhaps the "office" becomes her, a woman, because women in general are excused from the parameters of socially acceptable speech because of their propensity for shrewishness. Women cannot be held to the same standards of discursive decorum as men, so their deviations from such decorum can be overlooked. Informing Paulina's claim that the office "becomes a woman best," then, is a major stereotype about women's speech that persists throughout history. If women are volatile, generous of speech and unsilenceable, then they are also apt figures to voice pressing but complicated and perhaps contradictory concerns. A woman's shifting nature makes her useful for articulating literary theories of multivalency, as the voices of Gosynhyll's women do. The questions of essential nature invoked by women's talkativeness make them—and men dressed or speaking as women—appropriate figures through which to demonstrate the performativity of conventions about human nature, as we see in the Swetnam cluster; and the very inability of women to act consistently according to cultural expectations for them, exemplified by Long Meg particularly and shrews generally, provides a poet such as John Taylor a crucial analogue through which he can express his own concerns with poetic authority and social value. Through—and because of—the voice of women, these authors can engage in discourses that, while not as fraught as telling a King of his "unsafe lunes," are disruptive in their own ways.

The implications of this project for narratives about early modern women's marginalization are clear: the ways that controversy authors use feminine apologists' voices to engage in issues outside the controversy indicate an

understanding of women's voices—and the symbolic figure of woman—as central and significant rather than marginal. Thus, this dissertation identifies in the controversy genre specifically the active representations of women that early modern scholars have recently located in other genres.[3] In addition, there are other conversations to which this work contributes and avenues of study for which it paves the way. Those deserve brief examination here, if only to situate this project as an arch through which additional possibilities can be viewed.

Periodization

This project both participates in and calls into question typical constraints of historical periodization. Chapter One most clearly engages in a cross-period analysis, destabilizing the comfortable assumption that the "early modern" is closer to the "modern" than the "medieval." In positioning Chaucer as a founding inspiration for works in the controversy, my dissertation suggests the significant work that may be done to connect the medieval and early modern periods through the genre of the controversy. Ester Sowernam's invocation of the female figures Reason and Experience demands a closer examination of the potential relationships between her work and that of Christine de Pisan, and Taylor's invocation of medieval notions of shrews also points to the possibility that these

[3] See, for example, Sharon L. Jansen's work on powerful queens in early modern Europe: *Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Laura Gowing's essay on women's role in enforcing authority over women's reproductive systems: "Ordering the Body: Illegitimacy and Female Authority in Seventeenth-Century England," *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43-62; Theodora Jankowski, *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

early modern texts more fully respond to and reflect medieval ideologies than previously recognized. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that identifying through lines across historical periods is integral to unsettling the hegemony of the Renaissance canon and its consistent characterization as the nascent point of all things modern and enlightened.[4]

The medieval to early modern divide is not the only one in need of reassessment. Despite the oft-used stopping point of 1640, the controversy thrives well into the 1700s. After Taylor, a number of writers continue to engage in the controversy about women, such as a late seventeenth-century debate composed of Robert Gould's "Love Given O'er" (1682) and the response of Sarah (Fige) Egerton (1686).[5] In 1673, Bathsua Makin ardently defends a woman's right to

[4] While the word "hegemony" may be strong, I am invoking Margreta de Grazia's accurate assessment that "whether you work on one side or the other of the medieval/modern divide determines nothing less than relevance. Everything after that divide has relevance to the present; everything before it is irrelevant" (453); see "The Modern Divide: From Either Side," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37.3 (2007): 453-67. De Grazia's claim that "the period divide is most damaging to the Middle Ages" (456) reflects my own experience throughout this project, as current work on the controversy falters in adequately bringing together medieval controversy works and later members of the genre. For a compelling account of the influence of periodization on the restriction of women's writing from the traditional canon, see David Wallace, "Periodizing Women: Mary Ward (1585-1645) and the Premodern Canon," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36.2 (2006): 397-453. Anne E.B. Coldiron posits what the field might look like if scholars moved the starting point of the traditional Renaissance period in England to 1476, a date that marks the introduction of the printing press in England; see "A Readable Earlier Renaissance: Small Adjustments, Large Changes," *Literature Compass* 3.1 (2005): 1-14.

[5] Gould, "Love Given O'er" (London: 1682), Wing G1422. This text has also been attributed to Thomas Brown. Sarah Fige Egerton, *The Female advocate, or, An answer to a late satyr against the pride, lust and inconstancy, &c. of woman*

education, offering numerous exempla of women learned in languages, literature, and religion as well as a series of impressive rebuttals of anticipated objections.[6] Judith Drake defends women through *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696), and Mary Astell makes "*Some Reflections upon Marriage"* (1700) in response to the troubled marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Mazarin.[7] Astell's reflections partly articulate sentiments that seem heavily drawn from the female apologist's tradition in the controversy. Lady Mary Chudleigh's *The Female Advocate* (1700) against John Sprint uses, remarkably, three male voices to assist her apology and invective; Mary Collier's *The Woman's Labour* (1739) responds to Stephen Duck's scorn of working women in *The Thresher's Labour* (1730).[8]

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written by a lady in vindication of her sex (London: 1686), Wing (2nd ed.), E251A.

[6] See *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (London: 1673), Wing M309.

[7] Judith Drake, *An essay in defence of the female sex in which are inserted the characters of a pedant, a squire, a beau, a vertuoso, a poetaster, a city-critick, &c : in a letter to a lady / written by a lady* (London: 1696), Wing D2125A . For a discussion of the work's earlier attribution to Astell, see Ekaterina V. Haskins, "A Woman's Inventive Response," 299, n.3. Mary Astell, *Some reflections upon marriage occasion'd by the Duke & Dutchess of Mazarine's case, which is also considered* (London: 1700), Wing A4067.

[8] Lady Mary Chudleigh, *The female advocate; or, A plea for the just liberty of the tender sex, and particularly of married women. Being reflections on a late rude and disingenuous discourse, delivered by Mr. John Sprint, in a sermon at a wedding, May 11th, at Sherburn in Dorsetshire, 1699* (London: 1700), Wing (2nd ed.), C3984; Mary Collier, *The woman's labour: an epistle to Mr. Stephen Duck; in answer to his late poem, called The thresher's labour. To which are added, the three wise sentences, taken from the first book of Esdras, Ch.III. and IV* (London:1739), STC T052659; Stephen Duck, *Poems on several subjects: written by Stephen Duck, Lately a poor Thresher in a Barn in the County of Wilts, at the Wages of Four Shillings and Six Pence per Week: which were publickly*

That these works are rarely considered alongside their earlier controversy counterparts is a result of continued struggles with the constraints of periodization. Without ignoring the major religious, political, and economic shifts that occur, we can continue imagining a way of working with this genre beyond the mid-seventeenth century.

In pointing towards the works of this project as additional evidence in the argument for reconsidering literary periods, I mean to imply more than just the debate about terminology.[9] As Heather Dubrow and Frances E. Dolan wrote nearly a decade ago but with as much relevance as ever, "it is necessary to reflect constantly on periodization."[10] Dolan and Dubrow offer a helpful caveat to the

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read by The Right Honourable the Earl of Macclesfield, in the drawing-room at Windsor-Castle, on Friday the 11th of September, 1730. to Her Majesty: Who was thereupon most graciously pleased to take the Author into her Royal Protection, by allowing him a Salary of Thirty Pounds per Annum, and a small House at Richmond in Surrey, to live in, for the better Support of Himself and Family (London: 1730), STC T042654.

[9] Terms do matter, of course, and what we call these literary periods goes hand in hand with our ability and desire to read works from adjacent periods. Here, however, I am not concerned with the specific debate between "Renaissance" and "early modern" except insomuch as the debate has implications for scholarly consideration of the relationship between the medieval and the post-medieval. For a wonderful article that argues for the use of century-markers rather than descriptive terms, see James A. Parr, "A Modest Proposal: That we Use Alternatives to Borrowing (Renaissance, Baroque, Golden Age) and Leveling (Early Modern) in Periodization," *Hispania* 84.3 (2001): 406-16. While Parr's concern is with pre-1700 Spanish literature, his argument has clear and compelling implications for English literature. Period concepts, he argues, "are not to be taken all that seriously. They are arbitrary categorizations that find expression in the rhetoric of the moment" (407). For a literary scholar's examination of the term, see Heather Dubrow and Frances E. Dolan, "The Term Early Modern," *PMLA* 109.5 (1994): 1025-27.

[10] Dubrow and Dolan, "The Term Early Modern," 1026.

issue of terminology, reminding scholars that it is not periodization per se that enables one to "attend simultaneously to the particular . . . and to continuity and change across time."[11] Rather, the care with which a scholar conceives of and engages in her research and writing dictates the degree to which any study can surpass the limitations of periodization. Thus, as critics continue to examine the use of terms such as "medieval," "the Middle Ages," "early modern," "Renaissance," and "pre-modern," we can support and encourage projects that strive to work beyond periodization and in spite of it, whatever the period boundaries may be at any given time. This does not mean merely stretching "the starting point of the modern back a century or more so that the Middle Ages is no longer a middle of any kind, but rather a beginning *avant le letter.*" Rather, it means continuing to unsettle, as scholars of the past two decades have, any expectation that the Renaissance is the natural home to the "new, [to] invention, [to] novelty, [to] innovation."[12] The terms of the controversy about women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries variously interact with terms of the controversy from years prior, and years subsequent, in more ways than simply reusing centuries-old commonplaces.

Englishness . . . And Frenchness

From the perspective of periodization, then, this project encourages a broadening of typical uses of boundaries and a widening of the connections usually considered relevant. But not all about this project suggests such an

[11] Dubrow and Dolan, "The Term Early Modern," 1027.

[12] de Grazia, "The Modern Divide," 457-58.

expansive approach to the debate about women. In pointing to the ways that these controversy texts are engaged in specifically English concerns, my work suggests a necessary reconsideration of the French *querelle des femmes* generally and Christine de Pisan specifically. In tandem with such reconsideration should be an effort to analyze the works of the English controversy alongside English sources and within English historiography in order to contextualize more accurately the controversy and identify its role in the development of English literary history.

Let me back up. Nearly every discussion of the controversy in the last three decades mentions the genre's relationship to the French *querelle des femmes*, which in turn claims Christine de Pisan as its foremother. This, despite evidence that translations of Christine's *querelle* works were not as widely circulated in England as has previously been thought. For example, Susan Hull notes the French beginnings of the controversy about women, and Elaine Beilin frames her discussion of women writers of the English Renaissance with reference to Christine de Pisan even as she notes that translations of Christine were probably not widespread.[13] Similarly, Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki contextualize the English debate about women "in terms of its Continental antecedents and elite manuscript circulation in England,"[14] while Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees summarize, "the debate about gender that [Christine's writing] transmits is frequently interpreted as a foundational event without

[13] Hull, *Chaste, Silent, & Obedient*; Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*.

[14] Malcolmson and Suzuki, introduction to *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, 1.

precedent in French or other medieval cultures."[15] Anne Coldiron's study on the relationship between French *querelle* poems and their English translations takes a measured stance on Christine de Pisan's influence in England even though her work charts the cross-over between early French and English poetry.[16] A notable exception to the tendency to overlook non-French influences in the controversy is Alcuin Blamires's study of the French and Latin precursors to the genre, but his work on the Middle Ages, perhaps because of the issues of periodization I mention above, seems to have had comparatively little influence on the work of scholars interested in the early modern English controversy.[17]

The overt and subtle gestures these and other scholars make towards a French-to-English trajectory in the controversy are not inherently inaccurate. I am not disputing that, to use Coldiron's phrase, "France [is] England's most significant cultural other (since 1066, anyway)."[18] Nor I am proposing that we already have a complete picture of the relationship among French, English, and Anglo-Norman texts debating women. In fact, recent works on the subject shed light on how much there is yet to learn about the extent to which notions of English literature and "Englishness" itself are inextricably tied to England's

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[15] Fenster and Lees, introduction to *Gender in Debate,* 2.

[16] Coldiron, *English Printing,* 22-36. Coldiron argues that Christine was authoritative in England but not in the *querelle* context, and that Christine's textual influence and authority look quite different in a non-courtly, printed context than they do in a courtly manuscript context.

[17] Blamires, *The Case for Women*.

[18] Coldiron, "A Readable Earlier Renaissance," 6.

relationship with France after the Norman Conquest. Deanne Williams adeptly makes the case that in creating its own national and literary identity, England in the late Middle Ages shows signs of "conflicting desires to emulate French culture and to articulate a distinctly English voice."[19] In the very idea of Frenchness, English authors such as Chaucer and Shakespeare find ways to conceptualize what it means to be English, and this conceptualization is marked by alternating experiences of identification with and alienation from notions of what the modifier "French" signifies.[20] Williams advocates for the application of research exemplified by scholars such as Elizabeth Salter, who ardently argues that "England's 'obsession with the continent' from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries is a fact to be reckoned with."[21] Salter's work demonstrates the extent to which understandings of "Englishness" in these formative years cannot always or fruitfully be separated from the Anglo-Norman contexts that forged them.

What I am suggesting is that the sophistication with which scholars have more recently attended to the literary relationship generally between France and England be turned specifically towards the English controversy and its relationship to the *querelle des femmes.* Scholarly preference for a teleological

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[19] Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2.

[20] See especially her introduction, *The French Fetish,* 1-17.

[21] Salter, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art, and Patronage of Medieval England,* ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5. Salter's phrase "obsession with the continent" is originally from G.O. Sayles*, The Medieval Foundations of London* (London: Methuen, 1948), 270.

narrative from Christine to Swetnam occludes investigation into the ways this genre reflects distinctly English concerns and engages with English sources.[22] Additionally, this narrative hinders a more accurate investigation of the relationship between French and English works in the genre, investigations of the type modeled by Coldiron's examination of sixteenth-century poetry and Williams's examination of Shakespeare's history plays. Gosynhyll's use of Chaucer, the Swetnam play's English ending (especially important given the play's non-English origins), and Taylor's recourse to English folk history are clear indications that English writers in the controversy are especially interested in notions of Englishness even if the genre itself has strong links to its French counterpart. It should not be surprising that through a century that experienced great shifts in national religion and politics, shifts reflected in other genres, the controversy genre would also register such a cultural emphasis on notions of national identity. If we can even partially set aside scholarly narratives about the nascent "Frenchness" of the controversy genre in favor of both an examination of the genre's Englishness and a more nuanced account of its relationship with the French materials, I believe we will discover even more about the ways the English texts in the genre engage with issues particularly relevant to their time and place. Such discoveries will in turn illuminate the genre's relationship to its French and Italian counterparts by putting into sharper relief distinct overlaps and discontinuities.

[22] My investment in the Englishing of the genre is also reflected in my choice, throughout this project, to use the term "controversy" rather than *querelle des femmes* when referring to the English works in the genre.

Evidence in New Places

Finally, this project emphasizes the benefits of continuing to diversify the evidence used in discussions of women in English history. Specifically, the debate about women is a genre that has much to tell us about the way early modern authors imagined the value of women as participants in critical discourses. Work by scholars in the last few decades has shown how much we can learn by looking at old texts for new evidence that informs critical narratives about early modern Englishwomen. For example, Jennifer Summit's study of women and literary traditions in late medieval and early modern England raises the problem of the "lost woman writer."[23] Here, she traces the way in which such missing women authors were crucial to the codification of traditional literary forms and a masculine canon. Active constructions of lost women writers came to play a crucial role in constituting notions of English literariness throughout late medieval and early modern eras. Once this tradition of English literature gains footing in the seventeenth-century, it does not include women by its very nature, thus aiding the absence of many women from the tradition while enabling the valorization of a few.[24]

Returning to previously examined texts in a new way, however, enables Kim Coles to respond to and challenge Summit's characterization of lost women.

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[23] Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[24] Summit, *Lost Property*, 205.

In the afterword to her examination of women and religious writing in Renaissance England, Coles suggests, "the disappearance of women from English literary history in the seventeenth century is purely a rhetorical vanishing act" wherein "by magnifying the reputations of certain women writers, male poets of the period caused others to disappear."[25] This magnification and resulting suppression is due, she suggests, to the gradual stabilization of English political and religious culture after the Reformation. During this stabilization, men remained in control over the various cultural practices whose earlier fracturing had enabled women writers. In reasserting class and gender hierarchies, women and, to use Mihoko Suzuki's phrase, "male subalterns,"[26] experienced a discursive alignment that reflected their marginalization and subsequent absence from acts of writing and records of such acts. Rhetorically, then, women writers vanished, but not actually. When their voices become bound up with other categorically peripheral voices, as Suzuki mentions, and as we see explicitly in the case of John Taylor, the agency that scholars have come to associate with women's writing is symbolically relocated from women writers to women's voices, even if those voices are written by men. The controversy genre, bound as it is within popular forms, is an ideal place to search for traces of both women and male subalterns as writers and figurative speakers. As scholars continue to read old texts with attention towards what they say about women and women writers, we will

[25] Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing,* 184.

[26] Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects,* 7.

continue to qualify our assessments of the early modern literary landscape in the way that Coles qualifies Summit's claims.

Evidence about women in early modern England importantly comes not just from women's writing, but also from sources such as visual images depicting women and women's participation in material economies such as gift-exchanges. Recent work on precisely this range of data has taught us more about early modern women than we could ever know were we to restrict our pool of evidence only to the literary or to works written by women.[27] Thus, we must continue to be conscious of considering the question of women writers alongside the question of *representations* of women, even if these representations of women are created by men, in genres that otherwise participate in or reflect the marginalization of women, or in mediums other than writing. The signs of women's resistance to and contestation of cultural patriarchies that we hope to find in women writers explicitly we might instead find in the way women *as figures* and *as voices* are used by authors to negotiate social concerns. The controversy genre, often understood first and foremost as a genre that traffics in centuries-old commonplaces, is an equally fruitful archive for investigating topics of women's agency and speech.

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[27] See, for example, Laura Lunger Knoppers's use of portraiture of Esther Inglis writing to introduce her edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, pp. 1-5; Jane Donawerth's essay "Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange," *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture*, pp. 2-18; Albrecht Classen, "Sixteenth-Century Cookbooks, *Artes* Literature, and Female Voices: Anna Weckerin (Keller) and Sabina Welser," *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literatures* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 339-66.

I do not mean to imply that women written are the same cultural phenomena as women writing; instead, I mean that the figurative speaking woman in the controversy is not merely a static convention, regardless of the author's gender. A woman's fictive voice is not the same as that of a historical subject, but they are reciprocally informing categories; this mutuality in the controversy genre has been largely ignored. The works I examine here place women in the writing landscape even not always as authors, providing additional proof to modern scholarly claims that women's voices have always been there, but we have not always been searching for them in the right places. The authors of the controversy texts I examine here are eagerly saying important things about rhetorical method, conventions of identity, and poetic and social identities; and that office does, indeed, become a woman best.

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