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# Telling New Tales: Modernizations of Chaucer in the Eighteenth Century

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Telling New Tales:  
Modernizations of Chaucer in the Eighteenth Century

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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## ABSTRACT

Any review of medieval culture and literature in the British eighteenth century requires some consideration for the modernizations of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Effectively a collaboration that spanned the entire century, this project began with Dryden and Pope and continued in earnest with lesser-known poets like George Ogle and William Lipscomb. The resulting modernization of every Chaucerian tale between 1700 and 1795 revisits medieval themes, but it also displays contemporary anxieties through presentations of language, content, style, and rhetorical intent that are sometimes vastly different from Chaucer's originals.

The modernization project is worthy of study, in particular because it reflects, across several generations of poets, the religious and political landscape of the late-Stuart and Georgian dynasties. Thus, through the completion of the modernized text, the text of Great Britain as it moved throughout the 1700s is also illuminated. The resulting eighteenth-century Chaucer looks with keen attention at the ideological conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism, especially within the context of events like the Glorious Revolution, the Hanoverian succession, the Jacobite uprisings, and the threat of war with Continental powers across the Channel.

In the process of rewriting the *Tales*, the modernizers unwittingly accomplished something else, of no less importance. Through their own close reading of the medieval, they articulated attitudes and interpretations that contribute to the modernization project in their own time but also anticipate modern accepted scholarship by several centuries.

At a minimum, any gathering awareness of the eighteenth-century Chaucer sheds more light on Britain's defiant steps toward patriotic Anglican rule at the start of the 1800s. While this better understanding can help unravel Britain's historical sense of its "dark" Catholic past, it can also help show the development of other literary genres, like the Gothic novel, with more clarity.

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## I. CHAUCER'S FAME IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

When Caroline Spurgeon published her monumental review of Chaucerian “Criticism and Allusion” in 1925, she began her discussion of the eighteenth century with the question of translation. By 1700, celebrated poets such as Spenser, Shakespeare, and Chaucer figured prominently in the debate over the need to translate, simply because their use of the language was already regarded as archaic and unapproachable by contemporary readers of the time. Spurgeon regards this inaccessibility to older works as one of the defining attitudes of the age—something, in fact, that developed into an anxiety shared by eighteenth-century writers who feared their own words might meet the same fate. She maintains that

There is no question but that the men of the eighteenth century were as firmly convinced as their forefathers that the continual change in the English language was destined to render unintelligible, within a comparatively short period, all writers who chose that medium.<sup>1</sup>

Now almost a century old, Spurgeon’s observations on the matter seem more poignant today than in her own time, especially as literary studies across time periods begin to collapse. Critics now see literary epochs, no longer separately, but as parts of a series of constant interactions and influences. Of course it is known, too, that the people of Stuart and Georgian Britain were not contained within temporal boundaries, nor did they look at themselves within the confines of a “long” eighteenth century. Instead, they were deeply affected by history, particularly their medieval roots, with a literary output that responded accordingly. But despite their fascination with the medieval, few were experiencing Middle English works through direct textual study. Spurgeon supports this claim, adding that in the early part of the eighteenth century, the “English of Chaucer was as to all intents and purposes a dead language... for which an arduous course of study was necessary.”<sup>2</sup> For those educated few, this general ignorance of the relatively recent past created tension about their present day and opened the door for a kind of translation that

glanced away, however slightly, from classical Greece and Rome and looked at the changes in the English language across time as something in need of expert mediation.

If Chaucer's language was considered dead by 1700, the general popularity or, at least, awareness of his poetry was likely suffering as well. It is here that Chaucer and Shakespeare deserve a side-by-side comparison in terms of their status during the Restoration and their rise to greater notoriety afterward. At the time of Charles II's ascension to the throne, these two were at least on level ground, even if that ground was starting to quake beneath their feet. Each, for example, had created vast amounts of material, both for private reading and public presentation. Each had been exalted immediately after death, encouraging numerous editions of their works, complete with glowing biographies and prefaced with elaborate testimonials of their worth. And each, by the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, was being modernized. It is this modernization piece in particular that occupies the present study because it possibly secured Chaucer's lasting fame. It was Shakespeare, however, who first benefitted.

Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor argue that Shakespeare was not necessarily well known between 1660 and 1700. They point out that his plays took "fourth place in frequency of recorded stagings" over this period, as those written by John Fletcher, Francis Beaumont, and Ben Jonson were presented more often.<sup>3</sup> During this time, too, Shakespeare's works were adapted with modern language and contemporary storylines, which proved an apparent mixed blessing. On the one hand, as Ritchie and Sabor contend, playgoers of the Restoration "would not necessarily have known the author of the work they saw on stage."<sup>4</sup> On the other, it was the process of adaptation that kept his plays on the stage, albeit with a lesser allure than Fletcher and Beaumont—not exactly household names today. When the movement toward a more authentic



Shakespeare took hold in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, his original themes needed only to be dusted off, leading to their widespread acceptance and eventual immortalization.

If anything caused a general appreciation for Chaucer and Shakespeare to stutter in the 1600s, it was, as Spurgeon notes, an objection to their use of language. Jean Marsden points out that Shakespeare's plays, for example, "were linguistically out of date" and that "Restoration audiences found their old-fashioned, even 'barbaric,' fondness for wordplay distasteful."<sup>5</sup> This disapproval led to their adaptation on the stage, which helped over time to generate a wider appeal. Chaucer suffered the same, if not a worse, perception. But added to this disadvantage, Chaucer's manuscripts were victimized by economic conditions that would, at the same time, begin to sink any public awareness of his medieval themes while alternatively buoying the popularity and long-term success of Shakespeare's storylines.

As the eighteenth century moved forward, literature transitioned out of the private home of aristocrats and into the new publically sponsored spheres of discourse, represented most famously by the open-discussion coffee houses. Shakespeare's works were already a part of this wider consciousness, given the insistence of his adapted plays on the Restoration and later eighteenth-century London stage. For the common consumer in terms of pocket money, too, Shakespeare was more accessible. Ian Watt notes that a majority of the population in England around 1700 was composed of the working and serving classes, most of whom averaged salaries of £6 to £20 per annum—in his words, a "subsistence level" that would have offered for them "little to spare for such luxuries as books and newspapers."<sup>6</sup> As for the much-more spectacular manuscripts commissioned by the landed aristocrats, the necessary range of commercial popularity across all the classes was practically nonexistent. Shakespeare's works benefited from the fact that they did not exist exclusively in manuscript or folio form; in fact, Shakespeare's art

was more prominently displayed in theaters rather than in print. And while the price of admission for a performance was roughly the equivalent of a quart of ale, the costs necessary to purchase a novel, let alone a bulky manuscript, would have otherwise fed an entire family for as many as two weeks.<sup>7</sup> As Betsy Bowden notes succinctly, “Chaucer did not come cheap before the late eighteenth century.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, any of his texts that were purchased were rarely sold in public bookshops; instead, they were passed from one wealthy generation to the next.<sup>9</sup>

Arguably, these economic conditions were also part of Shakespeare’s expanding name recognition and cultural popularity beginning in earnest in the 1700s. Chaucer’s name, by contrast, was in danger of becoming obscure. Worse yet, at the start of the 1700s, Shakespeare was developing into an iconic figure of “antiquity” in English letters. In other words, he was gaining admiration for his mastery of the medieval period—in some circles, a “model for the gothic,” an “analogue for the classics,” and the “father of English literature.”<sup>10</sup> The natural result was that any of the more-correctly identified “medieval” poets—those who came before Shakespeare but presented more-challenging Middle English verse—were judged along the Renaissance standard and found lacking in the court of popular appeal.

Given Chaucer’s downward trajectory at the turn of the eighteenth century, this study begins with Dryden’s decision in the 1690s to modernize his language for a new audience—something of tremendous significance though little considered by literary critics and historians today. Arguably, Dryden alone is responsible at this critical period for maintaining Chaucer’s name and promoting the richness of his works, particularly his *Canterbury Tales*. Pope would follow on the heels of Dryden’s posthumous success, and, even as a young, so-far-uncelebrated poet, he would do much to hold the momentum of Chaucer’s renewed identity. More than anything, Dryden especially, but also Pope, legitimized Chaucer while promoting his works

among all of their literate fandom. These two poets acted as a necessary bridge between the effete cultural patrons of seventeenth-century nobility and the widespread notoriety only to be gained through the populous middling classes. While not technically members of the landed gentry, themselves, Dryden and Pope were intellectual elites with more money and privilege than most. As such, they were able to appreciate Chaucer by nature of their education and through their own literary and financial connections; more importantly, they chose, through their modernizations of the *Tales*, to transmit this appreciation more widely, to new and previously unaware sections of the English populace. In terms of Shakespeare's similar reemergence, Dryden and Pope put Chaucer on the metaphorical stage, in recognizable costume, and lowered the price of admission.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, their efforts were not completely selfless. When Dryden and Pope took on the unprecedented charge of translating and modernizing Chaucer's works from deep in England's past, they accomplished two things, both for their own personal gain. First, as recognized by Spurgeon, they provided a therapeutic response to those overriding concerns of the age. They produced translations in the form of modernization that carefully balanced admiration with preservation, restoring the fame of those literary masters from long ago by dressing their words in a contemporary fashion. In doing so, they attempted to slow the perceived straight-line deviation of language from meaning, satisfying the need to make older expressions more accessible and alleviating any concerns that such trends in the future will make their own compositions seem archaic. Second, Dryden and Pope procured for themselves the opportunity to create something original and new for a previously unaware audience. For themselves and for their own enduring legacies, they found artistic expression through the appropriation of themes popularized by Chaucer more than three centuries earlier.

Nevertheless, through their efforts, Dryden and Pope laid a foundation for Chaucerian modernizations that continued throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, necessitating the more-focused analysis provided here. These two poets in particular made famous the late medieval as a field of critical inquiry and established the modernizing technique as an acceptable form of expressive art. Stephanie Trigg reminds us that Dryden, who later influenced Pope, is recognized by scholars today for his “founding moment in modern Chaucerianism.”<sup>12</sup> As such, he and Pope present a fitting starting point for a better understanding of an entire movement across Georgian Britain—one that capitalized on Chaucer’s reputation as a storyteller and used it for advancing modern political and religious ideas. The present study of this modernization project is important—not so much to better understand Chaucer, although this inevitably will occur—but to more fully grasp the tensions and anxieties of an eighteenth-century artistic community wishing to contemporize his works for a new reading audience.

#### **A. THE BRITISH MEDIEVAL MINDSET**

Before beginning any detailed analysis of Dryden, Pope, or any of the lesser-known modernizers who followed their lead throughout the 1700s, there should be some acknowledgement of Britain’s complicated relationship with its medieval past. It is undoubtedly true that British people of the eighteenth century looked upon their own foundational history with some trepidation. This fearful apprehension was more apparently a British characteristic than one shared by the rest of Europe, largely because of geography but more significantly due to the drastic religious shift under the stewardship of the Tudors. In fact, it is primarily because the English Reformation is traditionally viewed as the first step toward British “enlightenment” that such serious meaning is attached to England’s transition from the medieval to the early modern. What resulted from this movement to Protestantism and eventually Anglicanism was a fear of the

nation's "gothic" past—an apparently terrifying memory of those "dark" and "superstitious" times in which England was tied to the theologies of the Church of Rome and the politics of Continental powers.

As England became Britain during the Stuart and Hanoverian dynasties, concepts of medievalism continued to move side-by-side with those "unpleasant" remnants of Catholicism. And, as British colonialism spread its culture throughout the world in the eighteenth century, that anxious understanding of the Middle Ages as a dangerous and ignorant time developed into a global view that is difficult to debunk even today. It is therefore important to look specifically at the 1700s in Britain as the link between an authentic medievalism and the belief systems that came to define it universally in the centuries that followed. Given the overthrow of James II in 1688 and the Jacobite rebellions happening in the aftermath, few periods are more representative of that fretful looking back than the long eighteenth century, and the Chaucerian modernizations in particular capture and articulate that anxiety. As their medieval themes were tailored to fit new modern modes of thought, the modernizations began to take on lives of their own. Ultimately, they stood out in the literary marketplace as new creative reactions to Britain's enigmatic medieval past.

This culture of medieval interest throughout the eighteenth century—one that seemed fixed on the forbidden and the tantalizing—carries with it some measure of inner conflict. One needs only begin with excerpts from *The Spectator* to witness the full scope of these divided sentiments. In 1712, Joseph Addison begins a critique of the English imagination with a rather negative view of the superstitious "forefathers" who constructed it during the medieval age. According to Addison, people of the Middle Ages "looked upon nature with more reverence and horror, before the world was enlightened by learning and philosophy."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, "not a

village in England,” he says, “had not a ghost in it; the churchyards were all haunted; every large common had a circle of fairies belonging to it; and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with who had not seen a spirit.”<sup>14</sup> In a separate article, Addison also admits a personal admiration for the “inherent perfection of simplicity of thought” found in the “Gothic manner in writing.”<sup>15</sup> He marvels at the evocative strength of “Gothic writing” as something that recalls a kind of childlike wonder and even points his reader toward Ben Jonson’s praise of the medieval ballad and the “old song” of *Chevy Chase*, in particular, which Jonson reputedly said he would have rather authored than “all his works.”<sup>16</sup> However inconsistent he may seem, Addison firmly believes English literature had evolved by moving along a time continuum, with its beginnings in medieval writing that was both infantile in style and formed erroneously around the superstitions of its creators.

Addison himself was working in the tradition of those great poets and critics who came a few generations before. Philip Sidney, for example, praised the simple beauty of the medieval ballads, confessing that his “heart moved more than with a trumpet” at the hearing of the songs of Percy and Douglas.<sup>17</sup> Yet, within the same sentence, he laments that such works were “sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style, which being so evil appeared in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age.”<sup>18</sup> Samuel Johnson later contributes to this argument, contending that the wonder of the age “between the Greek dramatic writers and Shakespeare” can be likened to children “entertained with stories full of prodigies; their experience not being sufficient to cause them to be so readily startled at deviations from the natural course of life.”<sup>19</sup>

The full force of this idea is delivered only a few lines later:

Yet there are good reasons for reading romances; as the fertility of invention, the beauty of style and expression, the curiosity of seeing with what kind of performances the age and country in which they were written was delighted: for it is to be apprehended, that at the time when very wild improbably tales were well received, the people were in a

barbarous state, and so on the footing of children, as has been explained.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, any opinion of the medieval in the eighteenth century, at least from some of its most prolific commentators, carries with it a note of smug condescension.

Despite their critical and philosophical contributions to their time, Addison and Johnson might be accused of misinformation. Addison in particular, who positioned himself as a scholar of the period and wrote with such intellectual ferocity on the medieval mindset, had limited experience reading primary texts from the period—and only then with Chaucer and the early modern Sidney. Arthur Johnston mentions that Addison, at the time of his remarks, was “merely repeating what he believed to be a common attitude.”<sup>21</sup> It would take formal and more direct knowledge of medievalism later in the eighteenth century to clear away some of the misconceptions. These more researched philosophical perspectives would come from more serious-minded and dedicated scholars of English history like Richard Hurd and Thomas Percy. In 1762, Hurd published a critical review in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*. Only three years later, Percy followed with his compilation of ballads entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy’s restorative efforts are especially remarkable, as he reportedly rescued most of the original ballads from a manuscript used by his friend’s servants to light fires.<sup>22</sup> Both of these collections from Hurd and Percy were well received in their time by the reading public. Percy enjoyed especially good success. Within five months of the release of *Reliques*, eleven-hundred sets of finely bound copies had sold, each for a half a guinea—a substantial amount of money for the time.<sup>23</sup> With this release came some approbation for Percy in his selection of the ballads and editorial skill, yet little is credited to the works themselves in their originality. The ballads more highly praised were those Percy had edited the most to account for the delicate sensibilities of his patron, the Countess of Northumberland, Elizabeth Percy.<sup>24</sup>

Despite Percy's earnest efforts to resurrect the glory of medieval poetry, his "Dedication" and "Preface" to *Reliques* admit little—or, at best, a divided opinion—concerning his respect for the genre. He begins to Lady Percy with a nod to "these poems" as "showing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages,—of ages that had been almost lost to memory, had not the gallant deeds of your illustrious Ancestors preserved them from oblivion."<sup>25</sup> If these remarks are meant to be complimentary, they are more directed at the Countess herself and congratulatory of her aristocratic roots and her relation to those "great Progenitor[s]" who started the progress toward modern genius.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Percy is no less impressed with himself for his rejuvenation of these ballads in the public eye. As written in his "Dedication," he restores the songs and their worth to Lady Elizabeth, by "hereditary right."<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting, here, that the most famous and well received of these songs heralded the Northumberland Percys in their land wars with the Scots during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Elizabeth Percy traced her heritage to this family; likewise, Thomas Percy was seeking to determine the same lineage for himself.

Along with this typical patronizing activity, Thomas Percy exhibits the same manner of divided opinion regarding the poetry itself, as given by Sidney, Addison, and Johnson. He describes his "specimens of ancient poetry" as showing off a remarkable range of value as artifacts, including "the gradation of our language... the progress of popular opinions... [and] the peculiar manners and customs of former ages."<sup>28</sup> He admits further that they have a "pleasing simplicity," meant to "dazzle the imagination" and "interest the heart."<sup>29</sup> If descriptions of this sort seem contradictory or even outright schizophrenic, Percy seems compatible with Sidney, Addison, and Johnson in how he sees the poetry of England's past as childlike and marred by inelegant or inarticulate rantings.



Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* continues this argument, however with more affection for England's legacy and its contributions to literature. Hurd himself was an important figure outside of the world of criticism, as he served as the Bishop of Worcester for almost 27 years. Edith Morley notes, in her introduction to *Letters*, that he held this position longer than any other Bishop since the Reformation.<sup>30</sup> As someone, then, so prominently positioned in the Anglicanism of that period, Hurd was someone who celebrated what it meant to be British and therefore sought connections between previous eras and what he considered to be the modern supremacy of English verse. His "Golden Age of Queen Elisabeth," an essay found in his *Letters*, frames his vision of the past within a fictional argument between Joseph Addison and John Arbuthnot, the latter being a famous physician and contemporary of Pope's. Upon visiting the site of a ruined castle, Arbuthnot is taken with the romance and gallantry of England's martial past, while Addison remains fixedly indignant against the "tyranny of those wretched times."<sup>31</sup> Where Arbuthnot reacts to the medieval landscape with "silent admiration of the virtues that adorned it" and the "heroes and sages" that visit his memory, Addison remarks only on the positive political movements happening since the Middle Ages and culminating in the glory of his own time.<sup>32</sup> Hurd's Addison thus embodies a Britain looking back but reflecting mostly on progress:

Believe me, I never see the remains of that greatness which arose in the past ages on the ruins of public freedom and private property, but I congratulate with myself on living at a time, when the meanest subject is as free and independent as those royal minions; and when his property, whatever it be, is as secure from oppression, as that of the first minister.<sup>33</sup>

Arbuthnot's more compelling perspective comes later in *Letters* and acts counter to Addison's views. Arbuthnot goes so far as to propose medieval poetry's superiority to even those classical epics demonstrated by Homer and Virgil and represented faithfully again by Milton. Hurd

himself wants his reader to arrive at Arbuthnot's way of thinking, and he does so by providing his own commentary at the end to buttress the doctor's already persuasive arguments. He states that, while Homer, Virgil, and Milton strive for high-minded art that often moves even the common audience member, the ballad works in the opposite way. By its simplicity, it accommodates the "most ordinary reader" at first, while appearing "beautiful to the most refined."<sup>34</sup> If Hurd's praise of the medieval lyricists is the warmest to be expected—and, indeed, it might be—it still speaks to the ballads' nascent qualities and thus agrees on some level with Percy.

While undoubtedly champions of medieval verse, Percy and Hurd were also nonetheless turned off by the poems' tendencies toward the grotesque. This characteristic in particular seemed to contribute to Percy's inclination to rewrite some of the verses. In his "Preface," he acknowledges making some "modern attempts in the same kind of writing" to make up for the "rudeness" of the poems as he found them.<sup>35</sup> It may therefore seem strange that Percy would attempt to salvage the authentic songs for a new audience while, at the same time, adulterating their form and content by suppressing some parts and adding his own voice to others. In fact, Percy as editor and modernizer, here, fits well with treatments of other writers from the medieval period, which of course includes Chaucer. Throughout the 1700s, the desire to memorialize medieval poetry seemed to operate simultaneously with the desire to adapt it for modern tastes. Again, as with Dryden and Pope, this tendency to rework the original verses allowed the modernizers some leeway to express themselves as poets in their own right. Johnston cites these enthusiastic editors as "animated not simply by a love of what was old, but by a delight in what for them was new," with a resulting combination of "literary research with creating writing."<sup>36</sup> This attempt, therefore, to make modern those verses first formed in the distant past brings with

it a couple of distinct strategies. First, creative writers in this field were obliged to change the sense of the original verse to make the content or style more palatable to their contemporaries. Percy drew on this justification and was quick to point to his patron's sense of delicacy as an expedient for the occasional updated language, minus the "rudeness." Second, as mentioned, modernizers may have wanted to secure their place as artists and social commentators. The easiest way to do so would be to couch their own narrative voices within the already-celebrated context of those established works of the past.

## **B. CHAUCER AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MODERNIZATION PROJECT**

Chaucer's *Tales* must have appeared especially appropriate for the kind of treatment exploited by Percy in his reworking of the ballads. Beginning just after Chaucer's death at the turn of the fifteenth century, there seemed no end to the spurious links, tale endings, or other additions to Chaucer's largely unfinished work. There was even a most-interesting "Canterbury Interlude" found within a Northumbrian manuscript from the mid-1400s that recounts the pilgrims' overnight stay in Canterbury. If some of Chaucer's profane humor is continued in this "Interlude," it is the Pardoner who absorbs the brunt of the ridicule. Caught up in his usual sinful acts, he is in the Northumbrian account undone by the trickery of others and left beaten and humiliated, eventually harassed by a vicious guard dog and left shivering in a kennel instead of his own bed.<sup>37</sup> Part of the poet's sense of justice, here, likely derives from the Pardoner's supposed homosexuality, making us wonder if changes such as these were meant to serve the tastes and prejudices of the writer and his audience.

Indeed, we should ask ourselves if the "Interlude," for example, was meant to serve a cultural milieu—to pray at the altar of political expediency while ignoring the gods of

authenticity. If so, this inclination toward a social or cultural nature in the mindset of the modernizers, which apparently began as early as the 1400s, should be explored more fully. We should ask ourselves how, to what extent, and for what purpose did the modernizers seek to suit their own times by appropriating Chaucer's verse.

We should also discover why, and to what effect, Chaucer's *Tales* in particular might have been used to power a larger societal consensus. Chaucer's authority as a poet, even as early as the fifteenth century, figured prominently in the religious wars effectively tearing Europe apart. It is here that two different versions of the *Plowman's Tale* emerged. One is described as a "story of unimpeachable orthodoxy," while the other operated in the Lollard tradition as an icon for "radical change... during the Protestant Reformation."<sup>38</sup> Clearly, there is a reason for these tales of competing interests, each voiced by Chaucer's same exemplary figure.

In fact, the political and theological value of these medieval "type" characters cannot be underestimated. They represented significant social currency for those attempting to continue Chaucer's themes. Andrew Wawn laments in particular the creation of the "pre-Reformation" version of the *Plowman's Tale*, which he says moves with "leaden-foot ponderousness rather than with spring-heeled ingenuity" as characterized by Chaucer.<sup>39</sup> More egregious than this poetical affront however, according to Wawn, is that, until the tale was removed from the approved *Canterbury* cannon in 1775, "the poem created and then sustained the impression that Chaucer was England's most significant... protestant poet."<sup>40</sup> Of course, such misconceptions were advantageous for the copy artist, who rode on the heels of Chaucer's fame to further his own potentially biased message. As modernizers like Dryden and Pope carried this practice forward at the start of the eighteenth century, the *Tales* were no less useful. In fact, this movement gained

more momentum as the impetus for moralizing and politicizing the *Tales* was increased and made more fashionable by Dryden at the very beginning of the 1700s.

### C. DRYDEN AS MODERNIZER AND CULTURAL CRITIC

Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *Nun's Priest's Tale*—along with his enlarged portrait of the Parson from *The General Prologue*—were published posthumously in his *Fables Ancient and Modern* in the first few months of the 1700s. Given this timing, we should at least for technical reasons recognize that Dryden's final poetic movement belongs to the first few breaths of the eighteenth century. More importantly, Dryden's *Fables* procured the legitimacy of the Chaucerian modernization project as it extended across the Georgian age. This renewed energy was due at least partly to Dryden's name recognition. But Dryden added to the popularity by putting Chaucer's works in a position of honor, aside his celebrated translations of the Greek and Latin epics of antiquity, including Homer's *Iliad* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. While this placement might have appeared unorthodox at the time, Dryden celebrated his decision to put Chaucer adjacent to the works of the classical masters. David Bywaters argues for Dryden's unwavering respect for the great English poet of the past, asserting that he was motivated by both his "pure pleasure in reading and translating" the *Tales* and "his desire to compare poets who resemble one another."<sup>41</sup> Dryden affirms this view in his "Preface" to *Fables*, stating firmly that

Having done with Ovid for this time, it came into my mind, that our old English Poet Chaucer in many Things resembled him, and that with no disadvantage on the Side of the Modern Author, as I shall endeavor to prove when I compare them: And as I am, and always have been studious to promote the Honour of my Native Country, so I soon resolv'd to put their Merits to the Trial, but turning some of the *Canterbury Tales* into our language, as it is now refin'd.<sup>42</sup>

Dryden's patriotism here measures at least equally with his genuine respect for Chaucer's work.

However, Dryden also characterizes for his reader an English language in need of refinement.

Thus, through his modernization of the original Middle English, he works to change the style of verse to better suit the readers of his own age. He refers to this technique in his “Preface” as a means for setting all his translated poems “in the same Light, and dress’d in the same English Habit.”<sup>43</sup> By changing Chaucer’s English to match the English translations of Ovid and Homer, he hopes his audience will agree that the established poets of Europe’s distant past can serve as proof for England’s less-time-honored but otherwise equal works of genius. Of course, it serves Dryden no less that his own poetic translations are used to bridge this gap and decide the case. In fact, it is Dryden’s ability to create and essentially “perform” within these modernizations that deserves analysis here. His tendencies to change Chaucer’s original poetry always seem to lead to the production of something more recognizable and more relevant to someone of the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

Trigg looks to Dryden’s “Introduction” as the most important part of *Fables*—indeed, the very thing that gives birth to modern Chaucerian studies. She recognizes his deference to Chaucer, just before altering his voice in the modernizations, as a mechanism for conveying “a sense of historical distance that necessitates his translation... a way of defusing Chaucer’s influence, to appropriate him as a friend, not a rival.”<sup>44</sup> Dryden is quick to assert his authority in the modernizations by leaning on Chaucer’s credibility, and, in the process, he assures his readers that an English translation of an English work from a previous period is necessary. Dryden’s need to translate might also stem from his eagerness to speak out, and his friendliness to Chaucer might then add legitimacy to any message contained within those modernized verses. However, when Trigg decides to regard Dryden’s “Introduction,” not his actual modernizations, as the more significant indicator of how Chaucer was read in the seventeenth century, she fails to account for Dryden’s potentially hidden messages in the verses of the tales. She maintains

instead, based on Dryden's assertion that he will dress Chaucer in a more updated "English Habit," that Dryden wants only to make the medieval poet more accessible to readers of the eighteenth century. In her words, "Chaucer must be dressed up in eighteenth-century costume... before he can be invited into the coffee shop."<sup>45</sup> It should also be considered whether or not Dryden is seeking his own place in the coffee shop, and, rather than a costume, if he might be effecting a disguise—something to shelter him from public scrutiny while he voices his moral and political outrage.

The suggestion that Dryden uses his modernizations to speak through Chaucer seems more plausible given that Dryden changes more than just Chaucer's poetic style and structure. He also frequently administers major transformations in the tales' content and rhetorical meaning. His *Knight's Tale* provides countless examples. In one rather straightforward scene, Chaucer plays on the tension between Arcite and Palamon as they escape their imprisonment and seek the love of Emily. When Arcite eventually encounters the escaped Palamon hiding in the woods, Chaucer's version anticipates the anxiety of this moment by offering a short song from Arcite praising the month of May:

And loud he song ayenst the Sonne shene,  
May, with all thy floures and thy grene,  
Welcome be thou (said he) faire fresh May,  
I hope that I some greene thing get may: (651-654)<sup>46</sup>

Chaucer's poetic approach here abounds with pleasing alliterations, and he mixes this technique with Arcite's joys at the sight of a returning spring. What results is a happy respite for the reader or listener, as the audience is moved from the harsh themes of personal loss, imprisonment, and exile to a realization of transition and rebirth. Nonetheless, Chaucer still maintains a fragile peace—one poised tenuously amongst uncertainty and uneasiness, as Arcite's inevitable discovery of Palamon sets into motion the poem's major conflict and the violence that follows.

Dryden's modernization is an enlargement of this section, expanding Arcite's three lines into a more digressive ten:

For thee, sweet Month, of the Groves green Liv'ries wear:  
If not the first, the fairest of the Year:  
For thee the Graces lead the dancing Hours,  
And Nature's ready Pencil paints the Flow'rs:  
When thy short Reign is past, the Fev'rish Sun  
The sultry Tropick fears, and moves more slowly on.  
So may thy tender Blossoms fear no Blite,  
Nor Goats with venom'd Teeth thy Tendrils bite,  
As thou shalt guide my wandring Feet to find  
The fragrant Greens I seek, my Brows to bind. (53-62)<sup>47</sup>

In terms of style, Dryden affirms his presence as a Restoration poet through the use of multiple personifications and deifications, treating not only the month of May in this way, but also surrendering the foliage, the grove, the seasons, and nature itself to the conventions of late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century versification. In terms of meaning, Dryden more purposefully heightens the tension of Arcite's inevitable discovery of Palamon. If Chaucer's spring evokes feelings of hope, love, and fertility, Dryden's spring is connected only with a "short Reign" assaulted by the "Fev'rish Sun" to follow. The corresponding imagery highlights the possibility of newly bloomed flowers cut short by "Blite" and "venom'd Teeth." By the end of the passage, this sense of impending danger is connected inextricably to Arcite's own ill-fated footsteps. Even in this short piece, Dryden does much to amplify the more subtle and delicate tension established in the original. In the process, he inserts his own narrative techniques and forces upon the reader a personal reading that overshadows the simplicity and, arguably, the concise elegance of Chaucer's voice.

Perhaps it is the great Latin translator and classical scholar, A. D. Melville, who sums up Dryden as modernizer best when he comments on the poet's treatment of Ovid. To Melville, Dryden is "often brilliant, but with the arrogance of his age he did not hesitate to 'improve,' so



that a substantial part of his version is his own invention.”<sup>48</sup> If this tendency to invent and improve is critical to understanding Dryden’s treatments of Chaucer, it is also important in understanding the time in which such translations or modernizations were well received. Dryden’s song of Arcite is but one example of the poet’s significant intervention. Throughout his modernizations of the *Tales*, Dryden seems perpetually concerned with the insertion of his own voice, always imposing his own techniques as a means for carrying Chaucer’s rich medieval themes. In the process, too, he magnifies some themes while marginalizing others, allowing his works to exist as products of his own ingenuity.

Dryden’s approach to modernizing can be applied to his recognized body of criticism on the art of translating. For both, he is not interested in copying, saying in his “Dedication” of Virgil’s *Aeneid* that the “copier is that servile imitator, to whom Horace gives no better name than that of animal; he will not so much as allow him to be a man.”<sup>49</sup> If this stance borders a little on the condescending, it matches well with how modern scholarship has perceived the art of translation as it manifested in Dryden’s time. Mary Helen McMurrin says that “translating in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was almost exclusively of the domesticating kind... not least because constructing and confirming the unique identities of the national vernaculars might well have entailed controlling the threat of the foreign.”<sup>50</sup> It has already been established how poets and scholars of Dryden’s time looked back at their own history with some trepidation, and how they stereotypically associated this history with a fear of the outside and the unknown. Dryden would have approached his work with Chaucer in the same way, looking at medieval poetry as something that needs to be tamed and recast for the pleasing enjoyment of a modern audience.

This idea of a text's "domestication" comes from Lawrence Venuti, who points out the "asymmetrical relations in any translation project," in which there can never be "communication between equals."<sup>51</sup> Instead, "the very function of translating is assimilation, inscribing the foreign text with domestic intelligibilities and interests."<sup>52</sup> Dryden, then, needed to alter Chaucer in certain ways, not only to make the medieval understood by his contemporaries but also to determine for himself a rhetorical advantage. Bryan Nelson argues as well that translation is a "cultural practice as well as a linguistic one, wielding enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures while simultaneously constructing the subjectivities of its receptors."<sup>53</sup> If so, Dryden had motives that went far beyond the desire to put Chaucer in modern dress, ultimately making him more fashionable and recognizable. He also sought a dynamic between himself and Chaucer that would exalt the modernizer over the modernized—one that would place Dryden in the ascension while also clearing away a safe space for thinly veiled political satire.

Nelson acknowledges further that translations contribute most to interpretations of national identity and lead to imitations of the source text. Sometimes these imitations become appropriations of different cultures that serve the translator and his beliefs:

A crucial issue is how the translator is to convey the spirit, texture and general idiom of a text in a different culture. What is often required is a form of creative imitation rather than a translation in the strict, formal sense of the term... the translator must sometimes take considerable liberties in order to transmit the spirit of the original, sometimes to such an extent that we can say that a given translation assumes a considerable degree of independence from the original text.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, Dryden, either as translator or modernizer—indeed, little separates the two—is obliged to carry meaning from the English medieval period to the British 1700s through an impersonation of Chaucer that transmits only the general spirit of the original. With this obligation, too, is a potential power granted to the modernizer, in terms of how much he or she will deviate. Once a

modernizer has assumed Nelson's notion of "independence," there is ample opportunity to move away from the source text in terms of rhetoric or central message that is often unnoticed by even the most educated reader. How Dryden and his fellow Chaucerian modernizers of the eighteenth century handled this responsibility—that is, how much they decided to strictly modernize and how much as imitators they recast and reformed the *Tales* for their own purposes—requires some scrutiny.

Rita Copeland enters this conversation with more insight on how Chaucer might have viewed the art of translation in his own time and with his own Middle English texts. Copeland maintains, as with McMurrin, Venuti, and Nelson, that translation "is always, in one way or another, an act of appropriation."<sup>55</sup> Chaucer, of course, is no less guilty than Dryden. Copeland provides an example from his "Prologue" to the *Legend of Good Women*, in which Chaucer identifies "vernacular writing with the language of official culture, thus conferring this cultural privilege on [his] English texts."<sup>56</sup> In the process of establishing this privilege, according to Copeland, Chaucer transforms himself into the more ambitious "auctore"—that is, the authoritative originator of the text—and strips away the less glamorous role of compiler or arranger. If Dryden, Pope, and the other modernizers of their time admired Chaucer for this poetry, they might also have modeled this alluring tendency to create and perform.

Dryden's most articulate analysis of the subject comes from his "Preface" to *Ovid's Epistles*, in which he supposes that all translation can be reduced to three categories—or "heads":

First, that of Metaphrase, or turning an Author Word by Word, and Line by Line, from one Language into another... The second Way is that of Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude, where the Author is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his Words are not so strictly follow'd as his Sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not alter'd... The Third Way is that of Imitation, where the Translator (if now he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the Words and

Sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion: And taking only some general Hints from the Original, to run Division on the Ground-work, as he pleases.<sup>57</sup>

In order to better understand the larger eighteenth-century project to modernize Chaucer's *Tales*, this study must begin with Dryden's approach to translation, particularly in *Fables*. It should be considered, for example, if his reworking of the texts follows a line-by-line formula versus a general change in the ground-work, or if he adheres generally to the principles of metaphrase, paraphrase, or imitation. By knowing if and how much Dryden wishes to perform for his audience, there can be a more sophisticated study of the pattern of modernizations that followed. Any changes to the general approach to modernizing Chaucer might indicate changes in the way Chaucer and his broad period of medievalism were perceived by writers and readers throughout the whole of the 1700s. They might also reveal patterns potentially followed by those modernizers who continued to work with Chaucer's *Tales* throughout the rest of the century. At a minimum, Dryden's breakthrough work in the field led the way for understanding Pope's childhood years when he was experimenting with his own translations of classical and medieval poetry.

#### **D. OLD DRYDEN, YOUNG POPE, AND A CONTINUED FOCUS ON THE MODERNIZED TALES**

Pope's love affair with Chaucer began at an early age. David Nokes tells us that Speight's edition of Chaucer's works was given to Pope when he was thirteen.<sup>58</sup> Apparently, too, Pope moved from Chaucerian enthusiast to Chaucerian critic rather quickly. Nokes points out that the Speight edition given to him as a boy now contains numerous markings and annotations that can be traced back to Pope's eager hand. For example, he marked with a "c" several sections of Chaucer's poetry that he presumably found remarkable, with several of the tales and even the spurious *Plowman's Tale* provoking many such scribbles.<sup>59</sup> Speight's version of Chaucer's

*Franklin's Tale*, too, prompted Pope to write the word "Winter" next to a passage beginning "Phebus wax old."<sup>60</sup> Nokes theorizes on this small act, concluding that Pope likely noted the passage for "its striking seasonable qualities as a possible source for his Pastoral" but later leaned on "more traditional motifs."<sup>61</sup> Regardless of his intentions, there is no doubt Pope was quite taken with Chaucer's work. He would eventually modernize the *Merchant's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* as a teenager, publishing them, along with his *Pastorals*, in 1709. He even, around this time, experimented with his own Middle English *Imitation of Chaucer*, which despite the genuine effort has never aspired to much positive recognition. Within a collection of Pope's works from 1841, an advertisement comments on his translations and imitations, stating that they were "done by the Author in his youth; for the most part indeed but a sort of Exercises, while he was improving himself in the Languages."<sup>62</sup> It is therefore possible that Pope's modernization of the *Merchant's Tale* was influenced by his much-more celebrated work with the pastoral art form, or vice versa. Added to this, and based upon a fuller understanding of Dryden's approach, Pope might be revealed as a performing modernizer, himself—or perhaps even a performing critic of the medieval age and its literature. At any rate, his continuation of the modernization project is more significant than has previously been acknowledged and cannot be ignored either by Pope or Chaucerian scholars today.

Pope's approach to modernization deviates from Dryden's in remarkable ways. In terms of style, Pope is much less verbose. This different outlook perhaps stems from Pope's general philosophical approach to writing—famously stated, that "Words are like Leaves; and where they most abound, / Much Fruit of Sense beneath is rarely found" (309-310).<sup>63</sup> In his modernization of the *Merchant's Tale*, Pope finds a way to shorten the number of verses, yet he still includes certain alterations and enhancements that suggest, at times, a sophisticated grasp of

Chaucer's original works. Pope moves with a calculating precision—something easily evidenced, for example, by the way he treats the *Merchant's Tale's* garden scene. It is here that he persistently constructs a rich visual of Eden to amplify his vision of the tale's original. With Chaucer, May's longing for the fruit from the garden tree occupies nine lines:

alas my side:  
Now sir (quod she) for ought that may betide  
I must have of these peers that here I see  
Or I mote die, so sore longeth me  
To eten some of the small peers greene:  
Help for hir love that is heavens queen.  
I tell you well a woman in my plite,  
May have to fruite so great an appetite,  
That she may dyen, but she it have. (1085-1093)<sup>64</sup>

Nothing holds Chaucer's May from making an impassioned plea to her husband, January.

Several times in this passage, Chaucer emphasizes the fruit as an object of desire. There is also a curious allusion to May's "plite" or condition, suggesting, however lightly, that she is pregnant. Added to this reference is the hint of a double meaning—altogether unknown to January but obvious to the listening audience—that there is something of a sexual implication conspiring in this passage. May's repeated suggestion that she may die without her satisfaction adds to the intensity of the scene and emphasizes the fabliau quality running throughout the tale.

Pope's modernization effort does with six lines what Chaucer accomplishes with nine:

She stopp'd, and sighing, 'O good Gods!' she cried,  
'What pangs, what sudden shoots distend my side?  
O for that tempting fruit, so fresh, so green!  
Help, for the love of Heav'n's immortal Queen!  
Help, dearest lord, and save at once the life  
Of thy poor infant, and thy longing wife!' (720-725)<sup>65</sup>

In the process of shortening May's piece of dialogue, here, Pope maintains the same imagery, perhaps even increasing it with his description of the fruit, so "tempting," "fresh," and "green."

Pope also transforms Chaucer's "greene" / "heavens queen" couplet into something perhaps

more recognizable to his early-eighteenth-century audience. Where Chaucer speaks of the feigned object of her desire only as “small peers,” Pope exaggerates this scene to mimic the Biblical Garden. The fruit, after all, is described with the curious word, “tempting,” which is significant by itself, as it extends Chaucer’s double meaning by coupling her longing for food with her longing for sex. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* makes the same connection, moving the reader from a vision of the “delightful fruit,” now fully ingested, to the couple’s realization of another kind of “delicious fare” (1023, 1028).<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, Pope expands Chaucer’s meaning by recognizing and magnifying his allusion to Eden; he also does so in fewer words and with a nod to popular Restoration poetry. The more important observation is that young Pope performed a critical analysis of the *Tales*, making arguments and conclusions about the text that predated similar modern observations. Indeed, Pope’s reading of Chaucer was even a preamble to his own career as an established critic and editor of other poets, notably Homer and Shakespeare. In the process, he expressed a desire to do more than simply translate the medieval poetry. His efforts show off an elegant response and re-articulation of Chaucer’s verse, perhaps born out of the need to memorialize it for readers of the eighteenth century.

Pope’s *Merchant’s Tale* also transforms the Roman gods Pluto and Proserpyna mentioned by Chaucer into a group of sporting fairies, complete with “light-foot Ladies” and “Knights so nimbly” traversing the garden green before May and January enter the scene (620; 621). Such glimpses of a highly romanticized fae folk again pay tribute to Chaucer in the original, who lists Pluto as the “king of Fayrie” (983). Pope’s treatment also delights in England’s own medieval mythologies by replacing a Latin tradition with one reminiscent of ancient Briton and its deep roots in pagan superstition. Hurd reminds us of the effect of such gothic tales in his time:

The current popular tales of Elves and Fairies were even fitter to take the credulous mind, and charm it into a willing admiration of the specious miracles, which wayward fancy delights in, than those of the old traditional rabble of pagan divinities. And then, for the more solemn fancies of witchcraft and incantation, the horrors of the Gothic were above measure striking and terrible.<sup>67</sup>

With more subtlety than Dryden, Pope insists upon his own presence in the modernized tale. He is keen to apply a critical understanding in his treatment of the medieval verse, often teasing out for his reader Chaucer's hidden meanings and commenting too on England as a historical text.

However small in terms of the number of tales he rewrote, Pope's part in the Chaucerian modernization project adds another dimension to Pope's legacy. His contributions allow us to better understand how he, as teenager, anticipated scholarly approaches to medieval literature a full two centuries before their traditionally recognized time. More importantly, they show off a consistent inclination among the modernizers to alter, reform, and editorialize. Like Dryden just before, Pope interprets Chaucer and transmits to his audience perspectives that accompany his own reading. His efforts toward critical analysis help us understand the progress of Chaucerian studies throughout the last six centuries and lead us to a greater appreciation of the Augustans as attentive students of English history and literature. With Dryden and Pope laying a foundation that is still famously known today, what remains to be teased out is the equally relevant work of those lesser-known poets of the eighteenth century who continued the project and did so with the same mind for personal expression.

## **E. THE COMPLETE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHAUCER**

It is difficult to fully understand the scope of effort involved in recreating Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* for an eighteenth-century audience. The modernization of each tale was, by itself, a difficult task. Bringing these tales together under the original medieval design would prove a multi-generational effort. Chaucer himself was not up to the task, as regrettably even he



did not complete his vision as originally laid out in the *General Prologue*. Dryden and Pope set an example for “modern dress” that gave future poets something to consider and follow.

However, given that Dryden and Pope together only modernized roughly half a dozen of the tales—and did so with no apparent thought for Chaucer’s larger framing narrative—those modernizers who followed still had a monumental project on their hands.

In fairness, Dryden’s efforts should not perhaps be measured in the number of tales completed. He did, after all, modernize the *Knight’s Tale*, the lengthiest tale by far, and in the process made it longer still. The full picture of Dryden’s tendency to make more of Chaucer’s work is perhaps best seen in tabular form. Table 1 displays how Dryden consistently applies an enlarging effort to his modernizations, expanding the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* and *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* by roughly a quarter to a third. He also slightly increases the already-sizeable *Knight’s Tale* and nearly triples the size of Parson’s Portrait in the *General Prologue*:

Table 1

Text:	Modernizer	Chaucer: Number of Lines	Modernizer: Number of Lines	Percent Difference:
<i>General Prologue</i> (Parson’s Portrait)	Dryden	52	140	169.23%
<i>Knight’s Tale</i>	Dryden	2250	2431	8.04%
<i>Wife of Bath’s Tale</i>	Dryden	408	546	33.82%
<i>Nun’s Priest’s Tale</i>	Dryden	626	809	29.23%
Totals:		3336	3926	17.69%

It is perhaps not coincidental that the Chaucerian tales with the most literary references between 1475 and 1640—just before young Dryden attended Westminster School—were the *Knight’s*

*Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.<sup>68</sup> It is therefore likely that Dryden appreciated the fame associated with these stories in particular and drew from their general popularity, along with their rich themes and poignant characters, for his own purposes.

Dryden's work with Chaucer is of course well known. His modernizations were published widely in *Fables* and re-issued frequently throughout the two centuries after his death. While Pope's work in this field is not quite as famous, his general popularity and respectability has maintained at least some limited awareness of his modernizations of Chaucer. The rest of the modernization project, completed by a multitude of artists and covering the remainder of Chaucer's original tales, is now little more than trivial knowledge, even to modern scholars of their age. It is here we must rely on Betsy Bowden's *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales* as an undeniably crucial accompaniment to this study. Bowden's text provides a centrally accessible and singularly organized collection of Chaucer's *Tales*, as they were reinterpreted between 1700 and 1800. In it, she provides references to Dryden's first efforts, as well as Pope's follow-up contributions, with some commentary on how they fit within other, larger published groupings. More importantly, Bowden includes the works of unknown figures, most of which are now out-of-print, that compose the substantial bulk of the Chaucerian modernizing industry operating in the eighteenth century.

It would be impossible, for example, to consider this project without Samuel Cobb and Thomas Betterton, who rewrote the *Miller's Tale* and *Reeve's Tale*, respectively and independently, in the early 1700s. Likewise, without George Ogle, who in the 1740s placed Cobb's and Betterton's tales—along with many others from the period—into one published text and wrote the corresponding prologues for the rest, we would have no understanding of how readers in the mid-eighteenth century began to view the *Tales* as a connected framework.

Table 2 outlines the works of these more obscure artists and includes Pope's work, as well, showing off in particular his unique capacity to shorten the tales in their retelling. The details, too, of the Chaucerian modernization project are not without their alluring controversies. Thomas Betterton, better known now and then as a Shakespearean actor, also consistently shortened his modernizations. Bowden, however, asserts that Betterton is not the author and that Pope himself completed the *Reeve's Tale* and the *General Prologue*. Bowden laments reasonably that "Pope scholars have evinced remarkably little interest in Pope's acknowledged modernizations of Chaucer, and none whatsoever in these two works... now known to have been secretly edited by Pope."<sup>69</sup> To prove the point, she highlights Samuel Johnson's "matter of fact" remark that Pope is the poet, not Betterton.<sup>70</sup>

While Johnson might be taken at his word, the more conclusive evidence that Pope wrote Betterton's modernizations comes from a nineteenth-century biography of Betterton by Robert W. Lowe. Within this text, Betterton is described as a congenial man who befriended both Dryden and Pope. According to the biographer, Pope was such an admirer of Betterton that he went so far as to paint a portrait of him and "also published a modernization of some of Chaucer's poems in Betterton's name, though they were, no doubt, the poet's own productions."<sup>71</sup> Such evidence is not overwhelming, but it is compelling enough to warrant further investigation. If the facts of the case can be applied here for at least the moment—that is, if Betterton's work can be absorbed into Pope's literary canon—the latter's technique for shortening the modernized tales would differ from almost every other modernizer in the first half of the eighteenth century. The only exception in this case would be the enigmatic Mr. "Grosvenor," another anonymous figure, whose *Sumner's Tale* is somewhat slapdash and incomplete.

Table 2

Text:	Modernizer	Chaucer: Number of Lines	Modernizer: Number of Lines	Percent Difference:
<i>General Prologue</i> (Various Portions)	Betterton	569	515	-9.49%
<i>Miller's Tale</i>	Cobb	668	729	9.13%
<i>Reeve's Tale</i>	Betterton	404	327	-19.06%
<i>Man of Law's Tale</i> <sup>72</sup>	Brooke	1064	1828	71.80%
<i>Squire's Tale</i>	Boyse	662	1400	111.48%
<i>Merchant's Tale</i>	Pope	1174	820	-30.15%
<i>Wife of Bath's Prologue</i> <sup>73</sup>	Pope	828	439	-46.98%
<i>Fryar's Tale</i>	Markland	344	352	2.33%
<i>Sumner's Tale</i>	Grosvenor	586	202	-65.53%
Totals:		6299	6612	4.97%

While Table 2 documents those poets who attempted to rework Chaucer for a modern audience between the time of Dryden's death and the middle of the 1700s, the most deserving modernizer of this period, George Ogle, has been intentionally left off. Ogle did so much to revitalize Chaucer's fame in the first half of the century, he requires a table of his own. It was Ogle, in fact, who took on the laborious task of compiling all of the known English modernizations for publication in 1741, entitled *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands*. And Ogle's ambitious work goes far beyond editing and compiling. He adds to the efforts of the other modernizers by including his own rendering of *The Clerk's Prologue and Tale*, along with

prologues to ten others.<sup>74</sup> He also edited Betterton's *General Prologue*, rewriting the first 38 lines and either adding or replacing some descriptions of the pilgrims, including the Clerk, the Haberdasher, the Weaver, the Carpenter, the Dyer, the Tap'stry-Merchant, and the Cook. In effect, Ogle looked at a body of work made incomplete by a collection of modernizers working independently and pieced it all together, translating bits of poetry here and there to fill in the gaps. Finally, Ogle took special care to remember Dryden, adding his *Knight's Tale* and his *Wife of Bath's Tale* to the mix and including in *The General Prologue* his greatly lengthened and completely reimagined *Character of a Good Parson*.

Ogle, then, can be described as the first person interested in bringing the mostly independent work of others into something recognizably similar to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as they existed in manuscript form. Ogle's passion as editor and compiler most likely exceeded his desires as a true modernizer and poet. His work, as seen in Table 3, is prolific; however, his efforts were mostly concerned with filling in the gaps left by Dryden, Pope, and the host of others who modernized tales in isolation. Perhaps one of Ogle's greatest achievements was his accounting for the early modernizers when they merely treated a tale in modern verse but made no attempts to define that tale's place in Chaucer's original frame narrative. As such, Ogle marks a significant moment in the eighteenth century when the completeness of the *Tales* was appreciated—a removal from earlier times when each tale was regarded separately. Alice Miskimin documents this theory in terms of the art that accompanied John Urry's 1721 edition of the *Tales*, which pictured the whole of the Canterbury pilgrims in procession from London's Tabard Inn.<sup>75</sup> This image was an innovation compared to earlier renderings that only displayed individual portraits. Miskimin states that, in contrast to the focus on the tellers “as an array of moral, social, and psychological types, much as Dryden describes them in the Preface to the

*Fables*... later eighteenth-century artists turned from the tellers to illustrate the *Tales*, reflecting a shift of interest toward Chaucerian narrative.”<sup>76</sup> Ogle honors this artistic shift and revitalizes the larger narrative when he stitches together the modernized works of Dryden, Pope, and others from the beginning of the century. In order to do so, he recreates the various prologues and epilogues otherwise ignored or rejected by those doing the work previously—and includes in the bargain his own version of the *Clerk’s Tale*.

Table 3

Text:	Modernizer	Chaucer: Number of Lines	Modernizer: Number of Lines	Percent Difference:
<i>General Prologue</i> (Various Portions)	Ogle	237	364	53.59%
<i>Miller’s Prologue</i>	Ogle	78	117	50.00%
<i>Reeve’s Prologue</i>	Ogle	66	76	15.15%
<i>Cook’s Prologue</i> <sup>77</sup>	Ogle	98	152	55.10%
<i>Man of Law’s Prologue</i> <sup>78</sup>	Ogle	98	130	32.65%
<i>Squire’s Prologue</i> <sup>79</sup>	Ogle	28	40	42.86%
<i>Squire’s Epilogue and Merchant’s Prologue</i> <sup>80</sup>	Ogle	70	119	70.00%
<i>Fryar’s Prologue</i>	Ogle	36	42	16.67%
<i>Sumner’s Prologue</i> <sup>81</sup>	Ogle	64	86	34.38%
<i>Clerk’s Prologue and Tale</i>	Ogle	1219	2532	107.71%
Totals:		1994	3658	83.45%

Ogle's approach is one of constant enlargement of Chaucer's original. Even Chaucer's spare treatment of the *Squire's Prologue* is assigned 12 additional verses, and his already-substantial *Clerk's Tale* is more than doubled in size in the modernization. Ogle creates a total of more than 1,600 additional lines of verse. If we also consider Dryden's creation of almost 600 new lines and account for modernizers like Samuel Boyse and Henry Brooke, who between them piled on more than 1,500 lines to the tales of the Squire and Man of Law, there seems strong evidence that the Chaucerian modernizations were designed to take on complete lives of their own.

Finally, Bowden's documentation of William Lipscomb offers a full view of the Chaucerian modernization project throughout the eighteenth century. Lipscomb published his complete edition in the 1790s by modernizing nearly all of the remaining tales himself.<sup>82</sup> In doing so, he ignored the efforts of other modernizers between 1750 and 1790, who published translations of their own. For example, the London bookseller Andrew Jackson released versions of *The Shipman's Tale* and *The Manciple's Tale* in 1750, but Lipscomb recompleted both of these on his own for his 1795 text. An anonymous translation of *The Nun's Priest's Tale* also surfaced in 1769, although Lipscomb paid it no attention, writing his own, instead.<sup>83</sup> It is unclear whether or not he knew about these modernizations. However, given his academic ambitions and his interest in the particular subject, he was likely aware. By the end, Lipscomb had authored twelve tales and added them to the overall collection. While not including the works of Jackson and other unknown poets from the late 1700s might be forgivable, Lipscomb also curiously produced and included his own modernization of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* in his final edition, despite its original inclusion in *Fables*. The motivations for this oversight will be considered later. However, as Table 4 bears out, a main reason might have been Lipscomb's obsession with shortening, rather than adding to, the original medieval works.

Table 4

Text:	Modernizer	Chaucer: Number of Lines	Modernizer: Number of Lines	Percent Difference:
<i>Wife of Bath's Prologue (Portion)</i> <sup>84</sup>	Lipscomb	28	36	28.57%
<i>Merchant's Epilogue</i>	Lipscomb	22	17	-22.73%
<i>Introduction to Squire's Tale</i>	Lipscomb	8	8	0.00%
<i>Pardoner's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	640	593	-7.34%
<i>Franklin's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	916	767	-16.27%
<i>Physician's Prologue and Tale</i> <sup>85</sup>	Lipscomb	286	222	-22.38%
<i>Shipman's Tale</i> <sup>86</sup>	Lipscomb	434	280	-35.48%
<i>Prioress's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	256	198	-22.66%
<i>Tale of Sir Thopas</i>	Lipscomb	228	163	-28.51%
<i>Prologue to the Tale of Melibeus</i>	Lipscomb	48	31	-35.42%
<i>Monk's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	878	662	-24.60%
<i>Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	696	474	-31.90%
<i>Second Nun's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	553	343	-37.97%
<i>Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	928	561	-39.55%
<i>Manciple's Prologue and Tale</i>	Lipscomb	362	226	-37.57%
Totals:		6283	4581	-27.09%



With the exception of a brief link between the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* and a miniscule introduction to the *Squire's Tale*, Lipscomb's contributions to the modernizing project are remarkable in that every work is made smaller. Throughout all of his efforts to finish the modernization project, Lipscomb tells his tales on average with less than three-fourths of the space required by Chaucer. Especially considering the work of the decidedly more verbose poets in the earlier part of the century, there remains an obligation here to understand why Lipscomb chose to condense Chaucer for a late-Georgian audience—and to better comprehend the corresponding rhetorical effect.

## **F. DRYDEN AND THE POLITICS OF A GLORIOUS REVOLUTION**

With the frame of this analysis set and the initial questions now posed, the second chapter in this study will take a closer look at Dryden late in life. His dedication to the Chaucerian modernization project requires a biographical focus on his diminishing years, when his works were generally less popular and less critically received. While this last decade in Dryden's career may seem unimportant, the 1690s in England were hugely significant. It is during this period, in particular, when the country's political, social, religious, and economic structure—indeed, its entire place in the European theater of power—underwent drastic changes felt throughout the eighteenth century. William III's forceful, albeit peaceful, seizure of James II's throne in 1688 would lead to a "Glorious Revolution" for those citizens who witnessed it. If this event is largely forgotten today, it was remembered well during the 1700s and certainly no less at the end of the century when France, too, toyed with the idea of political change. In an extract from the "Register of the Deliberations of the Patriotic Society of Dijon" in November of 1789, one Mr. Navier stirs his listeners with the memory of England's own revolution:

Why should we be ashamed, Gentlemen, to acknowledge that the Revolution which is now establishing itself in our country, is owing to the example given by England a

century ago? It was from that day we became acquainted with the political constitution of that island, and the prosperity with which it was accompanied; it was from that day our hatred of despotism derived its energy. In securing their own happiness, Englishmen have prepared the way for that of the universe. Whilst on all sides tyrants were attempting to extinguish the sacred flame of liberty, our [sic] neighbours with intrepid watchfulness are care cherished it in their bosoms. We have caught some of these salutary sparks; and this fire enflaming every mind, is extending itself over all Europe, for ever to reduce to ashes those shackles with which despotism has oppressed mankind.<sup>87</sup>

Readers, here, might be shocked to notice that French patriots at the dawn of their own Revolution evoked English, not American, notions of liberty, happiness, and prosperity as a rallying cry against the perceptions of tyranny. These ideals were perhaps more a factor of Dryden's world than that of any other satirical artist of the long eighteenth century.

Britain, too, despite the anxiety of France's Revolution across the Channel, remembered the Glorious Revolution with some fondness in similar speeches in 1789, particularly for the religious changes it brought about. Despite the confusion over which year it occurred, notes from the "Society for commemorating the Glorious Revolution of 1668" recollect William's arrival in England with patriotic zeal:

This Society, sensible of the important advantages arising to this country by its deliverance from popery and arbitrary power, and conscious that, under God, we owe that signal blessing to the Revolution, which seated our deliverer King William the Third on the throne; do hereby declare our firm attachment to the civil and religious principles which were recognized and established by that glorious event, and which has preserved the succession in the protestant line; and our determined resolution to maintain, and, to the utmost of our power, to perpetuate, those blessings to the latest posterity.<sup>88</sup>

William and his cousin Mary's reign signified religious change, but it also stiffened the resolve of a people at the end of the seventeenth century who would be governed only by Protestantism, even to the point of revolution and even if such monarchical power ran counter to the natural succession. This British sense of anti-Catholicism would, of course, gain some momentum in the 1700s with the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty and continue unabated well into the twentieth century.

Dryden, then, had the privilege of witnessing these monumental upheavals in terms of the political and the religious. He also saw, throughout the 1690s, how the Glorious Revolution recast England's place in the world. William III, known before as William of Orange, made the quick and obvious decision to discontinue the war with his native principality in the Netherlands and wage war instead with Louis XIV in France. Steve Pincus argues, here, that such a reversal in policy was not so much imposed on the English by William but was demanded by his people, who viewed both the king of France and the pope "as bitter enemies."<sup>89</sup> Even if the new war with the Sun King and all Catholics was not necessarily a shift in popular thinking, Dryden's 1690s represented a decisive movement in military strategy and sparked debates between the Whigs and Tories over the best way to finance its execution. With the formation of the Bank of England under William's patronage in 1694, fresh ideological battles waged between the Whigs' notions of a radicalized credit economy and the Tories' conventional ideas that the ownership of land should remain in the hands of the privileged few.

All of these issues, of course, would carry forward into the eighteenth century. J. G. A. Pocock reminds us that the foundation of the Bank of England and a system of public credit in the 1690s led to the creation of a "monied interest" that began to take hold in politics and economics.<sup>90</sup> Pocock alludes to the records of debate in Dryden's time that documented a fierce contention between Whigs and Tories. This argument established in the minds of conservatives an ideal image of the "patriot" or "the individual rendered independent by his property and permitted an autonomous engagement in public affairs."<sup>91</sup> Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer—particularly in those moments when he focuses on land—provide the literary link between the historical events of England's 1690s and those new British ideas unfolding in the century to follow. Given Dryden's removal from the public stage, his decreased popularity, and

the suppression of his creative works in poetry and drama during this last decade of his life, his translations are likely some of the only links to the period possessing any real satirical potency. As such, his treatment of the Middle English and Chaucer helps us understand the significance of England's deposition of the Stuarts in terms of politics, religion, and economics.

This second chapter will also continue the argument that Dryden, at this point in his life a Catholic sympathizer and ardent Tory, strives toward imitating Chaucer, rather than giving a word-for-word or even a sense-for-sense translation. With this technique, Dryden moves Chaucer's medieval world three centuries ahead, with his own world views oftentimes replacing those of the Knight, Wife of Bath, Nun's Priest, and Parson. Far from leaving behind his career as a satirist, Dryden's keen wit is developed by his articulation of Chaucer, offering for his readers a sometimes-blatant attack on the mechanisms of political leadership, especially kings. He turns this commentary into a demonstration of William's apparently corrupt state, challenging not only his policies but his right to rule. By the end, Dryden has placed himself in Chaucer's *Tales*, expressing deeply personal anxieties concerning his own alienations from public life and his impending death.

#### **G. GEORGE OGLE AND THE CASE FOR BRITISH NATIONALISM**

The diversity of members belonging to Ogle's cohort necessitates a different kind of analysis in the third chapter of this study. Each of the modernizers represented in his *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands* from 1741 brings different perspectives to the larger project. Most of these "poets"—even if some could not aspire to such a title—took on Dryden's obliging interest in enlarging rather than mechanical translations. Also like Dryden, most of Ogle's modernizers included their own distinct voices in the finalized tales, rather than serving Chaucer's then-outdated tastes. Even with these similarities among the

cohort's members, the poems that emerged were different and separate from each other, despite Ogle's attempts as editor to mimic Chaucer's sequence and framing devices.

Pope, for example, despite his youth, was a serious scholar of the medieval age. Accordingly, his approach to Chaucer leaned toward the conventional; he aimed for an authentic representation, albeit with a more concentrated verse structure. Pope also modernized as a critic of Chaucer's work. In many instances, his treatment of the original text reflects his reading of the Middle English, allowing him to tease out for an early eighteenth-century audience those nuanced meanings hitherto undiscovered. Like Pope, others in Ogle's cohort strove to recreate Chaucer by supplementing his work with their own critical and scholarly insights. In doing so, they emerge in this study as important figures in the understanding of eighteenth-century medievalism. They accompany, if not sometimes overshadow, Addison, Johnson, Hurd, and Percy as practiced historians of earlier English periods.

Others in Ogle's edition, however, left Chaucer in their wake, sticking only to a bare outline of his original narratives and adding to his material drawn-out digressions with intense personal agendas. As the century moved forward and as Pope's Stuart Britain was replaced by a new Georgian age, their modernizations dismissed Chaucer more brazenly and deviated toward strong support of Protestant monarchical values. While not always laudable, these approaches were perhaps understandable. Under George I, English patriotism was booming, operating under the mighty patronage of an ever-increasing imperial strategy, with a large component of this strategy dependent on a national religion. Despite George's tenuous claim to the throne, the succession of the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty might have reminded citizens of William's joyful usurpation from a generation earlier. Minus Pope and Betterton, who had already established themselves as artists and would hardly have shared these ideals, the lesser-known

poets in Ogle's circle of modernizers would have followed political fashions. These were obsequious men, hoping to gain some celebrity for their treatments of Chaucer, and so they represented staunch allegiances to Church and Crown. Ogle, in fact, was one of these poets. His rendering of the *Clerk's Tale* is, by itself, a study of Britain's rejection of Catholicism and its isolation from Europe's religious rule. Henry Brooke's *Man of Law's Tale* is a similar condemnation of Rome's authority, but Brooke has the advantage of working with the story's original setting in early Christian Britain. His modernization overwhelms Chaucer's hagiography and converts it into a treatise on nation building. Brooke projects his own sense of Protestantism—or at least the conspicuous absence of Catholic ritual—as a medium for instilling justice, virtue, and liberty into the hearts of a budding citizenship. In the balance, he also manages to incorporate the ideals of chivalry, and he blends them rather boldly with modern notions of Providence and Biblical determinations of fate.

Given Britain's precarious political situation in the first half of the eighteenth century, this dependence on nationalism found a ready outlet in almost every kind of artistic medium. Traditional favorites like pamphlets and sermons took up the cause, but poetry and other forms of literature were not left out of the struggle. Collectively, their cause was simple: to unify a country at the height of its feared instability. In fact, the whole idea of a burgeoning Great Britain, made so by the Acts of Union between England and Scotland in 1711, represents a new nation in its infancy—one that was worriedly shaken by Stuart claimants to the throne in 1715 and 1745. For Ogle and some of his modernizers, any sense of nationhood required buffeting from the constant outside threats to Protestant prosperity. Linda Colley fully dissects both the causes and the ramifications of this push toward patriotic thinking, citing specifically the needs of the English to reconfigure their history and literature to reflect an inevitable movement toward

Anglicism. She mentions key historical events put into sharp focus at this time, including the Norman Conquest, Luther's Reformation, Elizabeth I's accession to the throne, the destruction of the Armada, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and of course the Glorious Revolution.<sup>92</sup>

Upstart poets had something to gain by playing a part in this movement. By acting accordant to new political ideals, they were perhaps better able to make a place for themselves in the literary marketplace. The modernization project gave them more of a foothold. On the one hand, Ogle's cohort could capitalize on the notoriety of Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales*. On the other, any treatment of medieval literature, with its various pre-Reformation settings, allowed Ogle, Brooke, and others to glance back at an English identity still in development. With this advantage, and by changing the original texts to suit their own needs, the modernizers had the opportunity to do more than imitate; they could impersonate. By doing so, they could refashion England's legacy of literature and determine for a new generation of "medieval" readers its entire national legacy, writ large.

#### **H. WILLIAM LIPSCOMB AND THE REFORMED POLITICS OF AN ANGLICAN PEOPLE**

Lipscomb's efforts at the end of the eighteenth century are a bit of a novelty. When he set out to modernize the remainder of Chaucer's tales not yet touched by Dryden or Ogle in their publications, he did so completely on his own. He did not include modernizations from other poets, despite the fact that a few existed and could have been incorporated into his final issue. If this bold undertaking seems reminiscent of Dryden's independent crafting of *Fables*, we should acknowledge that Lipscomb possessed neither the talent as a poet nor the enduring fame of Dryden. Arguably, Lipscomb was not a poet at all, at least not one with professional aspirations. He was instead employed primarily in the church. While he had won a prize at Oxford for his

treatise on the benefits of inoculation and had published in both prose and poetry for the prestigious *Gentleman's Magazine*, Lipscomb's career and life was devoted to religion, not literature. His obituary, also found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, speaks little of his scholarly work and focuses, instead, on his long list of accomplishments in the clergy. It was in this vocation that he thrived. He was Master of St. John's Hospital, tutor and chaplain to the Duke of Cleveland, and a distinguished Rector of Welbury in Yorkshire for 35 years.<sup>93</sup> He also appeared dedicated to temperance and clean living—an appropriate complement to his lifelong study and application of theology. The man, himself, died at the advanced age of 88, and his father before him, perhaps more improbably, had lived to 91.

Some awareness of Lipscomb's life is necessary for this study. It was in fact his devotion to Anglican Protestantism that informed the way he approached the *Tales*. The fourth chapter, here, interrogates this relationship, looking more closely at the poet's life as it affected his modernizations of the medieval poetry. What results from Lipscomb's work is a better understanding of Britain's defiant status as a Protestant nation at the end of the eighteenth century. His reflections on Anglicanism, as they appear in his modernization of the *Tales*, are perhaps more important than other perspectives on the subject gleaned from the period's literature. When compared with the traditional London writer, illustrator, or pamphleteer, Lipscomb more accurately represents the common understanding of Britain's religious state, far away from the dissenting metropolis. He offers a voice that is at once possessing poetic sentiment and based in professional practice. As such, he stands well able to define the whole nation as it readied itself for the turbulence of the late-Georgian, Regency, and early-Victorian periods.



There is clear evidence at the start that Lipscomb was affected deeply by his religious values in his treatment of Chaucer. He admitted in his “Preface” his intentions to censor the original works, and he promptly excised the bawdy *Miller’s Tale* and *Reeve’s Tale* from his final edition. This act alone proves his willingness to take some license with both Chaucer and Ogle; it was, after all, from Ogle’s edition that Lipscomb defiantly erases any memory of the Miller and Reeve. Accordingly and perhaps deservedly, the reviews for Lipscomb’s work were not favorable. An issue of *The English Review* from 1795 points out that Lipscomb’s complete edition boasts “all Chaucer’s tales,” but the article expresses quick disappointment in “finding [its] mistake.”<sup>94</sup> The review goes on to cite the “delicacy which the translator affects [as being] ridiculous” and states that any person “who would wish to represent Chaucer, should not have a particle of squeamishness about him.”<sup>95</sup> The reviewer, in fact, is not squeamish in his full criticism of the Lipscomb edition. Instead, he engages in a wholesale condemnation of Lipscomb’s technique, at several times comparing his work to Dryden’s, line by line, and granting the prize each time to the latter.

We should not conclude from this one critical source that Lipscomb’s final edition is not worthy of serious study, nor should we surmise that its contents are significantly lower in value than Dryden’s. The review from 1795 does on two separate occasions applaud Lipscomb’s skill as a “melodious versifier,” despite its otherwise uncomplimentary stance.<sup>96</sup> Readers today might actually prefer Lipscomb to Dryden, especially given Dryden’s inclination toward longwinded tedium and Lipscomb’s hope for a more faithful modernization executed in a smaller space. Chapter Four explores this comparison between Lipscomb and Dryden more carefully, arguing that, like most of the other modernizers, Lipscomb adapted Chaucer’s themes and changed his meanings to reflect deeply personal political and religious beliefs from the British 1790s.

Lipscomb, however, managed a more artful approach in the way he concealed his propaganda. In its comparison between Dryden and Lipscomb as Chaucerian modernizers, the 1795 review proclaims the following:

[Dryden] is extremely natural; and (though the sentiment be a little expanded) is truly characteristic of the original. Mr. Lipscomb ought to have known, that, amidst amplification [*sic*] the most licentious, translators often represent their authors more justly than those who render *verbum verbo*; pluming themselves on the fidelity of their version.<sup>97</sup>

Lipscomb's work is, in fact, anything but a word-for-word translation. Despite the efficiency with which he works, Lipscomb attempts a more revisionist strategy than even Dryden and Ogle. For one, he follows in the steps of his predecessors by removing all references to the medieval mystery plays—a dramatic tradition that had itself been almost deleted from the public consciousness in England from the mid-sixteenth century onward. He also wants to promote England's prosperity as dependent on its separation from Catholic powers in Europe—a theme, of course, explored by Ogle and his cohort of modernizers. But Lipscomb goes much deeper than Ogle's men, often driving his reader toward simple and literal moral meanings and, in the process, sweeping away Chaucer's typical adherence to allegorical nuance. His aim is to more subversively attack Catholic practice at the textual level of the *Tales*. Lipscomb's subtle alterations—so subtle, in fact, as to confuse reviewers of his own time—effectively change the reading of Chaucer, all beneath the deceptive mask of *verbum verbo*. Ultimately, his new interpretation is meant to run parallel with accepted Anglican readings of Scripture and other ecclesiastical texts at the turn of the century.

Lipscomb's work allows us to complete our understanding of the *Tales* and their place in Britain throughout the 1700s. What we discover is not so much how Chaucer was viewed in the eighteenth century but how modernizers wanted to view him and interpret his works as a means

for defining and shaping the Georgian age. The fifth and final chapter, here, will look past the eighteenth century, if only briefly, hoping to open the door for more substantial research. It will consider this interpretive power of the Chaucerian modernizers as a broad movement across the 1700s that seeped well into the 1800s—the latter being a literary age with even stronger devotions to its medieval roots. If, as will be argued, the eighteenth-century modernizers established revised Chaucerian or even “gothic” values for new artistic communities, these values would have endured and influenced other cultural and literary genres. They would have inspired similar examinations of Britain’s “dark” medieval past and contributed, for example, to the development of ideas beginning to form around the Gothic novel.

## II. CHAUCER'S *TALES* AND THE FRAMING OF DRYDEN'S *FABLES*

In order to establish *Fables Ancient and Modern* as an important starting point for this study, there should be a fuller understanding of the last decade of Dryden's life. Between 1688 and 1700, Dryden's celebrated success on the London stage was effectively finished. During this period, he produced only a handful of dramatic works, and even these few received little popular support. Dryden's two most popular plays in the 1690s had only six performances each, while *The Indian Emperour* from 1665, by comparison, had eighteen.<sup>98</sup> Of course, Dryden's commercial failure late in his career has much to do with his political downfall at the hands of William III following the Glorious Revolution, as well as his forced removal from the office of Poet Laureate and subsequent replacement by Thomas Shadwell, his great rival. However, this fall from public esteem only applies to Dryden's career as a playwright. His ability to translate never suffered in the 1690s. Where there might be the assumption of an injured retreat or an artistic withdrawal following his forced and humiliating removal from popular state affairs, Dryden's new circumstances might have contributed instead to an added political potency. If this reinvention happened, it would have been better manifested more secretly in his overlooked lines of translation, instead of brazenly displayed in the public theaters in the form of new plays. Dryden's *Fables* might thus have functioned primarily as a creative instrument of that outspoken rage and bitter resentment toward those now-prevailing monarchical powers in England.

Aside from its potential historical and biographical worth, *Fables* is also significant because it established a wider appreciation for Chaucer, the only English poet in the work and someone Dryden apparently regarded as equal if not superior to Homer, Ovid, and Boccaccio. As mentioned, he confesses in his "Preface" that he included the ancient masters, dressed by his translations in the "same English habit," in order to provide a side-by-side demonstration of

Chaucer's comparative worth. In the process, too, Dryden defends the perception of Chaucer's "broad language" and re-styles it according to late-seventeenth-century poetic fashion—only to reveal a narrative structure in the original that he regards as "God's plenty." Clearly, Dryden, toward the end of his own life, was quite taken with the fourteenth-century poet. Such a newly acquired taste for the medieval is especially interesting given that Dryden had worked with Shakespeare previously and had helped adapt a modernized *Tempest* for the London stage. Working with Davenant on this project in 1674, he admits that "somewhat might be added to the design of Shakespear" and "from the very first moment it so pleas'd me, that I never writ anything with more delight."<sup>99</sup> Dryden's love for Chaucer, after his success with Shakespeare, is therefore quite remarkable, especially considering Chaucer's relative obscurity when compared with Shakespeare's ever-growing popularity at the start of the eighteenth century.

In her exploration of Shakespearean adaptations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jean Marsden comments on the rhetorical strategies involved with reforming Renaissance drama for new audiences. Marsden contends that such modernizations were obsessed with simplifying Shakespeare's original complexities and especially his moral ambiguities:

Just as subplots and minor characters were cut away to simplify the plot and focus attention on the main action... the nature of this action and the characters who perform it were also simplified... Questions of motivation or of the fine line between good and evil vanish, and, as a result, moral dilemmas disappear. Simple causes motivate these characters; the evil characters scheme because they are evil by nature, while the good characters follow the dictates of love or honor, favorite themes in Restoration heroic drama.<sup>100</sup>

Certainly, one needs only review a basic narrative account of Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, with its added love affairs and pleasant ending, to understand the poignancy of Marsden's argument, especially as it relates to prolonged anxieties over civil war. In his advanced age, Dryden likely

recognized this popular dramatic technique and rejected any notion of pruning away a story's political indelicacies, especially those that might point to actual contemporary events. His movement toward modernizations might have allowed him to express himself more satirically and with a mind for those serious moral and political dilemmas facing him at the end of his life. In other words, Chaucer on page would have replaced Shakespeare on the public stage. Dryden may have turned to a solitary reading and reworking of Chaucer as a means for quiet reflection and a medium for expressing himself during his last years, when his personal crises must have seemed most enormous.

Whatever the reason, Dryden's rather abrupt shift in thinking late in life deserves some notice. If the Shakespearean adaptations of the time are considered today, as Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor point out, indicators of the "aesthetic, cultural and political values of the period," we should naturally ask ourselves why Dryden's shift toward potentially more-critical adaptations of Chaucer have been overlooked.<sup>101</sup>

#### **A. THE ENDURING LEGACY OF DRYDEN'S CHAUCER**

Regardless of what is thought of Dryden today, it must be acknowledged that he has been a constant presence in the literary academy. That said, despite his continued perseverance in the canon, his works of modernization are largely overlooked today, even by scholars in the field. Cedric Reverand speaks on behalf of these scholars when he admits that "few of us have read [*Fables*] all the way through, and few of us teach [it] as a major Dryden work."<sup>102</sup> He however follows this statement with the remarkable observation that *Fables* was the work "by which Dryden was once best known, the work for which he was once most admired."<sup>103</sup> In fact, it was Dryden's *Fables* in particular that was often memorialized during the approximate century and a half after his death. In anticipation of the rich medieval imagery in its tournament scenes, Walter

Scott's *Ivanhoe*, for example, twice quotes from *Palamon and Arcite*—Dryden's version of the *Knight's Tale*—and references Chaucer's original text only once. Dryden's poem is also one of only three translations or modernizations cited in this way by Scott: Pope's rendering of *The Odyssey* was also honored, as well as Colley Cibber's adaptation of *Richard III*. At a minimum, Scott's homage in this most popular of his works testifies to the lasting endurance of Dryden's originality with the verse romance. Scott would have wanted to provide references most known to his audience, with both Shakespearean and Chaucerian modernizations occupying a prominent place. For a simple comparison, Gillen D'Arcy Wood refers to Scott's use of Cibber's *Richard III*, rather than Shakespeare's, as appropriate because Cibber's version of the play was "known to British theatergoers for more than a hundred years."<sup>104</sup> Although we cannot say for sure that Dryden's adapted Chaucer was more well-known than Chaucer's original, it is clear that Dryden's version of the *Tales* was well positioned in the literary public's consciousness. The *English Review* of 1795 supports this claim when it unfavorably compares William Lipscomb's modernization of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* to Dryden's version from a century earlier. After including an extract from *Fables*, the reviewer remarks off-handedly that the "corresponding passage in Dryden is well known; we have often heard it repeated from memory."<sup>105</sup> Earlier in the article and also in the context of repudiating Lipscomb's modernizations, the reviewer remarks on the ubiquity of Dryden's *Fables*: in his words, a "volume in the hands of every schoolboy."<sup>106</sup> Dryden, it would seem, had affected a literary culture throughout at least the eighteenth century—one that was thoroughly aware and appreciative of his modernizations of Chaucer.

As a critic, Scott also brought Dryden's relationship with Chaucer into the realm of intellectual discourse. Despite his preferment of Dryden's translated verse in *Ivanhoe*, Scott was

admittedly conflicted as to the worth of the modernizations as a whole. Herbert G. Wright mentions Scott's general claim that Dryden's translations of Chaucer were so "spirited a transfusion" that Dryden's "modern verse... almost deserved to be called an original."<sup>107</sup> Scott deviated from this sentiment, however, in some of the specifics. Again according to Wright, Scott believed that Dryden could not compare to Chaucer "in simple description or pathetic effect."<sup>108</sup> Other notable poets and critics of the time seemed to echo this last idea that Dryden's efforts fell short of the medieval original. William Wordsworth told Scott in 1808 that Dryden had essentially ruined Chaucer's poems. Although he appreciated Dryden's work with Boccaccio, Wordsworth said of Dryden that he has "entirely spoiled [Chaucer], even wantonly deviating from his great original, and always for the worse."<sup>109</sup> Such condescension from a fellow poet provides at least the hint of a critical trajectory out of Dryden's favor. Perhaps his treatments of Chaucer were losing their cachet during the Romantic Age. Whatever the conclusion, the debate itself is indicative of the enduring success of Dryden's *Fables* as the people's version of the tales. In other words, Dryden's translations of Chaucer were well read and worthy enough of the conversation's high-order intellectualism.<sup>110</sup> Scott, too, despite his reluctance to favor Dryden's version wholesale, still included references to the modernization.<sup>111</sup> Presumably, he was forced to acknowledge the continuing popularity of *Fables*, even if such popularity was beginning to wane by the early 1800s.

## **B. DRYDEN'S EMILY AND THE *KNIGHT'S TALE***

Considering Dryden's success in popularizing a modernized Chaucer for readers of the 1700s, any attempt to understand the eighteenth century in terms of its complicated relationship with the medieval period requires another more studied look at Dryden's last years, when he created his own version of the *Knight's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*,



and the *Character of a Good Parson*. Doing so can add clarification and perhaps even redefinition of the surrounding politics and poetics that nurtured their development. The fact is that Dryden deliberately altered Chaucer's *Tales*, and he did so for rhetorical purposes associated with his own time and place. These changes, of course, range from simple poetic embellishments to the more forceful additions of political messages particular to Dryden's 1690s. In extreme cases, Dryden transforms Chaucer's original verses into something more revealing—that is, a personal portrait of the seventeenth-century poet at the very end of his life. By peering closely at Dryden's image of Chaucer, we can begin to see the modernizer reflected back. Out of consideration for an artist who explored the tragic hero so extensively, there deserves a more sophisticated understanding of how he communicated poetically in the years leading up to his own death. Given Dryden's retreat from the more traditional literary projects throughout his last decade, *Fables* then becomes our only piece of biographical insight into his final years.

Even on the surface, Dryden shows little shame in the way he expands upon Chaucer's expression of a particular theme. In many cases, too, these alterations are obvious attempts to increase Chaucer's original stylistic power through references to Dryden's own contemporary world. From Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, for example, Arcite laments his release from the tower prison because it prevents his constant gazes upon Emily:

And said, alas, the day that I was borne,  
Now is my prison worse than beforne:  
Now is me shap eternally to dwell  
Nought in purgatorie, but in hell. (365-368)

Dryden enlarges the pathetic imagery by doubling the number of lines:

What have I gain'd, he said, in Prison pent,  
If I but change my Bonds for Banishment?  
And banish'd from her Sight, I suffer more  
In Freedom, than I felt in Bonds before;  
Forc'd from her Presence, and condemn'd to live:

Unwelcom Freedom, and unthank'd Reprieve:  
Heav'n is not but where Emily abides,  
And where she's absent, all is Hell besides. (Book I, 383-390)

Without dwelling too much on the obvious structural differences, Dryden has orchestrated significant changes to Chaucer's versification. Throughout this particular treatment of Chaucer in *Fables*, Dryden alters the rhyme scheme, and—while the metrical patterns can be somewhat similar throughout—he finds accent points not originally intentioned by Chaucer. The stressed mention of Emily in line 389 of the modernized version is an innovation, developed by Dryden's assumption that the thought of Emily is what causes Arcite's profound suffering. In the last two lines of the passage, Dryden seems influenced by the portrait of Satan in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, echoing the tragic lamentations of supreme exile and placing the literary strength of Milton's epic poetry on the same level as Arcite's suffering.<sup>112</sup> The effect is to magnify the presence of the female figure—elevating her to the status of a deity who rules over the psychological distress shared by the knights and driving the powerful motor of the narrative forward. Dryden, then, allows the image of Emily to take a more centrally governing role in this pivotal moment, thus building to a more emotionally powerful resolution at the poem's end.

Dryden also appears to apply cosmetic changes from his own philosophical age. Considering Arcite's original argument to Palamon—one in which he claims that love is a mightier law than any earthly rule—Dryden moves the theme into something reminiscent of Locke's principles on landed property. Thus, we have the following lines completely added by Dryden to Chaucer's version:

Each Day we break the Bond of Humane Laws  
For Love, and vindicate the Common Cause.  
Laws for Defense of Civil Rights are plac'd,  
Love throws the Fences down, and makes a general Waste: (Book I, 331-34)

Here is the theme so reminiscent of Locke. When Dryden's Arcite, for example, speaks of a "Common Cause" and "throw[ing] the Fences down," he alludes to the enclosure laws. Locke's theory, while focused more on political transgressions, resembles Arcite's appeal to natural rights "For Love" rather than man-made legal ones. According to Locke:

'Tis true, in Land that is common in England, or any other Country, where there is Plenty of People under Government, who have Money and Commerce, no one can inclose or appropriate any part, without the consent of all his Fellow-Commoners: Because this is left common by Compact, i.e. by the Law of the Land, which is not to be violated.<sup>113</sup>

Dryden then, after connecting Emily to Milton's God, proposes that Palamon can assert no rights of ownership, either to Emily's love or to their assumed right of gazing upon her. Dryden again elevates the theme by attaching Emily's poetic imagery to the higher and more fundamental privileges imbued in the rights of all of humankind—and does so by appropriating from the literature and philosophies of his own time.

All of these changes move the reader toward Dryden's modified interpretation of Arcite's death. This event, more than any other, produces the most dramatic result of the poem's overriding tension and the philosophical compromise between mortal affairs and the fated interventions of the gods. For Chaucer, Arcite's last moments are, at once, a negotiation of the violently physical, warring conflict between two knights and a terrifying demonstration of the unknown consequence of death:

And with that word his spech faile began.  
For from his feet onto his breast was come  
The cold death, that had him overnome.  
And yet moreover, for in his armes two  
The vitall strength is lost, and all ago.  
Save only the intellect, without more,  
That dwelleth in his heart sicke and sore,  
Gan failen, when the hart felt death.  
Dusked been his iyen two, and failed breath.  
But on his ladie yet cast he his iye,  
His last word was, mercy Emelie.

His spirit changed, and out went there,  
Whitherward I cannot tell, ne where: (1940-1952)

The embedded narrator, either the tale-telling Knight or Chaucer himself, is careful to reject a theological certainty in pre-Reformation Europe by stating defiantly “I cannot tell, ne where” the spirit resolves itself. If this notion was a dangerous one, it is also consequential to the delivery of the scene. It offers for the reader something that is now much less concerned with traditional conventions of the romance and delivers, in its place, a strong religious concern at the moment of Arcite’s death.<sup>114</sup>

Dryden’s style deviates greatly from Chaucer’s. It is predictably reminiscent of conventional seventeenth-century poetry, personifying “Death” and concentrating more details on the journey of the unwilling spirit:

This was his last; for Death came on amain,  
And exercis’d below, his Iron Reign;  
Then upward, to the Seat of Life he goes;  
Sense fled before him, what he touch’d he froze:  
Yet cou’d he not his closing Eyes withdraw,  
Though less and less of Emily he saw:  
So, speechless, for a little space he lay;  
Then grasp’d the Hand he held, and sigh’d his Soul away. (Book III, 836-43)

Arguably, Dryden’s remodeling of this scene adds to its eloquence and evocative nature. Less obviously, it aligns more with Dryden’s previously established dramatic imagery, continuing the focus on Emily instead of allowing the message to dissolve away into theological concerns.

Dryden’s Arcite reveals a dying energy that is more squarely spent on his love for Emily, thus framing a sentimental concern associated with the inevitability of Death. Phrases like “exercis’d... his Iron Reign” crash forcefully against Arcite’s last attempts at visual love, which is a fitting accompaniment to the frustration of his first gaze in the prison tower. By the end of the modernized tale, all of the tension that Dryden has built around Emily is poured out into this

final kinetic moment. Instead of resting his anxieties on the uncertainties of immortality, Dryden's mention of a "grasp" and a "sigh" presents the conflict in terms of the characters' strictly emotional anguish.

### C. THE WIFE OF BATH AS RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL COMMENTARY

Many of Dryden's changes to the *Knight's Tale* rely on these re-characterizations of Emily to increase the poem's emotional tragedy. As will be discussed at the close of this chapter, Dryden will eventually capitalize on this critical shift, turning it to his own advantage at the tale's end. His treatment of Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, however, is less about personal values and more concerned with governance in both the public and private realms, allowing him to demonstrate deeply held political values. Early in this poem, Dryden begins taking significant license. In Chaucer's original version, there exists a quick commentary on members of the medieval religious clergy, with the poet's "holy freres" held up to immediate ridicule (10).

For there as wont to walke was an Elfe,  
There walketh now the limitour himselfe  
In undermeles, and in mornings,  
And saieth his Mattins and his holy things  
As he goeth in his limitatioun:  
Women may go safely up and down  
In every bush, and under every tree,  
There nis none other incubus but hee,  
And he ne will doen hem but no dishonour. (17-25)

With Dryden, the metrical regularity is again compromised for a more modern sense of artistic flare. He also orchestrates significant changes in the passage's general meaning. Where Chaucer replaces the presence of the mythical faerie creatures with the less agreeable agents of the Church, Dryden softens the rhetoric:<sup>115</sup>

But in the Walks where wicked Elves have been,  
The Learning of the Parish now is seen,  
The Midnight Parson posting o'er the Green.  
With Gown tuck'd up to Wakes; for Sunday next,

With humming Ale encouraging his Text; (34-37)

The movement from Chaucer's limiter or friar to Dryden's parson is of immediate consequence, as it shifts the focus of this anecdote from the regular clergy to secular priests. Such a reference fits better in Dryden's post-Reformation England and allows him to connect the religious imagery in this scene to the pleasing portrait of the other Parson in the *General Prologue*. As Dryden continues, he presents a gentler picture of the tale's parson to replace Chaucer's less-complimentary version.

From Fiends and Imps he sets the Village free,  
There haunts not any Incubus, but He.  
The Maids and Women need no Danger fear  
To walk by Night, and Sanctity so near:  
For by some Haycock or some shady Thorn  
He bids his Beads both Even-song and Morn. (40-45)

Among the obvious changes, Dryden unsympathetically inserts "wicked" to describe the "Elves" and attaches words such as "Learning" and "free" to the parson and his wholesome influence on the parish. Finally, Chaucer's sentimental note that the friar "ne will doen hem but no dishonour [do nothing to the women but dishonor them]" is changed by Dryden to demonstrate the parson's holiness: "He bids his Beads both Even-song and Morn." Partly, as stated, Dryden's treatment here anticipates the wonderfully drawn-out image of the Parson he creates from Chaucer's *General Prologue*, and it applies cohesiveness to the whole of his modernization project by maintaining one positive representation of the church figure. However, Dryden also seems focused on removing the entire picture of rape from the beginning of this tale. Where Chaucer appears to set up the image of a lascivious friar at the beginning to match with the account of the lusty knight to follow, Dryden loses any mention of the rapist limiter in the first few lines of the tale. While it is possible that Dryden is merely censoring for a more circumspect audience, his treatment of the scene to follow does not shy away from the details of a similar sexual encounter.

When Chaucer's knight, by "very force," takes the young woman's "maidenhead," his allusion to rape in the Middle English is brief and simply stated (32). Dryden, on the other hand, picks up the theme without hesitation and adds to the unsettling quality of the scene:

If seeing her behind he lik'd her Pace,  
Now turning short he better lik'd her Face:  
He lights in hast, and full of Youthful Fire,  
By Force accomplish'd his obscene Desire: (53-56)

These lines add a discomfoting element of voyeurism to the scene, as if the poet and reader are conspiring in the victimization of the woman. Dryden's description puts the maiden's actual body on display, with references to her "Pace" and "Face," at once stripping away her identity and framing her vulnerability in terms of discreet violable objects. As Dryden fails to censor this scene—even, arguably, increasing its more sensational qualities—he is not likely to strip away any notion of the friar's similar transgressions purely out of a sense of decency.

Dryden's changes so far are perhaps designed to absolve the sins of the church while maintaining, if not elevating, the sins of the king's knight—that is, his agent of war. Dryden continues to make these adjustments, holding up for examination a critical condemnation of kingship that drives the reader somewhat recklessly through the remainder of the tale. When the knight is brought before Arthur's court to answer for his crimes—an aspect of the story familiar to Chaucer's telling—Dryden adds the following description:

Then Courts of Kings were held in high Renown,  
E'er made the common Brothels of the Town:  
There, Virgins honourable Vows receiv'd,  
But chaste as Maids in Monasteries liv'd:  
The King himself to Nuptial Ties a Slave,  
No bad Example to his Poets gave:  
And they not bad, but in a vicious Age  
Had not to please the Prince debauch'd the Stage. (61-68)

Full of political satire, this passage compares a historical, albeit fictional, period of English rule with Dryden's present day. His reference to a "King" who gives "No bad Example" points to William III, who would stand as the obvious counter-example in Dryden's mind. His last line in this passage proves the point and casts Shadwell in the joke—a poet who, to "please the Prince debauch'd the Stage." According to Wm. Hand Browne's 1913 article on Shadwell's life and career, Dryden's rival playwright capitalized on a new kind of low-comedy currency in the early 1690s.<sup>116</sup> Supposedly, too, this movement away from the higher-minded arts was at the behest of William, who, after Dryden's impeachment, not only awarded Shadwell the position of Laureate; he also hired him as the court historiographer. Browne points out that Shadwell had "intimate knowledge of those lower strata of London life which afforded the best material for low comedy and farce."<sup>117</sup> Dryden's political barbs, here, are cleverly reinforced by the fact that, within the passage leveled at Shadwell, he mimics Shadwell's own lines from the prologue to *The Royal Shepherdess*: "I find it pleases most to see vice encouraged by bringing the characters of debauched people upon the stage... who openly profess swearing, drinking, breaking windows, beating constables, etc., and that is esteemed among us a genteel gaiety of humour."<sup>118</sup> Dryden therefore had more in mind than a simple translation; while holding Chaucer's story up for some admiration, he consistently uses it, too, as a means for timely political satire.

Dryden's attacks on William III are intensified as the Wife's narrative in *Fables* continues to unfold. Within of the context of the "King Midas" scene adapted by Chaucer from Ovid, Dryden adds the following:

Midas the King, as in his Book appears,  
By Phoebus was endow'd with Asses Ears,  
Which under his long Locks, he well conceal'd;  
(As Monarch's Vices must not be reveal'd)  
For fear the People have 'em in the Wind,  
Who long ago were neither Dumb nor Blind;



Nor apt to think from Heav'n their Title springs,  
Since Jove and Mars left off begotting Kings. (157-64)

Here, Dryden aims to convert Chaucer's seemingly innocent displays of kingship into a focused parody of England's monarch in the 1690s. Chaucer's Midas figure does not comment on contemporary ruling power; instead, it is more focused on the medieval stereotype connecting women and gossip. Whether this message runs from Chaucer's design or a display of the Wife's sarcasm, Dryden intercedes completely and changes the direction of these lines.<sup>119</sup> His emphasis is not so much on the story of Midas, his wife, and their shared secret. Instead, he applies the absurdity of a "Heav'n-sprung Title" to William's rise to the throne and undermines England's religious coup in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.

This idea of the divine right to rule, along with Dryden's refusal to assign it to William, is granted more purchase as the modernized *Wife of Bath's Tale* moves forward. In Chaucer's version, the knight is obliged to marry the "foul" woman who helps acquit him in the Queen's court of love. What results is a particularly poignant conversation between the knight and his bride within their wedding chamber. Chaucer's knight's wife defends her lack of noble lineage by suggesting that such characteristics are not so easily passed down the family line. Her message, and Chaucer's, privileges virtue over traditional notions of gentility.

But for ye speake of such gentlenesse,  
As is discended out of old richesse,  
That therefore shullen ye be gentlemen:  
Such errogaunce is not worth an hen.  
Lo who that is most vertuous alway,  
Prevy and apert, and most intendeth aye  
To do the gentle deeds that he can,  
Take him for the greatest gentleman. (253-260)

Dryden ignores this message, allowing his modernization to instead be overwhelmed with images of “seed” and “blood”—all of which serves as a continuation of the earlier “Midas” discourse concerning the hereditary right to rule.

No Father can infuse, or Wit, or Grace,  
A Mother comes across, and mars the Race.  
A Grandsire, or a Grandame taints the Blood;  
And seldom three Descents continue Good. (400-403)

Dryden’s use of “three” in line 403 seems deliberately targeted at William and his namesake lineage. The poet also challenges William’s rise to the throne via the female line, alluding negatively to his birthright as a “Grandsire” of Charles I through the king’s daughter, Mary. At this point, Dryden’s belaboring of the same idea begins to place him in a belligerent state:

Such is not Man, who mixing better Seed  
With worse, begets a base, degenerate Breed:  
The Bad corrupts the Good, and leaves behind  
No trace of all the great Begetter’s Mind  
[...]  
And thus it needs must be: For Seed conjoin’d  
Let’s into Nature’s Work th’ imperfect Kind: (414-417; 425-426)

Dryden extends his treatment of the Midas story into this passage. Where Chaucer’s conversation between the knight and his new bride is enlightening and morally high-minded, Dryden maneuvers in his own narrow political space with a biting and antagonistic tone. Instead of allowing his readers to benefit from Chaucer’s original moral, his energies are spent on political statements—in this case, casting William’s reign as illegitimate. While messages of this sort might have rivaled similar inflammatory remarks from Dryden’s popular years on the London stage, the poet in his late career uses the modernization, not the public play, to code his beliefs and hide them from his potential royal enemies. In this way, his adaptations of Chaucer reach an even more personal level. They reveal a now-demoralized artist without a large or influential

patronage, attempting to communicate a political agenda that has, by this time in his life, turned stale and unfashionable.

#### **D. DRYDEN'S NUN'S PRIEST AND THE LAND-HOLDING PATRIOT**

If Dryden introduces changes in his *Knight's Tale* that establish a more personalized voice, and if he uses this presence to begin broadcasting politically in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, his *Nun's Priest's Tale* adds a little of both. The result is a strong argument against specific royal prerogatives that were endorsed by William at the beginning of his reign and hated by Dryden. Particular among these new mandates is the king's renegotiation of how land is valued in the emerging mercantile economy of the 1690s.

Chaucer's original Nun's Priest offers a tale reminiscent of a conventional beast fable, in which Chanticleer the rooster and other farm animals reveal simple moral lessons to the reader or listening audience. However, the tale itself operates within a rather curious frame narrative. Chanticleer's over-exaggerated empire is contained within a poor widow's humble plot of land. A review of this exterior narrative is important, because Dryden further emphasized the description of the woman and her cottage in his own version. He added ten lines to the twenty-eight lines already present in Chaucer's original. By doing so, he allowed significant differences between his text and Chaucer's to lead the reader, more suggestively, toward a critical examination of William's land policies, his court life, and the nature of flattery at the highest political levels during the 1690s. Chaucer's introductory section focuses on the woman who runs the small farmstead:

A poore widdowe somdele stept in age,  
Was whilom dwelling in a poor cottage  
Beside a grove, stonding in a dale:  
This widdowe of which I tell you my tale,  
Sens the day that she was last a wife,  
In patience, led a full simple life,



Dryden's noticeably modern voice alludes once again to William and specifically his land tax just following his coronation, which was a political move designed to account for the expenses of a war with Louis XIV. The details of this tax, too, were considered by the Tories to be particularly unfair because of the higher-than-usual rate and the fact that it was permanent instead of just in times of war. Most importantly, William's policy was an innovation in triple taxation, as it drew income from the land itself, the products of land sold on the market, and a percentage due to the newly formed Bank of England for borrowing money against the purchase of property.<sup>120</sup>

Chaucer's portrait of the widow and her relationship with the land continues under a much more positive light. In her description, below, the imagery associated with food and agricultural blends together in some harmony:

Ne deinty morsell passed through her throte:  
Her diet was accordaunt to her cote.  
Repletion ne made her never sicke,  
A temperate diet was her physicke,  
And exercise, and hearts suffisaunce:  
The gout let her nothing for to daunce,  
Ne apoplexie shent not her hed:  
No wine dranke she, white ne red, (15-22)

Chaucer's earlier sense of simple plentitude in the widow's household is carried forward. In fact, its natural consequence is a healthy body—one that avoids the excesses of food and alcohol and obtains, in their place, a physiological harmony:

Her bord was most served with white et black,  
Milk et broun breed, in which she found no lack;  
Seinde bacon, et sometime an eye or twey,  
For she was as it were a manner dey. (23-26)

When the medieval poet mentions bread, he does so with a positive association: "she found no lack." Some items, including bacon and eggs, are in short supply, but such is to be expected

considering her occupational place in life. As a dairy farmer, she survives mostly on the medieval “white meats,” which consisted of cheese, bread, and milk. Ultimately, within Chaucer’s simple agrarian economy, this woman is able to produce more than she needs.

Dryden constructs this image differently, replacing domestic surplus with a worrying sense of scarcity. As he moves through his modernization, he extends this anxiety to the level of national politics and macroeconomics:

For no delicious morsel passed her throat;  
According to her cloth she cut her coat.  
No poignant sauce she knew, no costly treat,  
Her hunger gave a relish to her meat.  
A sparing diet did her health assure;  
Or sick, a pepper posset was her cure. (19-24)

At the start, there seems a tone of anti-“delicacy” in these lines, as if courtly tastes are immediately under attack. There also appears to be an obvious and explicit reference to “hunger,” projecting a negative tone that continues throughout. When Dryden explains her eating habits in terms of what is missing but desirable, such as “no delicious morsel” or a “costly treat,” he accentuates her miserable state. Also, while he does allude to health as a consequence of a “sparing diet,” he moves quickly to the mention of sickness and her dairy-based “cure.” Finally, when he finishes this passage, Dryden is silent on the widow’s occupational “manner”—something that, under Chaucer, stressed her unrestricted class status and her independent industry. Given the poet’s propensity to add lines, readers should examine those moments when he consciously decides to eliminate one entirely. In this case, he wants to complete the picture of the widow, not as a freeholder but as a subject. He rewrites her as a victim of corrupted political policy—a casualty of William’s tax code, now highlighted as a character in Dryden’s cast but appearing to carry the heft of a Chaucerian character from centuries earlier. Given Dryden’s extreme reworking of the tale’s introductory frame, his specific critical references later can be

interpreted as one unified condemnation of William's kingly presence, in general, and of his economic changes for the country, in particular.

Dryden's description of Chanticleer's relationship with the other hens is possibly the most potent political digression in the whole of the poem. He takes Chaucer's meager four lines—concerned only with the hens' characterization as "sisters" and "paramours"—and produces a triple-sized invective (47). It is therefore evident in *Fables* that

This gentle cock, for solace of his life,  
Six misses had, beside his lawful wife;  
Scandal, that spares no king, though ne'er so good,  
Says, they were all of his own flesh and blood;  
His sisters, both by sire and mother's side,  
And sure their likeness showed them near allied.  
But make the worst, the monarch did no more,  
Than all the Ptolemies had done before:  
When incest is for interest of a nation,  
'Tis made no sin by holy dispensation.  
Some lines have been maintained by this alone,  
Which by their common ugliness are known. (55-66)

Again, Dryden gravitates toward a mention of "king" and "monarch," in this case a contemporary ruler with specific political designs. More to the point, he establishes a view of the common public as an impoverished and subjugated citizenry, highlighting a people's struggle defined by the rhetorical attachment of "incest" to "interest of a nation." This last point deserves extra critical attention, as there is more than the suggestion of actual "incest"—a point that by itself is accurate enough given William and Mary's close kinship.<sup>121</sup>

Dryden's use of the word "interest" has another less-obvious connection to the 1690s. This decade marks the official beginning of a credit economy in England, a product of William's rule and a source of anxiety for Dryden and his fellow Tories. The so-called Financial Revolution under the Bank of England allowed governments to mortgage property legally by placing it in the hands of private investors.<sup>122</sup> William's reign therefore saw the birth of

something new: the generation of income from the agricultural potential of land in the present and from land's ability to create in the future—theoretically, forever. In practical terms, England's economy of the 1690s could receive interest payments from the sale of land through borrowed funds while still collecting taxes on the sale of land's agricultural output. Thus, it gained from a present and future value of the same commodity: property—that is, the very thing negatively highlighted in Dryden's description of the widow.<sup>123</sup> William's government leaned on these domestic beneficiaries, turning them into long-term creditors, with loans that were for the first time backed by Parliament.<sup>124</sup> If Dryden and his like-minded contemporaries regarded this new Dutch system as a corrupted and incestuous relationship, they must have viewed the formation of a permanent national debt in 1693 as a sort of deformed extension to an already-unnatural process. Of course, institutionalized credit would have been virtually unknown to Chaucer, yet Dryden saw its development in London as he wrote *Fables*. He therefore points rather condescendingly to a nation held up by an economic philosophy that, at once, seems to suggest illegitimacy, immorality, and financial irresponsibility.

Further in the tale, Dryden is forced to contend with the introduction of the fox. Again, he appropriates Chaucer's use of vivid characterizations, effectively redrawing this character as something appropriate to William III's, rather than Richard II's, royal court. Chaucer begins by touching lightly on the theme of flattery:

Alas ye lords, many a false flatterour  
Is in your court, and many a false lesingour,  
That pleaseth you well more, by my faith,  
Than he that soothfastnesse onto you saith.  
Readeth Ecclesiast of flatterie,  
Beware ye lords of her trecherie. (507-512)

Dryden develops the concept and accentuates the dangers of flattery, especially in the court setting, while also equating its vices to the profession of poetry:



Ye princes, raised by poets to the gods,  
And Alexandered up in lying odes,  
Believe not every flattering knave's report,  
There's many a Reynard lurking in the court;  
And he shall be received with more regard,  
And listened to, than modest truth is heard. (659-664)

It might seem strange that Dryden uses the art of poetry to wallow in the sins of poetry. His careful use of a court context, however, points the reader toward the perils of professional—in this case, royally appointed—versification. This kind of reference is more attuned to Dryden's world, as he had previously enjoyed political privileges through his appointment to Poet Laureate under the Stuarts, but, by this point in his life, all such liberties had been revoked. In what can only be likened to a bitter resentment, Dryden now conflates the ability to create poetic verse with the ability to influence and corrupt at the state level. The word "Alexandered" supposes both of these meanings: the heavy-handed application of power and the heavy-handed meter used to obtain it. As Dryden completes this particular passage, just before revealing the fox's treachery, the role of poetic flatterer and credulous leader is dramatically switched:

This Chanticleer, of whom the story sings,  
Stood high upon his toes, and clapped his wings;  
Then stretched his neck, and winked with both his eyes,  
Ambitious, as he sought the Olympic prize. (665-668)

The use of the term, "Olympic prize," is impossible to ignore, especially as it can be so tantalizingly associated with the honor of Laureate. However, doing so removes Chanticleer from the role of monarch and places him in the position of court poet, with Reynard assuming the crown. Dryden, possibly, had no choice but to exploit this back-and-forth metaphor to his own advantage. By the very nature of Chaucer's original narrative, he has to move with the shifting victimization in the tale. Yet he wants to maintain a consistent rhetorical stance.

According to Dryden, the usurping Protestants are always greedy and gullible, and their new Laureate and court favorite, in the person of Shadwell, is always the opportunistic flatterer.

Given these interconnections, the narrative of the widow becomes more important for Dryden, as his political imagery can only hold together if the tale sets up its “land” argument at the very beginning. By establishing the widow, not as a property owner, but as a poor tenant farmer, there is a more dramatic impression of Chanticleer’s enclosed court as a subjugating influence. The rooster and the fox are no longer contained within her world; rather, she is contained within theirs. Thus, Chaucer’s primary moral objectives are transformed into a forceful political demonstration—one that takes land from the people, grants it to the beasts instead, and highlights their subsequent misuse of power. It is useful here to remember Pocock’s concept of the English “patriot” as a bastion of conservative values during the Financial Revolution of the 1690s. Dryden’s patriot, as defined by Pocock, rejected mercantilism and the rising credit economy. He was a person instead made free by his property—an idea reminiscent of ancient Rome and its landowning ruling elite, with “roots... deep in classical antiquity.”<sup>125</sup> While Dryden’s account of the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* is purposefully nostalgic, as if reaching back to the simple happiness of Chaucer’s medievalism, it is also in terms of land and self-sufficiency noticeably barren. Dryden strips away any sense of the property-owning “patriot,” if Chaucer could have anticipated such a thing, leaving his Tory sympathizers to contemplate the cold comfort of William’s bold new economic plans.

#### **E. THE PORTRAIT OF THE PARSON AND THE PICTURE OF WILLIAM’S DEBASED COINAGE**

As Dryden continues to consider the king’s monetary system of the 1690s, he moves to a specific point in Chaucer’s *General Prologue* that allows him to expand on his earlier ideas. It is

this particular focus on Chaucer's brief portrait of the Parson, which Dryden describes in his title as "Imitated from Chaucer, And Inlarg'd," that proves his conscious effort to link the modernized tales in some personally desirable and thematic way. In fact, there is something uniquely appropriate about Chaucer's description of the Parson that allows Dryden to capitalize further in his arguments against William's economic policies.

As one of his three exemplary figures, Chaucer's portrait of the Parson has usually been associated with interpretations of medieval religion and codes of general conduct. Dryden holds onto the Parson's exemplary status—in fact, he depends on it—but takes advantage of the figure's high moral platform to look instead at monetary mismanagement on a national level, as if lingering on his economic treatment of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Dryden makes this connection by expanding cleverly on Chaucer's reference to gold as a measure of personal virtue. Chaucer's original runs as follows:

Out of the Gospell he the words caught,  
And this figure he added eke thereto,  
That if gold ruste, what should Iron do?  
For yef a priest be foule, on whom we trust,  
No wonder is a leude man to rust: (498-502)

Chaucer's late-fourteenth-century sensibilities are concerned with ecclesiastical corruption throughout Europe, empowering his portrait of the Parson and his country-cottage spiritual leadership to bump against the assumed commercial profiteering happening at the higher levels of church government. As the whole picture of Chaucer's Parson is made clearer, the reader learns of his outright refusal to engage in matters of excommunication and other theological punishments, deferring instead to acts of personal generosity toward his parishioners. Dryden's Parson lives by the same general example; however, his triumph over corruption is not strictly religious:

For Priests, he said, are Patterns for the rest:  
(The Gold of Heav'n, who bear the God Impress'd:)  
But when the precious Coin is kept unclean,  
The Sovereign's Image is no longer seen.  
If they be foul, on whom the People trust,  
Well may the baser Brass, contract a Rust. (81-86)

Here, Dryden mentions a "Sovereign's Image" and narrows the discussion to more earthly, rather than spiritual, concerns. The "People's trust," too, suggests political and financial frustration directed at a state rather than among a congregation—all of which treats Chaucer's original gold metaphor in a much more literal way.

Dryden's adaptation of the old Chaucerian theme is directed toward issues of economy and especially the value of currency. England's shortage of silver in circulation during William's reign was woefully unable to match the value of goods and services being exchanged at the time, presenting for William's administration a potential economic catastrophe. The most obvious solution involved a "recoinage," whereby all English money would be collected and minted using the latest stamping and milling technologies to deter further counterfeiting.<sup>126</sup> William's government was so profoundly invested in this process—indeed, tying its success to the health of the entire Revolution—that England's most respected intellectuals, including Christopher Wren, Isaac Newton, and John Locke, were called in to decide on specific tactics.<sup>127</sup> Clearly, this issue was a significant one, with much public scrutiny, and it gave Dryden the chance to hijack Chaucer's Parson for the purposes of extreme political slander.<sup>128</sup>

This fact is made plainer as Dryden moves further through his particular description of the Parson. Here, he displays his holy nature in no uncertain terms:

Such was the Saint; who shone with every Grace;  
Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's Face.  
God, saw his Image lively was express'd;  
And in his own Work, as in Creation bless'd. (87-90)

Dryden's portrait is preoccupied with the physical characteristics displayed in the Parson's face. He mentions earlier in the poem how the pilgrim's "Eyes diffuse'd a venerable Grace, / And Charity itself was in his Face" (3-4). With these lines, Dryden participates in a popular movement of his time, whereby identity could be communicated in print through physical descriptions of a person. Deidre Lynch reminds us that, especially with faces, writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could do much to reveal a person's inner thoughts and behaviors, even revealing his or her moral code, simply by creating descriptions that acted like readable signs. While, as Lynch states, these articulations of verbal signs interacted with the "culture market of bookselling and printselling," there is also something in the way faces on coins advanced the exchange of value by circulating money.<sup>129</sup> In her words, there was a "numismatic sense of *character*" moving through minds as easily as coins passed among hands; "the transformations that the Royal Mint wrought on pieces of metal were seen as analogous to the divine or experiential marking that rendered characters and faces legible."<sup>130</sup> Dryden's "Image" of "God" in the Parson's description is quick to blur the lines between those physical bodies stamped on coins and communicated through poetry. Dryden's divine Parson, existing in verse, replaces the idea of William's divine body, residing at it does on an "unclean" coin.

This idea is perhaps better explained and contextualized through an analysis of James Thompson's economical approach to William's ruling period:

By the last decade of the seventeenth century, after more than a half-century of shifting of regimes and neglect, from the civil war through the Interregnum and the Restoration, the English coinage was severely debased. Many of these issues turn on the common distinction between intrinsic versus extrinsic value—what a coin weighs versus what a coin says—the signs stamped on its surface. And how are coins to be evaluated, by what they say or what they weigh? Finally, the signs stamped on coin raise a whole series of questions about the nature of authority. Has the king the right to determine arbitrarily the value of silver coin?<sup>131</sup>

William's reign is therefore easily defined by a monetary crisis and, particularly, the crises in terms of "value" that resulted from his formulation of a state-sponsored credit economy. Within earlier portions of his Chaucerian modernizations, Dryden makes light of this potential danger that would eventually lead to the market "bubbles" throughout the early 1700s. Now, with his description of the Parson, Dryden means to place his own image of the exemplary figure side-by-side—or, rather, face-by-face—with the coined image of William. While the latter wallows in a questionable system of exchange and worth, the former, now of Dryden's creation, imparts the signs of virtue and holiness. The Parson in effect becomes Dryden's exemplary figure, instead of Chaucer's, carrying with him the modernizer's own political values. Dryden's new Parson works for Dryden only, opposing both the "unclean" sovereign or "Coin" moving through William's economy, as well as the unclean sovereign himself.

With the establishment of the modernized Parson as an ally, Dryden enlarges on the portrait in order to further endorse his beliefs and frustrations. His mention of Richard II and Henry IV is, at once, a secretive allusion and a bold political statement:

The Tempter saw him too, with envious Eye;  
And, as on Job, demanded leave to try.  
He took the time when Richard was depos'd:  
And High and Low, with happy Harry clos'd.  
This Prince, tho' great in Arms, the Priest withstood:  
Near tho' he was, yet not the next of Blood.  
Had Richard unconstrain'd, resign'd the Throne:  
A King can give no more than is his own:  
The Title stood entail'd, had Richard had a Son. (106-114)

Dryden's allusion to "High" and "Low" follows Shakespeare's account of Richard's fall and Henry's ascension. He also uses this scene to continue his "Blood" and seed argument from the *Wife of Bath's Tale* and compares Henry's rise to a kind of Biblical curse. More importantly, Dryden cannot help but conjure images of the same political scenario connected to the

Revolution in 1688. If such a reference seems haphazard, it should be remembered that Dryden's readership was mostly unaware that Chaucer's original lines in the *General Prologue* contained no mention of these dangerous views. Put another way, Dryden's contemporaries must have believed his efforts to be a true translation, with no added political polish. In the rare cases where Dryden's trick was recognized—that is, when someone might have discovered his alterations to Chaucer—his sympathizers might have enjoyed the conceit. Conversely, William III's apologists and other of Dryden's enemies, without a full working knowledge of Chaucer's Middle English and without a plentiful supply of new editions of the original *Tales* to reference, would have had a difficult path toward proving any charges of libel.<sup>132</sup> In a very real sense, Dryden's use of Chaucer in *Fables* allowed the seventeenth-century poet a smokescreen for some of his most potent attacks on the ruling dynasty.

Other critics have keyed in on the context of these lines. Austin C. Dobbins asserts blankly that “Dryden's portrait of the Good Parson reflects an interpretation of Chaucer which was accepted by Dryden's contemporaries as being validly medieval *and* seventeenth century.”<sup>133</sup> Dobbins's point is that Dryden attempted, poetically, to bring Chaucer three-hundred years in the future. In his words, if “Chaucer or, better, Chaucer's Parson, had lived in the seventeenth century, he would have remained true to the Faith by supporting the claims of the Catholic James II, to the throne of England both before and after the Revolution of 1688.”<sup>134</sup> James Kinsley also maintains that Dryden is truly modernizing this section of the *General Prologue* by paying tribute to Bishop Thomas Ken, a non-juring priest during William III's reign.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, Dryden goes to some pains in his portrait to describe the Parson's age, and, at sixty years old, he would have matched well with the same-aged Bishop Ken in 1697. Also according to Kinsley, Ken lost his diocese as a result of his non-juring actions. As a result, he

was “forced to live on the charity of his friends and sympathizers” and was “wandering round the country” in a way that fit well with Dryden’s portrait of the exemplary pilgrim.<sup>136</sup>

Dobbins and Kinsley are both reluctant to see Dryden, himself, painted in the likeness of the Parson; however, some evidence of a self-portrait can be found. Kinsley points out that Dryden was born in 1631 and was therefore in his sixties almost completely throughout the 1690s. Also, given his own retreat from public popularity and royal support, Dryden’s plight was equal to Bishop Ken’s, in that it resulted from a similar belief system and an accompanying estrangement from the new Dutch dynasty. Simply put, Dryden was also poor and lonely and might have identified with the person of Ken and Chaucer’s characterization of the Parson. To Dobbins’s assertion that Dryden wanted merely to characterize a seventeenth-century Chaucer for an audience of the same period, the point is valid and almost certainly one of Dryden’s leading intentions. However, Dryden goes too far in his imagining of Chaucer’s original Parson—so far, in fact, that he overplays the portrait’s political potential and ignores the religious sentiments so powerfully brought forward in the original. Dryden makes a vain attempt to convert Chaucer’s commentary on the Church into a commentary that is solely political and pointed directly at the relationship between James II and William III. For Dryden, Chaucer’s work is more of a convenient platform for attacking royal politics. And what results from the Parson’s tribute, as modernized, is a system of values that Dryden held personally sacred.

In the same way that Dryden downplays Chaucer’s demonstration of simple spirituality and develops instead the tension of a usurping monarch, he moves Chaucer’s poignant “gold ruste” argument away from the theme of religious morality and into a harsh critique of England’s economy during the formative years of the Bank of England. Viewed together, these changes



show the beginnings of a pattern—one perhaps less focused on Bishop Ken or his Anglican non-juring fellows and more on Catholic Dryden as the disenfranchised political subject.

#### **F. DRYDEN'S NEW EXEMPLAR: THE MODERNIZER AS MORAL SUBJECT**

Given his tendency to transform meaning and develop new themes, Dryden, it would seem, wanted to secure a place for himself in the canon as an imitator of Chaucer. He might have also desired something beyond even this honor; he may have reached for immortality by placing himself within *Fables* and among the rich cast of characters bound for Canterbury. Dryden tells us that his Parson, for example, “went not, with the Crowd, to see a Shrine; / But fed us by the way, with Food divine” (135-136). If Dryden saw himself near the end of his own mortal journey, he would seem well suited with this last, seemingly “divine,” poetic movement in *Fables*. More importantly, with these lines, the reader picks up on a sense of futility articulated by one who feels removed from the crowding public but, nonetheless, is able to facilitate some lasting instruction. If we begin to see what must have been Dryden’s frustrations later in life, regarding the religious and political world around him, and if we accept his tendency to self-aggrandize, we can see more of the creative poet in the Parson’s portrait and less of the mechanical actions of a translator simply reworking a medieval text.

If we accept this tendency of Dryden’s to place himself in his translations of Chaucer, we can begin to see that sections of *Palamon and Arcite* are also revelations of the poet’s own life. It becomes more evident that Dryden is recognizing his mortality and reworking Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale* in order to preserve for himself an enduring legacy. The tale’s insistent themes of longing, fate, and death allow him to reflect on his personal tragedies, as well as his own anticipated heroic death. Considering this potential motivation, Dryden capitalizes most on those moments when the idea of an artist manifests itself in Chaucer’s original text. When, for

example, in the *Knights Tale*, the preparations for the knightly tournament—when the construction of the lists, along with the temples of Venus, Mars, and Diana—are richly described, Chaucer concludes with a short tribute to one of the unrecognized painters in the story: “Well could he paint lively that it wrought, / With many a florein he the hewes bought.” (1229-1230). Dryden takes the hint of these two lines and creates eight in their place. With his modernized description, there is a much greater focus on the artistic master, himself:

All these the Painter drew with such Command,  
That Nature snatch'd the Pencil from his Hand,  
Asham'd and angry that his Art could feign  
And mend the Tortures of a Mothers Pain.  
Theseus beheld the Fanes of ev'ry God,  
And thought his mighty Cost was well bestow'd:  
So Princes now their Poets should regard,  
But few can write, and fewer can reward. (Book II, 655-662)

Here, Dryden alludes subtly to his now almost-extinguished genius. He laments that “Nature” has “snatch'd the Pencil from his Hand,” perhaps alluding to his death or at least the end of his career. There is also the anxiety of impotence, either political or otherwise, to go with this fear of advanced age. Dryden’s “Pencil” had been taken from him years before. If this more-personal frustration at the hands of an angry and jealous monarch is foreshadowed in these lines, the last couplet in the passage moves the subject matter rather blatantly to his main point. “Princes” and “Poets” are then mentioned, shifting the reader’s attention suddenly from the merits of the visual artist toward those of the writer and abruptly highlighting the corrupted state of Shadwell’s appointment under William.

These discouragements at the end of Dryden’s life come forward again during Theseus’s reflections on the death of Arcite. Dryden maintains Chaucer’s thoughtful philosophies on death with the words, “the Journeys End,” but he adds the lines, “Ev’n Kings but Play; and when their Part is done, / Some other, worse or better, mount the Throne” (888-890). These are obvious

jabs, but they still evoke sympathy for Dryden's miserable state and the bitterness he maintained throughout this last project. Despite these feelings, there is a positive personal reflection in the last section of the modernized tale. For comparison, Chaucer's original runs as follows:

And God that all this world hath ywrought,  
Sende him his love, that it hath to dere bought,  
For now is Palamon in all wele,  
Living in blisse, in richesse, and in hele,  
And Emely him loveth so tenderly,  
And he her serveth so gentilly,  
That never was there no word hembetwene  
Of jealousye or of any other tene. (2241-2248)

Here, there is a definite centering on Emely and Palamon. Chaucer's lines assert the optimism of the medieval romance. His telling of the story compels the characters to face off against the forces that threaten peace and security, thus allowing them to achieve harmony only after these forces have been engaged and overthrown. Although Dryden's changes to these lines are still positive, they are meant to serve his happiness:

Smil'd Venus, to behold her own true Knight  
Obtain the Conquest, though he lost the Fight,  
And bless'd with Nuptial Bliss the sweet laborious Night.  
Eros, and Anteros, on either Side,  
One fir'd the Bridegroom, and one warm'd the Bride;  
And long-attending Hymen from above  
Showr'd on the Bed the whole Idalian Grove.  
All of a Tenour was their After-Life,  
No Day discolour'd with Domestick Strife;  
No Jealousie, but mutual Truth believ'd,  
Secure Repose, and Kindness undeceiv'd.  
Thus Heavn, beyond the Compass of his Thought,  
Sent him the Blessing he so dearly bought. (Book III, 1141-1153)

Dryden asserts a post-Renaissance historical distinction. He turns Chaucer's mention of "God" into a protracted account of the Roman deities and heavenly interactions, which adds to the overall length of the passage. He also deemphasizes the central characters, failing to mention Emily even once and referring to Palamon non-specifically as a "Knight." Ultimately, Dryden

digresses from the couple's blissful union. Instead, his idea of "Heav'n" at the end bestows happiness upon one person signified only by a masculine pronoun. Within these lines, it is the voice and presence of the poet that seizes control. For all of Dryden's groundwork establishing the storyline around Emily and her alluring gravity, it becomes apparent that he wishes to transfer this focus of the reader's attention toward himself.

Judith Sloman has also argued that Dryden's Emily, more than Chaucer's Emely, motivates the actions of the male characters. She maintains however that, by the tale's end, "the focus shifts to Theseus when he stops a battle between the rival lovers and, at the women's request, forgives the lovers for their crimes."<sup>137</sup> Emily's agency is clearly reduced; but, rather than assigning the power of the poem's conclusion to Theseus, the text seems more inclined to recognize Dryden as the emergent hero. His decision to change the ordering of the lines in the modernization has some significance; as a result, the happy state of the mysterious male figure is relocated to the poem's very end. By making this change in sequence, Dryden changes the poem's last impression, scrubbing away Chaucer's sweet sentiments on the return to family bliss and moving instead toward a final "Blessing he so dearly bought," bestowed upon a singular and purposefully unnamed male figure. Dryden therefore places himself at the moral center of the romance as a figure ready to receive a return to bliss following hardship. All of the woe and glory collected at the end of Chaucer's original *Knight's Tale* is shifted at the last moment upon Dryden, and all of the glory heaped upon Emily in the earlier part of the modernization is likewise inherited by the poet.

At a minimum, Dryden's contributions to an eighteenth-century Chaucer offer insights on the poet's final years that were perhaps never truly comprehended. They also set a foundation for understanding the rest of Chaucer's *Tales* as they were modernized throughout the 1700s. As

lesser-known poets and editors like George Ogle in the 1740s and William Lipscomb in the 1790s followed Dryden's model, they created other religious and political portraits of Chaucer to reflect their interpretation of the times. Their Chaucer gazes worriedly at similar social and state concerns, like the bubble markets anticipated by Dryden, along with the perils of imperialism, while reflecting too on a religious state bent on Protestant, instead of Catholic, ideals. Ultimately, all of these adaptations, starting with Dryden in 1700 and continuing until 1795, are critical to eighteenth-century studies, simply because they reveal a cultural understanding that links this literary period to the late medieval in ways never before realized.

### III. GEORGE OGLE'S "SEVERAL HANDS" AND THE FASHIONING OF A NEW GEORGIAN CHAUCER

After the publication of *Fables* in 1700, there was a renewed interest in the modernization of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Alexander Pope, for one, wanted to continue Dryden's work. Thomas Betterton, too, the celebrated actor and a member of Dryden's acting circle, published a translated version of *The General Prologue* and *The Reeve's Tale* in 1712.<sup>138</sup> Others followed, including Samuel Cobb, John Smith, John Markland, Henry Travers, Thomas Morell, Henry Brooke, and Samuel Boyse. Most of these lesser-known figures were, in fact, only lightly associated with the literary world with which they interacted. Cobb, for example, taught grammar school, while Travers moved steadily through the priesthood. Others, like Markland and Boyse, earned meagre incomes as poets and translators. Betsy Bowden provides the sole biographical source for many of these modernizers, touching often on the hard conditions they were forced to endure. Boyse, for example, was so poor at one point he had to pawn his clothes and continue writing under a blanket with holes cut for his arms. Cobb was plagued with addictions and his own sense of obscurity. He was, in Bowden's remarkable words, "a trapped Romantic spirit drinking to death the body of an Augustan schoolmaster."<sup>139</sup> Principally, Bowden's research explores the more fascinating aspects of these struggling scholars and the relevance of their work; however, a thorough critical examination of their modernizing poetry remains to be accomplished. In doing so, there can be a better understanding of the Georgian and the medieval periods in two important ways: specifically, how Chaucer reflected eighteenth-century values and how he, in the context of those values, was interpreted by modernizers of the eighteenth century.

Because of either their creators' lack of fame or the amateur style they sometimes exhibited, modernizations of the *Canterbury Tales* published in the early eighteenth century are seldom regarded, either as historical landmarks or enduring works of literature. Pope's version of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* is included in most published collections of his major works, but his modernization of the *Merchant's Tale* is not well-known.<sup>140</sup> Except for Bowden's contributions to the scholarly world, few of the others have been the subject of significant critical treatment for centuries.

This modern neglect of the modernizations is largely attributable to the predominance of Chaucerian studies today. The evolution of critical theory in medieval literature has now privileged Chaucer's original verse over the sometimes-tedious imitations that followed. Chaucer's work is also more fully understood and appreciated, and his Middle English is now so glossed and footnoted that it no longer poses a significant challenge to the modern reader. As a result, the *Tales* are often presented today as they were first written, without any need for a modernizing hand. As for the "plain-English" attempts at modernizing his language, recent versions have treated the medieval text with more accuracy, less embellishment, and an ever-more sophisticated critical eye.

Scholars, however, cannot discount the fact that the eighteenth-century modernizers, no matter how obscurely they operated, brought something unique to the field of Chaucerian studies. For one, they lived during a time that witnessed a renewed fascination with all-things medieval. Their period in English history was one of the first and most influential to resurrect the "gothic" in noticeably constructive ways. These artists therefore offered a perspective that twentieth-century critics and their successors could not. Secondly, eighteenth-century readers were more greatly immersed in the classical learning that Chaucer studied and emulated, and

they benefitted from this cultural association when it came to immediately understanding the nuances that future critics had to laboriously tease out for themselves. Finally, modernizers of the eighteenth century had the advantage of temporal proximity. Simply because they were born into a period closer to Chaucer's own time, they were better poised to inhabit his world. All of these advantages enabled a connection to the late-medieval age—one, of course, helped along by a burgeoning intellectual enlightenment that began to permeate the culture and consciousness of British citizens in the early 1700s. If these factors affected for the early Georgians a better understanding of the fourteenth century, that understanding was even more developed through the curious efforts of the school masters, translators, and struggling poets who attempted versions of Chaucer's work.

One other point that deserves mentioning: the early eighteenth-century modernizers had the opportunity to participate in political thought during the bloom of British nationalism. Their historical period was one defined by budding patriotism mixed with Protestantism; indeed, by the start of the next century, the two could not be separated. They also belonged to a generation of Britons with an undeniable urge to dissociate from the European continental mainland, both politically and religiously. Linda Colley touches on this complex relationship:

Protestantism, broadly understood, provided the majority of Britons with a framework for their lives. It shaped their interpretation of the past and enabled them to make sense of the present. It helped them identify and confront their enemies. It gave them confidence and even hope. It made it easier for them to think of themselves as a people apart.<sup>141</sup>

Modernizations of Chaucer throughout the 1700s would have reflected this sentiment. Moreover, they might have instigated it. Few literary genres could have better mobilized this effort to “make sense of the present” than the Georgian modernizations of the medieval past. By reinterpreting Chaucer's writings from a historical period steeped in Catholicism, Ogle and his



fellow modernizers had the advantage. As will be shown, they used it to influence perspectives on the Protestant present and to lay out their visions for a hopeful future.

Granted, given this vision of a glorified, post-Reformation and post-Stuart England—this newly authorized “Britain”—it might not seem intuitive that budding young artists would choose to work with medieval literature. Chaucer in particular, despite his own complicated personal beliefs, lived comfortably amidst an English culture of Catholicism, European communalism, and an attachment to governing ideologies across the Channel. The answer might lie with Dryden’s treatment of *Fables*. As with Dryden, it is likely that the modernizers wanted to take from Chaucer’s rich narrative themes and use the entertainment value of his stories to carry forward their own beliefs and the ideologies of their age. Perhaps, too, the modernizers wanted to do more than simply facilitate access to Chaucer’s work. They may have wanted to replace it with something of their personal design, thereby leveraging the fame and popularity of the gothic for their own propagandizing purposes. Their goal may have been to translate Chaucer into a Protestant apologist and a British nationalist—or, even further, to rewrite history and master their readers, not with the creative written word, but with the slightly altered modernized word.

If we allow ourselves to see how the modernizers operated under the influence of these motivations, we can begin to look at them as informed scholars—that is, critics of their political age, critics of the medieval age, and critics in particular of Chaucer’s writings. This new understanding of their work would be useful, as, despite their fascination with the medieval, the Augustans are not highly regarded for their sophisticated grasp of the literature and philosophy of the Middle Ages. By carefully regarding the modernizations as critical texts, this prior dismissiveness might prove to be an unfair characterization. It could well be proven that some of the ideas put forward as “new” in the field of medieval studies during the last hundred years

have, in fact, been well known since the eighteenth century. If substantiated, this bit of insight would reveal that medieval interpretations from the early 1700s were developed without notice, most likely because they came from amateur Chaucerian enthusiasts modernizing the *Tales* for a limited commercial readership. Regarded little then and forgotten now, this group could potentially have much to say about the medieval period. They may be more informed than even the community of outspoken intellectuals at the time, led by Addison, Percy, Hurd, and Johnson.

#### A. OGLE AND THE MODERNIZERS' "IMPROVING" ARTS

George Ogle therefore becomes one of the most important yet still least known of these modernizing figures. Ogle's relative obscurity today is a shame, considering his contributions to the field. He took on the significant task of compiling most of the modernizations of the *Tales* existing at the time, and he added to these his lengthy translation of the *Clerk's Tale* for publication in 1741. Ogle also included his own modernized versions of almost a dozen prologues, which helped fasten together disparate works into one more fully readable narrative. Additionally, he edited Betterton's *General Prologue*, rewriting significant portions and adding descriptions of some of the pilgrims, including the Clerk, the Haberdasher, the Weaver, the Carpenter, the Dyer, the Tap'stry-Merchant, and the Cook. Finally, Ogle took special care to remember Dryden, adding his *Knight's Tale* and his *Wife of Bath's Tale* to the mix and including in the *General Prologue* his greatly lengthened and completely reimagined *Character of a Good Parson*.

Ogle's ambitious project, entitled *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands*, guides our study of Chaucer's reception in the eighteenth century—a reception that was, of course, greatly concerned with easily consumable translations of the *Tales* for a new readership. The result of Ogle's work is especially worth noting, for he did more than simply

compose easy translations for contemporary readers. In linking together most of Chaucer's original tales, he took great pains to fill in the gaps left by others. In the process, he completely reworked the prologues for the Miller, the Reeve, the Cook, the Man of Law, the Squire, the Merchant, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Clerk.<sup>142</sup> By the end of his efforts, he had done no less than establish a coherent running narrative for the first half of the *Tales*, representing with some accuracy a partial eighteenth-century image of Chaucer's own ambitious project. The sheer volume of lines that Ogle modernized or composed for his readership is enormous. Just in terms of quantity, and disregarding for the moment his tireless work as an editor, Ogle's output as a Chaucerian poet almost equals Dryden's; in fact, he fell short by only a few hundred lines. Considering Dryden's dedication to the lasting fame of Chaucer, Ogle's energies might be viewed as greater.

In terms of modernizing quality, Ogle perhaps also exceeded Dryden in his propensity to digress from the original text. Of course, this assessment of "quality" assumes that such digressive tactics can be regarded positively. Whether or not this assumption is true, Ogle took tremendous artistic license and found countless ways to add to Chaucer's original version of the *Tales*. His rendering of the *Clerk's Prologue* and *Tale* only barely resembles the general framework lined out by Chaucer, as Ogle more than doubles the 1,219 original lines to 2,532. In doing so, he takes on a kind of personal appropriation of the Clerk's voice, which apparently also motivated him to greatly alter the pilgrim's portrait in the *General Prologue*. For this portrait of the Clerk, Ogle inserted his own lines, replacing Betterton's earlier modernizing work from just a few years earlier with his sentimental reflection on the life of an impoverished intellectual. Where Betterton, in 1712, had stuck more closely to Chaucer's original portrait of a scholar who depended upon and greatly honored his benefactors, Ogle offers a more scathing commentary on

the institution of poetic sponsorship from the aristocracy. His version of the Clerk receives nothing by “Courting Folly” or “Flatt’ring Vice” (68).<sup>143</sup> Ogle moves pointedly, too, toward the Clerk’s refusal to write any “fulsome Dedication”—in the poet’s words, “Drudge for a Dame, or pander for a Knight!” (61-62). With these revisions, Ogle challenges the apparatus of sponsorship from the higher classes, calling into question the sort of income that provided for Dryden, Pope, and others of their time.<sup>144</sup>

Even if these changes are only small and contextual, they show principally that Ogle had no problem altering the text to fit his own belief systems or those of his immediate cultural surroundings, even if that directly contrasted with Chaucer’s ideals. Ogle’s manipulation of the Clerk’s description is clearly obvious and intentional. He had access to Betterton’s complete modernization of the *General Prologue*, published posthumously in Barnaby Lintot’s *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* in 1712. Ogle took it upon himself to re-modernize particular sections, and the Clerk’s portrait seems highly targeted for alterations. In many ways, Ogle was responding less to Chaucer and more to Betterton, intending by the specificity of his language to contradict him directly. Chaucer, after all, never mentions a patron in his *General Prologue*; instead, he vaguely and briefly alludes to “friends” who sponsor his studies (299).<sup>145</sup> Betterton, however, depicts his “Scholar of Oxford” as someone who prays for his “Patron’s Soul... / Whose Bounty gave that Learning which he had / Laboriously study’d Night and Day” (256-258).<sup>146</sup> Ogle’s negative opinion of the patron-poet relationship shows his distaste for the connection between scholar and benefactor and proves a conscious editing of the *Tales* to suit his own rhetorical desires. This tendency to alter the original message, if only in minor ways, provides a thread for investigating all of the modernizations in Ogle’s *Several Hands*, to see how other changes might have reflected political or religious discourse of the time.

Ogle also takes possession of the last few lines of the Clerk's portrait to reflect on his own role as modernizer. Where Chaucer completes his picture of the Clerk with three couplets praising the pilgrim's virtue and wisdom, Ogle alludes to the anxiety of the modernizer's craft:

Thus grounded well, he study'd to proceed;  
And not a Word spoke more than there was need.  
'Twas short or close, sententious or sublime,  
And urg'd with Modesty, and said in Time.  
For to instruct, he rather wish'd, than strove,  
Willing to be improv'd, or to improve!  
Still turn'd to moral Virtue was his Speech,  
And gladly wou'd he learn, and gladly teach: (89-96)

In general terms, Ogle stays true to Chaucer's vision. Both poets, for example, maintain that the Clerk is a person of few words, delivered sparingly and only at the most consequential moments. Ogle does however increase the wordiness of this passage, rather ironically, given the message, and he curiously associates the Clerk with the improving arts. It is here that Ogle summons for the reader's consideration the tension between an expectation to represent a story faithfully and the artistic desire to increase its instructive worth. Speaking at this point on his own, Ogle advocates the power of an altered and embellished storyline. The Clerk, after all, is "Willing to be improv'd," but this sentiment moves quickly toward a responsibility "to improve."

Ogle himself adds significantly to the Clerk's own tale, in terms of both volume and elements of the plot. Thus, where he sees the need for creative interpretation via the pilgrim's story, he cleverly procures his license beforehand in the introductory portrait. Ogle adds to this permissive modernizing environment when he readjusts a particularly pivotal moment in the *General Prologue*—that is, when Chaucer himself steps out of the narrative frame and comments on the true rehearsal of a tale. According to Chaucer's original:

Who shall tellen a tale after a man,  
He mote rehearse as nie as ever he can,  
Everich word, if it been in his charge,

All speake he never so rudely ne large:  
Or else he mote tellen his tale untrue,  
Or feine things, or find words newe: (731-736)

Chaucer presents an interesting contrast for his audience. On one hand, the rehearser is obliged to report exactly as he witnessed, to maintain the integrity of the story. On the other, there is a desire to intervene between the original and that which is passed along—to negotiate in the transaction of a tale and engage creatively in the process. A. J. Minnis interprets this moment as one in which Chaucer uses the “fictitious narrative of a pilgrimage to... [provide] the rationale for the compilation.”<sup>147</sup> Thus, by the nature of his frame narrative, Chaucer cannot in theory be held responsible for the vulgar tales performed by churlish pilgrims like the Miller and Reeve, while, at the same time, he can participate in the fiction and contribute his own individual thoughts. Minnis alludes to this latter part when he suggests that Chaucer and other medieval writers of the period “were accustomed to including something out of their own heads, of adding some personal assertion to their reportage;” ultimately, they “delivered... opinions” and “criticised [their own] sources.”<sup>148</sup> Chaucer engages in this playful criticism when he quotes Plato immediately following his appeal for a true retelling, by stating that the “words mote been cosin to the dede” (742). He therefore makes a statement based on accepted philosophical authority and, by couching it within the fiction of a larger narrative, refutes and ridicules it outright.

Ogle mimics this approach. He recreates Chaucer’s cautionary digression near the end of the *General Prologue* in the same manner and for the same ultimate effect. Thus, where Chaucer prohibits “feine[d] things” and “words newe,” Ogle offers the following:

Who tells Another’s Tale, in Verse or Prose,  
Nigh as He can shou’d ev’ry Word disclose;  
For be it ne’er so wanton, or at large,  
Such are the Facts, and you must give the Charge.

This Rule infring'd (by Law and Reason known)  
The Tale is not Another's, but your Own. (175-180)<sup>149</sup>

Ogle's treatment is therefore, like Chaucer's, a studied exercise in persona-making that also presents a rhetorical self-contradiction. At the very moment in which he reproduces Chaucer's sentiment on the subject of a true account, which should "ev'ry Word disclose," he substitutes his own and adds both in volume and poetic flourishes.<sup>150</sup> Ogle continues the theme by incorporating a political ideal from his own particular time period:

If new the Conduct, or the Language new;  
The Stamp re-touch'd, the Coinage is untrue.  
To This, Whate'er the Standard Sense affords,  
Requires exact Similitude of Words. (183-186)

To strengthen his argument, Ogle takes from his era's anxiety regarding counterfeit currency. As with Dryden in the late-seventeenth century, coinage was a familiar cultural and economic topic in Ogle's 1730s and 1740s. But, again, Ogle presents an internal inconsistency. He proclaims in theory the need for "Similitude" with the original text, yet he violates it in practice through his own artistic deviation and his own contemporary reference. It is this simultaneity that puzzles the audience, at once establishing standards of conduct and revoking them in the same breath. Like Chaucer, Ogle creates a fiction through compilation, allowing him to lean on the authenticity of his source while negotiating for himself a vehicle for parody and political commentary. He honors Chaucer on the surface, but, underneath, he confesses that he will make the tales his own.

Minnis's conception of Chaucer as a "compiler," who can varnish his own philosophical treatises with comic irony, is a complex and modern understanding. Ogle, however, grasped this strategy and used it in the same way—at once copying Chaucer's original text, laying out rules, and violating them as a means for his own performance. Ultimately, Ogle modernizes Chaucer's words but also his subversive techniques.

Before returning to the frame narrative and the Host's proposal to the other pilgrims,

Ogle again flaunts this trick to his readers:

Others perhaps, with happier Talents blest,  
Our Breach of due Decorum may contest:  
In Poems well dispos'd they may maintain,  
Rank shou'd be kept, as in a public Train

[...]

“Nor Rank, nor File, our rude Militia mind,  
Some stray, 'tis true, before, and some behind.”

If This excuse not; on the Truth we rest,

“Low was our Genius, and We did our Best. (221-224; 227-230)

Ogle refers almost directly to his compilation of the *Tales*, and he points specifically at his fellow modernizers. Words such as “our” and “we” appear regularly in the place of Chaucer's singular personal pronouns and communicate a kind of collaborative effort. Additionally, where Chaucer worries only about plain language and rude subjects, Ogle seems more concerned with the order and discipline of his “Militia,” as if the tendency to “stray” represents a deviation in translation from the prescribed original text. The last couplet in this passage reveals, once again, the rhetorical inconsistency. On the surface, it laments the modernizers' lack of faithfulness to their source; but, through the words, “Genius” and “Best,” Ogle glorifies their art for its modern relevance and accessibility. His apparent adherence to “Truth” is more aimed at being clever and professing personal values than any attempt to represent Chaucer's words accurately.

What eventually comes from this “Truth” is something revealed in the modernized tales that follow. Quite different from Dryden's intentions, one of Ogle's main goals as a poet and editor is to advertise and support a sense of Anglican nationalism flickering into existence with the Georgian dynasty. At the same time Britain imports a new German dynasty, Ogle wants to engender within the nation's readers an appreciation for the forms and doctrines of



Protestantism. In order to do so more effectively, he draws on Chaucer's authority and the people's fascination with their medieval history to make the pleas for religion more credible.

## **B. THE *CLERK'S TALE* AND CHAUCER'S NEW RELIGION**

Chaucer's own source for the *Clerk's Tale* is most likely Petrarch's telling of the Griselda story, which, according to John Finlayson, existed in "many late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century manuscripts, and is directly identified by the Clerk himself."<sup>151</sup> The tale, apparently, was well known and greatly enlarged and embellished, even by Chaucer.<sup>152</sup> At its conclusion, the story of Walter and Griselda is declared a religious fable—one in which a lord subjects his young and virtuous wife to a series of harshly enacted tests. In Chaucer's version, Walter appears to treat his peasant bride with contempt. Over a span of many years, he systematically torments her by pretending to kill her infant children and exiling her so he can remarry a younger woman of nobility. When Griselda is forced to return to the court in the service of Walter's new bride-to-be, the trick is revealed to her, and their children are restored amidst a seemingly happy ending. Chaucer's version is one of heavy-handed religious imagery, in which the trials of Job are recast with the lord Walter acting as an all-knowing God. In terms of perspective, Chaucer's audience members are also all-knowing, as they are privy to the trick at every stage of the story. As such, they are participating in the deceit and marveling at Griselda's impenetrable piety and faithfulness. They are meant to be moved with ever-increasing passion as poor Griselda endures her torture like a martyred saint.

Ogle's telling of the Griselda story is very different—and not merely because he adds so much in terms of poetic volume. What is perhaps most significant is that Ogle changes the perspective, leaving his readers unaware of the lord's trick until the end, when the truth is revealed to them and the wife simultaneously. Therefore, where Chaucer allows his audience to



that follow. Phrases like “royal mandates claim obedient hands” and “[he] would have his will” appear throughout the narrator’s grim accounting of events (1186; 1206).

With Ogle, too, there is a more pronounced political commentary—one, as noted, that requires an audience more focused on hate than religious piety. This emotional manipulation is brought forward further in Ogle’s transformation of the “papal bull” scene. Originally, with Chaucer, a special dispensation from the Pope acted as a necessary instrument of the story, procuring for Walter the means to feign an annulment of his marriage with Griselda. Chaucer treats this scene gently, justifying the deceit as a mechanism for ensuring peace with his people:

I saie he had, they should counterfete  
The Popes bulle, making mencion  
That he hath leve, his first wife to lete  
As by the Popes dispensacion  
To stint rancour and discencion  
Betwixt his people and him, thus spake the bull  
The which they han published at the full. (687-693)

Chaucer’s Walter moves within the tenets of the Roman Church and does so for the purposes of preventing “rancour” and “discencion.” Ogle’s Gualtherus sends his servants on the same errand, but the poet makes additional mention of the “forging hand” and “scheming head” easily found among the “prolific court” of papal representatives (1522-1523).

Ultimately, Ogle reflects on the power of the Pope, not so much as a mechanism for peaceful governance over domestic strife, but as a medium for abuse. With his pardon:

Handed from heav’n the scroll, the crowd believ’d;  
To slav’ry prone, and form’d to be deceiv’d.  
Moles, that in darkness center’d their delight!  
The day to them had been a pain of sight. (1591-1594)

Ogle therefore turns Chaucer’s necessities of canon law into a further demonstration of unjust rule. In doing so, he adds to the reader’s anxiety and creates a call-for-action, mobilized both by the story’s inherent cruelty and the lord’s undisclosed motivations.

Ogle's interventions point to a lack of awareness or blindness in the narrative structure. The reader's blindness then begins to eerily resemble the blindness exhibited by the Pope's community of parishioners in the story. Where Gualtherus's fictional subjects come up short in their response to the outrage, Ogle's British citizens are expected to consider their own part. By associating with Griselda's point of view, Ogle's readers can more effectively experience her plight. They are no longer omniscient witnesses to her saintly actions, as with Chaucer's version. Instead, with Ogle, they are fellow victims meant to respond angrily to the story's harsh treatment of an innocent person. Ogle's audience is therefore moved to demand liberty from an apparently oppressive Catholic lord and the Pope who demands his fealty. This realization is tightly summarized for scrutiny in the couplet, "The pope infallible with one accord / They held, nor less infallible their lord" (1595-1596). Ultimately, Ogle can apply a powerful critique to undermine the assumed blind hold demonstrated by outside European influences. In its place, he can highlight the benefits of an independent Protestant nation, with a king and state religion working in harmony for the good of the populace.

### **C. TALES WITH MANY VOICES: TOWARD A UNIFIED MODERN BRITAIN**

With these political purposes in mind, Ogle's task as a modernizer was straightforward, and his liberal use of Chaucer's verse only further mobilized his support of Britain's Anglican revolution. His task as an editor, however, was more challenging. Almost all of the tales in his *Several Hands* had been published earlier in the century, and all of these previous modernizing efforts were done in isolation, away from any consideration of a collected whole. If Ogle wanted to arrange these tales in the image of Chaucer's original frame narrative, and, if he was determined to present a consistent voice among them bent on nationalistic ideals, he had significant work ahead of him.

Of particular difficulty must have been the treatment of companion pieces in Chaucer's original *Tales*, such as the *Miller's Tale* and *Reeve's Tale*. These two stories had already been modernized by Cobb and Betterton, respectively, before Ogle published his compilation. Yet they did not refer to each other at all, despite Chaucer's designed purpose to reveal the tellers' bitter rivalry. Chaucer's Miller and Reeve are in fact so opposed that they conduct their pilgrimage by riding at opposite ends of the party toward Canterbury. In terms of the tales they offer to the party, both are linked thematically by the presence of foolish husbands and scheming, unfaithful wives, and each is directed with animosity toward the other pilgrim. Chaucer's Reeve, for example, builds his story around a characterization of the Miller held up for contempt and eventual ridicule. His miller cheats two traveling students but is repaid when his wife and daughter engage in sexual intercourse with the young men. In the resulting fight, the students make off with their milled flour and a cake, without paying, allowing for a brief moral and the Reeve's assertion that he has "quit the Miller in his tale" (404). Chaucer, then, lets the tale modify the dispute, putting into full focus the lewd and unorthodox behavior of the warring pilgrims. Situated nicely within the larger frame, their behavior follows the sobriety of the modest Knight and mixes uncomfortably with his stirring romance.

All of this interplay between the pilgrims is lost through the efforts of Cobb and Betterton. The latter's *Reeve's Tale* in particular contains a drastically restructured ending. Instead of finishing with the miller's frustrating awareness of the trick, thus pointing smugly back to the pilgrims' angry dispute, Betterton isolates his tale and interacts with his reader only by the addition of a misogynistic twist. Betterton's miller is tricked by his own wife to believe that the students never succeeded in their sexual ambitions. The wife falsely reports that she, in fact, had spent the night in the company of their daughter, thereby producing a credible alibi for

both women. In one highly compacted and clever moment, when the miller asks his wife about his daughter's innocence, she replies: "Ay by my Life, / As pure and spotless—as thy Bosom Wife" (323-324).<sup>154</sup> The moral, therefore, loses the character-driven complexity of Chaucer's original design and draws instead on the paranoia surrounding marital unfaithfulness and sexual promiscuity in the maidenhood—both, of course, unfairly directed at women.

Betterton, therefore, had no intention of linking his tale to another and, by shedding this creative restriction, was able to change the story in playful new ways. Pope, too—who, we should remember, might also be "Betterton"—failed in his modernizations to maintain Chaucer's most explicit cross references. In Chaucer's version of the *Merchant's Tale*, the character Justinus discusses the hardships of taking a wife and mentions the "wife of Bathe" by name (441). Pope, however, alludes only vaguely to "Old wives" (295). This alteration is curious enough, but it is even more perplexing given the fact that Pope had himself modernized the Wife's prologue for an eighteenth-century audience. Where Betterton had not wanted to connect his work with another separate modernizer, Pope was not even bothered about referencing himself. Given these previous tendencies to look only at the individual tales or the "type" characters who tell them, Ogle faced a monumental undertaking.

There might have been a reason for the staunchly individual efforts of Cobb, Betterton, Pope, and the others in Ogle's cohort. By not referencing other tales, the modernizers from this period began to communicate their tales independently, as if in a vacuum. Despite the loss of a larger inherent meaning, working in this way gave them greater flexibility to focus on their personalized messages without having to contend with Chaucer's original design. Essentially, they could alter major segments of the storyline to suit their own needs and avoid paying homage to a master narrative or to each other.

Instead of a loose collection of particular agendas, Ogle needed something to bind the tales in structure and purpose. He needed a reason for bringing them together and for adding his own *Clerk's Tale*—something, too, that would unite Britain against a fear of the Jacobite incursions. The magic ingredient that made his edition work was a consistent voice for the absolute freedom of Britain's government—a voice that endorsed its separation from the political and religious powers in Continental Europe and articulated a national self, now focused inward on its Anglican faith. Pope and Betterton, of course, wrote much earlier in the eighteenth century, and their fame necessitated Ogle's inclusion of their work, along with Dryden's, despite the fact they did not add to this general theme. Pope and "Betterton" may have also been the same person, and while they did not advocate Protestantism in the modernizations, they did not dispute it either. The vast majority of the other modernizers in *Several Hands*—owing, assumedly, to Ogle's authority as editor—shared this tactical approach that favored strong British patriotism characterized by political and religious independence.

The fact that most of the modernizers opted to translate their tales in isolation, instead of submitting to any governance from the original framing narrative, actually contributed to Ogle's central message in subtle ways. The very idea of a pilgrimage is itself based on canonical practice, which included the worship of shrines, saints, and relics. Most of the English modernizers, then, would have rejected Chaucer's original narrative architecture, in favor of something more reflective of Britain's new religious character. With this theory, foremost for removal would be Chaucer's repeated allusions to the medieval mystery plays: a performance cycle traditionally associated with midsummer pageantry, specifically honoring the Feast of Corpus Christi and promulgating the doctrine that the body and blood of Christ existed as a real presence in the Eucharist. As this belief in particular was eventually abrogated by English rule in

the 1500s, the medieval plays were generally outlawed and replaced with new dramatic forms. As if in direct obedience to these directives, modernizations of Chaucer in the eighteenth century purged the medieval poet's numerous references and filled the spaces with more authentic Biblical stories.

Examples of this censorship are best taken from Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, which, in its original, uses malapropisms associated with the mystery plays for humorous effect. John the carpenter, for instance, is tricked because his only understanding of the Noah story comes from his exposure to the public dramatic performances and not from a direct reading of Scripture. As such, Chaucer provides the humorous passage:

Hast thou not heard (quod Nicholas) also,  
The sorrow of Noe with his fellowship,  
Er that he might get his wife to ship?  
Him had lever I dare well undertake  
At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,  
That she had had a ship her selfe alone: (430-435)

Cobb, the Miller's modernizer, removes any sense of this playfulness. He abandons the anecdote about Noah's wife being placed in a separate ship and opting, instead, for a more sober and strictly Bible-based account. What results is a Protestant privileging of the literal text to replace the show of medieval pageantry:

'(Ay, ay, quoth John, I've in my Bible found  
'That once upon a Time the World was drown'd.)  
"Hast thou not heard, how Noah was concern'd  
"For his dear Wife, and how his Bowels yearn'd,  
"Till he had built and furnish'd out a Bark,  
"And lodged her, with her Children in the Ark? (389-394)<sup>155</sup>

In this passage, John explicitly refers to "my Bible" as his source, promoting what can only be a highly conscious ideological change in the text.<sup>156</sup> Cobb's reworking goes well beyond a simple removal of the medieval play's mention. By altering a minor detail of a lewd story, the



modernization has a completely new voice. Cobb's Miller, masquerading as Chaucer's popular type, offers a critical retelling of England's Catholic past. In the process, he advocates the legitimacy of British Protestantism in the present.

Other modernized tales in *Several Hands* are more obviously committed to rejecting Roman Catholicism. The enigmatic "Mr. Grosvenor" provides a modernization of the *Sumner's Tale* that contributes to an anti-canonical fervor, mostly by adding extra commentary to Chaucer's characterization of a lay priest.<sup>157</sup> Like Chaucer, Grosvenor begins the account of the tale itself with the friar's visitation at the home of one of his parishioners, a sick man named Thomas. Also like Chaucer, Grosvenor's friar intends to use his office for profit. Grosvenor is more direct, however, in his contempt for institutional Catholic practices. He adds an "Ave Mary" at the beginning of the friar's dialogue, to remove any doubt of his affiliation, and has the friar brush aside the house "Tabby Cat" before seating himself at his "solemn Leisure" (14-15).<sup>158</sup> On the immediate subject of "glosses" to the Holy Scripture, admittedly mocked by Chaucer in the original, Grosvenor's translation lacks Chaucer's light touch. Chaucer only points to the friar's disingenuous nature; however, the practice of glossing itself is defended for its potential as a means for religious instruction:

And said a sermon, after my simple wit  
Not all after the text of holy writ  
For it is hard to you, as I suppose  
And therefore I wolle teache you all the glose  
Glosing is a glorious thing certain  
For letter slaeth, as we clerkes sain  
There have I hem taught to been charitable  
And spend her good there as it is reasonable (81-88)

Grosvenor's reworking of this passage changes the entire rhetorical tone. The commentary on glosses comes not from the friar but from his parishioner, Thomas, who defiantly states his case at the beginning of their exchange:

‘By Comments Priests can prove just what they will.  
‘Of Reas’ning deep, some Clerks to shew the Force,  
‘From Head to Head drawl out the long Discourse;  
‘On this side now, and now on that dispute;  
‘Are now confuted, now again confute;  
‘Make Saint with Saint, Father with Father vie,  
‘Till Glosses prove the Scriptures all a Lie. (23-29)

As with Ogle and the *Clerk’s Tale*, the modernizer here lets his personal convictions alter Chaucer’s original presentation of point of view. Grosvenor also violates character consistency when he allows the now-outspoken Thomas to overwhelm the usually confident friar. Where Chaucer means on some level to let the friar endorse glossing as a form of spiritual guidance for the purposes of charity, Grosvenor’s Thomas offers a scathing rebuttal on behalf of the common man. This ideology shift serves many purposes, but not least for the benefit of a post-Reformation Britain, anxiously under attack from an ever-mobilizing Jacobite threat.

Like so many of the other tales in Ogle’s compilation, Grosvenor’s rendering of the *Summoner’s Tale* falls completely outside of the framing narrative that was so vital to Chaucer’s storytelling. The medieval original was meant to couple with the *Friar’s Tale*, the latter showcasing a corrupted summoner tricked and taken by the devil. In the process of lining up his tales, Chaucer has two religious hypocrites challenge each other with vivid displays of one-upmanship. The Friar, for example, repeatedly steps into the Summoner’s account of his tale. When the Summoner draws an image of his own friar-character as someone who preys on the church folk, begging from their limited stores and offering nothing in return but trifles and “fables,” Chaucer’s Friar is quick to call him a liar. The Summoner, of course, had interrupted the Friar’s tale before him, causing the Host to intervene in both cases. What comes from these confrontations is a constant reminder that Chaucer’s travelers are interacting with each other in a larger, more significant social commentary. In this way, the Friar tells a story that is neither

endorsed nor refuted by Chaucer. It is merely part of a larger conversation—a dialogic that operates in the face of a new late-medieval way of life and the complex tensions that make it up.

This conversational element is missing from Grosvenor's more monologic treatment. In fact, his version has no dramatic context, with no demonstration of a larger narrative frame and no reference to the small party of travelers who should otherwise exist in constant interaction. Where Chaucer, then, puts the argument on display, Grosvenor shows off only a condemnation of Roman Catholicism, deleting in the process the complications presented by other party members and their competing interests.

It might be said that modernizers like Cobb and Grosvenor, by lightly tinkering with Chaucer's original design, are only taking small parting shots at England's historical European dependence. Indeed, removing allusions to mystery plays and providing mild criticism of Biblical interpretations are not earth-shattering poetic innovations, even when they are voiced through a new "Georgian" Chaucer. They do, however, reveal a tendency in the parts, along with an organized effort on Ogle's part, to create a singular fiction. With Ogle's *Clerk's Tale* and under his general stewardship, this fiction grew into a sacred and essential duty: to establish Britain's separation from European powers and unify its most-contentious factions. If the modernizers in his *Several Hands* are meant to act like councilors brought together to realize that goal, some were more uplifting speakers than others. Where Cobb and Grosvenor are merely whispering, others, like Henry Brooke, are loudly proclaiming.

#### **D. BROOKE'S MAN OF LAW AND THE REWRITING OF ENGLISH HISTORY**

Regardless of its ideology, Brooke's modernization of the *Man of Law's Tale* is a remarkable accomplishment in that it stretches Chaucer's already-sizeable 1,064 lines to an overwhelming 1,828—a feat perhaps that would have impressed even Dryden. Unlike Dryden,

however, Brooke reworks Chaucerian poetry to promote an anti-Catholic theme. In this case, he retells the story of Britain's Christian beginnings in a way that reaffirms its subsequent break from Rome as a thing of divinely inspired destiny.

Despite his Irish birth and his apparently close friendship with poets like Swift and Pope, Brooke was not aligned with formal Catholicism. His biographer laments the fact that his letters to Pope were lost in a fire but reports that Brooke “professed himself in heart a protestant, but apologized for not publicly conforming, by alleging that it would render the eve of his mother’s life unhappy.”<sup>159</sup> Part of Brooke’s affiliation with Protestantism was no doubt largely based on his natural inclination to perform close readings of the scriptures. He was known to do so in real life, as he allegedly presided over a service at his rural parish church in a spontaneous moment when the clergyman was detained. He “opened the Bible, and preached extempore on the first text that struck his eye”—a story made more remarkable by the fact that, “in the middle of his discourse, the clergyman entered, and found the whole congregation in tears.”<sup>160</sup> Brooke’s religious sympathies are appropriate to this discussion because his modernization of the *Man of Law’s Tale* is like an extemporaneous sermon that recalls the myth of Anglo-Saxon conversions in northern England. Brooke attempts to align this mythology with the understanding of Britain’s present religious condition. In other words, he wants to write a national history that, in the eighteenth century, looks fondly at the relationship between the Anglican Church and Anglican State, ultimately equating its hopeful strength with God’s providential touch.

Chaucer’s original *Man of Law’s Tale* features Custance, a noblewoman from Roman antiquity who endures constant victimization at the hands of her suitors’ deceitful mothers. Her only movements, therefore, are forced upon her, as she must navigate the marriage markets of Europe and the Middle East. Unfortunately for Custance, she must also navigate the seas and

waterways surrounding these areas, when she is quite literally set adrift in the Mediterranean Sea and off the coast of Northumbria. Chaucer's heroine is thus a model of religious piety throughout her suffering. Sheila Delany, however, teases out Custance's victimizing "passivity"—something that derives from her Christian orthodoxy and makes the tale "unattractive to the modern reader."<sup>161</sup> If this interpretation is so, it was perhaps a sentiment also shared by eighteenth-century readers, as Brooke goes to great efforts to change the theme completely. He transforms Custance's name to "CONSTANTIA"—laid out in all capital letters throughout the entirety of the poem—and projects her most stoic and steadfast qualities on Britain itself, as it unifies under Christianity.<sup>162</sup> With Constantia, the focus is removed from Chaucer's tale of Catholic allegory, downplaying the otherwise heavy-handed attempt at hagiography. Instead, Brooke's version centers on the patriotic retelling of Britain's ancient past—not coincidentally, as it struggled to emerge through religious adversity.

Brooke's prolonged introduction to the tale, which includes more than 165 lines of new material, is typically Augustan in its poetic personification of human qualities. Brooke highlights "Ambition," who, "reaching from his airy stand, / Grasps at a globe that shuns his desperate hand" (95-96).<sup>163</sup> It is here, too, that the modernizer strains to include a commentary on the mercantile eighteenth century, with perhaps a subtle assault on the South Sea bubble:<sup>164</sup>

Around the glittering sphere, confusedly gay,  
Crowns, truncheons, gems, and trophied radiance lay;  
But changing with alternate light and shade,  
The lures appear, and vanish, shine, and fade; (97-100)

These images of oceanic trade are later replaced with Brooke's construction of Constantia and her own movement across the sea. There, the poet's anxieties concerning imperial expansionism give way to the soft domesticity exhibited by his virtuous main character. In the scene that follows, Constantia progresses as if on a virgin footpath toward her fated destination, evoking a

desire for homelands in the place of wanderings and reinforcing notions of internal peace to trump the risks and perils of imperialism.

Of course, before arriving at this theme, Brooke must first take from Chaucer's general storyline. Constantia's plight is precipitated by her forced betrothal in Syria, when she is attacked at her own wedding but survives amidst the massacre that follows. Targeted as a foreigner and a Christian, she is abandoned on an unmanned ship as a form of execution. In his version, Chaucer is concerned with martyrdom; he thus narrates the punishment of the faithful while anticipating how God's intervention will bring salvation:

And Custance han they taken anon, fotehot,  
And in a ship all sternelesse (God wot)  
They han her set, and bidden her lerne to saile  
Out of Surrey ayenward to Itale. (340-343)

Brooke's Syrian soldiers, who marvel at Constantia's outward show of virtue, are, by contrast, powerless to murder her. Despite the "thousand javelins" raised to her destruction, there is a cry in unison of "forbear" and the decision to "Hence with [her] form, that knows so well to reign" (640, 641, 646). Their agreement to set her afloat thereby summons a sense of their own ineffectuality and grants a power, instead, to her predetermined role as a builder and ruler of nations. Brooke's description to follow gives a voice to this power:

Say, how shall we our power or will employ;  
Where both are weak, to spare thee, or destroy—  
Both impotent alike our power and will,  
The means to save thee, or the thoughts to kill?  
Yet one extreme may cruelly remain,  
To yield thee haply to the pitying main;  
And Heaven, who form'd thee so divinely fair,  
If Heav'n has power, will sure have will to spare. (668-675)

Naturally, Constantia is spared. The waves and winds bring her to Northumbria, as they do in Chaucer's tale. Brooke, however, spends 140 lines on the fated journey, itself, to compare with

Chaucer's lean 65.<sup>165</sup> In doing so, Brooke encourages the belief that Constantia is part of a process by which Britain is divinely elected. He delivers this message, too, in a way that emphasizes time and distance, forming to the reader's mind a chosen island separated from its past and from any kind of Continental influence.

If Brooke's small changes are meant to deviate from Chaucer's allegorical approach, his more obvious alterations later in the story prove the point and lay out for the reader an extravagantly redefined notion of modern England. Brooke's heroine, as with Chaucer, is victimized yet again, this time at the hands of a jealous and lusty knight, who wishes to envelop her in sin. Toward this end, he implicates her in a terrible murder. Chaucer's solution to this problem is steeped in religious ritual, as the offending knight must place his hand on the Gospel and swear to the woman's guilt—at which point, he is struck down by an unseen power:

An hand him smote upon the necke bone,  
That doune he fell atones as a stone:  
And both his eyen burst out of his face  
In sight of every body in that place. (571-574)

Chaucer's treatment is one of marvelous symbolism; indeed, the very word "miracle" describes this scene shortly after, in line 585. It is telling, too, that no one actively reads the Scripture in this scene. It is merely a prop, and the resulting ritual, no matter how inexplicable, drives belief—both in the maiden's innocence and the divine religion she brings to the people.

Brooke replaces this ritual of passivity and steadfastness with the crashing, kinetic force of an elaborate tournament, in which the king himself takes on the role of Constantia's champion.<sup>166</sup> The result is a painfully drawn-out account, in which the then-unidentified knight proclaims to Constantia: "So by this arm... may Heaven for thee decide!" (1268). The victory of the anonymous knight is inevitable:

His force in air the embarrass'd Pagan spent,

And by his bulk of cumberous poise o'ersway'd,  
Full on his helm received the adverse blade:  
Prone fell the Giant o'er a length of ground;  
With ceaseless shouts the echoing heavens resound. (1368-1372)

By itself, and even with all of its clichéd dramatic folly removed, this scene imports for the reader a genuine sense of national identity. If Brooke is attempting to write a history of the Christian conversion in Anglo-Saxon Britain that weaves within its narrative a sense of what it means to be heroically English, nothing serves his purpose better than the martial demonstrations of a late-medieval-style tournament.

Although there is no evidence that Richard Hurd was familiar with Brooke's work, his references to "heroic" and "gothic" manners appear to gaze backward at this portion of Brooke's modernization.<sup>167</sup> Brooke wants his reader enlivened by the tale's enthusiasm for military practice—a different kind of ritual that, by its nature, appears highly reminiscent of the medieval romance. Hurd maintains that the medieval trial by combat adds a spiritual touch to the narrative of knightly virtue. With these two ideals taken together, and considering Brooke's tournament device in the tale, all of Britain now seems subject to a singularly glorious destiny. As Hurd argues:

It was a love of God that supported the institution of chivalry... the Christian world... had been harassed by long wars, and had but just recovered a breathing-time from the brutal ravages of the Saracen armies. The remembrance of what they had lately suffered from these grand enemies of the faith, made it natural and even necessary to engage a new military order on the side of religion.<sup>168</sup>

By evoking these chivalric values, Brooke's modernization emphasizes Britain's national beginnings. It is no accident that such beginnings depend on romance-style combat orchestrated by virtuous kingship and decided justly by divine providence.

Brooke innovates further in this section, transforming Chaucer's original villainous knight into a "Pagan" and a "Giant." While the former term anticipates Hurd's view of the



Saracens as integral to bringing religion and war together, the latter also looks ahead to Hurd's recognition of giants in medieval poetry as "oppressive feudal Lords," each to be met and defeated by the hero "in his strong hold, or castle."<sup>169</sup> Modern critics have seized on Hurd's equating of mythical giants to the social injustices instigated by aristocratic rule. Michael Alexander, for one, applauds the "ingenious proposal that the giants found in romances should be understood as representations of feudal lords."<sup>170</sup> Johnston, too, credits Hurd for "explain[ing] the giants in medieval romance" but laments the fact that "no theorizer chose to follow him."<sup>171</sup> Hurd, in fact, may have followed Brooke's modernization. Brooke's treatment of Chaucer is indeed part of this ingenuity, as he transforms Chaucer's original scheming lord into one of the terrible mythological giants—an eventual dramatic victim to the king's championing sword. It is not a minor point that Ogle's edition of Brooke's modernization was published in 1741, more than two decades in front of Hurd's celebrated revelation. If Brooke can be recognized for originally making this connection, it should also be noted that he apparently enjoyed the conceit. In 1748, he produced an operatic satire called *Jack the Giant-Queller*, with "Princess Justice" as the protagonist amidst a cast of behemoths called "Wealth," "Power," "Violence," and "Wrong."<sup>172</sup>

By the end of his modernized tale, Brooke has effectively replaced Chaucer's saint's life with something of an anti-ecclesiastical spirit. His Constantia is eventually delivered to the margins of the story, with Alla, the native king of the Britons, taking the glory. Thus, justice is served by the good governance of a Christian ruler acting within his own lands and for his own people—not by Chaucer's influence of an outside religious authority. In Brooke's words, the king is "Heaven's own delegate" (1388). In the modernizer's post-Reformation era and within the national struggle to legitimize Protestant rule in spite of Jacobite grumblings, it is fitting that

Brooke would decide to secularize the law. In doing so, he acquits Constantia with a blending of monarchical will and divine providence, both of which are contained on British land and cut off from any kind of exterior priestly intervention.

When Constantia is set afloat again and returns unwillingly to Rome, Brooke predictably converts Chaucer's "Romane Emperour" into "Rome's Imperial Monarch" (856; 1755). When Alla then encounters his queen and their child, Mauritius, in Italy, Brooke alters the ending to reinforce all of his previous changes. In Chaucer's narrative, Alla's immediate death is anticipated, and the story follows the maternal line of royalty, leaving Mauritius to be blessed by the Pope and to rule as emperor. Brooke ignores all of these details. In his modernization, the family is unbroken and survives the story. Moreover, the accompanying celebratory feast recognizes the "circling year," as if highlighting for the reader a sense of Britain's immutability and immortality (1793). Brooke's tale also decrees that it is Constantia's family line that is forgotten, blotting out any memory of her personal state and replacing it only with the body politic. Within a few lines of verse, her essential identifying qualities are drowned out amidst acclamations of her role as the "British Hero's bride!" (1818). As for her "Lovely Boy," he returns to Alla's kingdom in England and is proclaimed, "the blooming pledge of future joy!" (1823-1824). Thus, Constantia's otherwise inspiring display of suffering and saintliness gives way to primogeniture, and a now-sovereign Britain is singled out by God for blessings to come.

#### **E. MODERNIZERS AS EARLY CHAUCERIAN CRITICS**

Brooke's dazzling portrait of an independent Britain works well in Ogle's compilation, especially given Ogle's treatment of the *Clerk's Tale*, with its similarly themed refusal to acknowledge papal rule abroad. Given these examples and the modernizers' tendencies at large to rewrite the tales for the sake of personal and political agendas, it becomes clear that Chaucer's

image in the eighteenth century is quite different from his authentic medieval self. This image is, of course, more concerned with contemporary crises of the eighteenth century. It is also a stronger reflection of Great Britain's quest for an individual national identity, as a response to its complete break from Catholicism and its acceptance of a foreign monarch. Looking more closely at the latter reason, it is perhaps the Hanoverian "George" in Georgian Britain that creates the most anxious need for self-actualization. The fact that this affirmation can be achieved in such defiantly "English" terms—that is, by the works of the "Father of English poetry"—likely adds to the deliciousness of the modernizers' art. By capitalizing on Chaucer's nationality but treating his texts with some liberality, the modernizers could conjure a pleasing image of the poet for an impressionable reading public fascinated with the Middle Ages. What may have been less obvious to the modernizers, however, was the way in which they moved in the opposite direction. In order to re-interpret Chaucer for a new audience, they had to first interpret his original meanings. They had to reflect on the medieval texts and provide an early commentary they could then shape for their own needs. By merely modernizing the *Man of Law's Tale* for a new generation of readers—simply by replacing an inscrutable Catholic miracle with a tournament scene—Brooke, for example, produced powerful observations on the ethics of feudalism that predate Hurd's similar thoughts. Yet Hurd is praised as the originator, most likely because his fame as a critic has, over the years, competed well against Brooke's obscurity as a modernizer. If Ogle, Brooke, Cobb, and most of the other contributors to *Several Hands* have been marginalized by their amateur status and relative lack of poetical skill, they deserve reintroductions as Chaucerian critics. As noted, their criticism of the Georgian era is important in the way that it frames a dominant view of Britain's new role in global politics throughout the 1700s. But it is also important in that, as poets, these men articulated a scholarly approach to

understanding Chaucer and his medievalism. They each formulated this approach, not within a traditional essay or article, but couched within the modernization itself.

When it comes to the modernizers' role as literary critics, there is perhaps no better example than Pope. As mentioned, Pope never adds volume to the stories, and he seldom deviates. More often, he attempts to magnify what he finds to be clever nuances within the original medieval verses. When he modernizes the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, he is especially attuned to critical intervention and seems anxious to convey aspects of the Wife's character and motivations to his reader. When, for example, the Wife gives an account of her fourth husband's death, Chaucer communicates a pivotal emotional state:

Whan that my fourth husband was on bere  
I wept algate, and made sorre chere  
As wives moten, for it is usage  
And with my kerchefe covered my visage  
But for that I was purveied of a make  
I wept but small, and that I undertake (587-592)

Within this confession is a picture of the Wife's motives and intentions, which allows the audience to better understand her more general views on marriage. For some critics, it even hints at her possible homicidal tendencies.<sup>173</sup> Pope turns these six lines into four and, in the process of shortening the passage, still develops the more intriguing subtleties:

I tore my gown, I soiled my locks with dust,  
And beat my breasts, as wretched widows—must.  
Before my face my handkerchief I spread,  
To hide the flood of tears I did—not shed. (309-312)<sup>174</sup>

Operating with one fewer couplet, Pope wants to more clearly demonstrate Chaucer's meaning. In doing so, he causes the reader to pause and shift from the Wife's original feigned messages in lines 310 and 312 toward a sudden realization of her authentic emotions. Where there is, at first, a display of the Wife's sympathetic reaction, Pope uses dashes and short declarative phrases in

these lines to create a sudden easiness. Of course, this impression that the Wife speaks uncaringly, or even jubilantly, about her fourth husband's death can be read from Chaucer's original. However, Chaucer does not make the case as adamantly as Pope. When he does, his writing is perhaps intentionally vague, using terminology and phrasings such as "usage," "visage," and "of a make" that are either unclear or too outdated for an early-eighteenth-century reader to fully understand. By translating, Pope projects his own reading of the Wife's confession more directly. He also, in the process, rewrites her general characterization. The structure of his verse, which is also the Wife's dialogue, creates a more vivid portrait of her prevarications and carefully guarded admissions. Ultimately, she is revealed through Pope as someone who is unpredictably clever and compelling.

Whether done correctly or incorrectly by today's standards, this desire to combine translation with interpretation is something shared across most of Ogle's *Several Hands*. Many of the modernizations, as shown, are eager to adjust Chaucer's larger themes, as well as his more-subtle notes, in the service of new political or moralizing ideals. Knowing, for example, that Cobb's treatment of the *Miller's Tale* purges any mention of the medieval mystery plays, readers today are made aware of the religious and political tenor of Cobb's early-eighteenth-century Britain. With these simple edits, Cobb also demonstrates something of Britain's collective consciousness. He reveals a nervous memory of the medieval pageants in the early 1700s—such a powerful memory, in fact, as to prompt continued censoring more than a century and a half after the Reformation. For a literary tradition in the Augustan and Georgian ages that is often disassociated from any sophisticated understanding of its pre-Renaissance roots, such a persistent anxiousness conveyed in its poetry is at least mildly significant.

Taking this argument further, Cobb's otherwise-unknown version of the *Miller's Tale* sheds light on the advanced medieval scholarship happening in the early 1700s. This level of learning was perhaps so typical that Cobb likely reveals it in his modernization accidentally—that is, not for the express purpose of showing off. One of his more important alterations is barely discernable until placed under the light of twentieth-century criticism. In the tale, when Chaucer describes John the Carpenter's treatment of his wife, he highlights the theme of jealousy:

This Carpenter had wedded new a wife,  
Which that he loved more than his life:  
Of eighteene yere I gesse she was of age,  
Jealous he was, and kept her strait in cage,  
For she was wild, and yong: and he was old,  
And deemed himself to been a Cokewold. (35-40)

Critics like George D. Economou have recently seized on this passage in their continued search for an application of Chaucer's sources. In this case, the line, "and kept her strait in cage," is reminiscent of Boethius's famous caged-bird argument, originally put forward in his *Consolation of Philosophy* in the early sixth century. Boethius's philosophical point presents a "janglynge brid [bird]... enclosed in a streyt cage."<sup>175</sup> The bird's desire to escape, despite its luxurious treatment in captivity, provides a commentary on the laws of nature. Chaucer, in fact, often quotes from Boethius in his works, and his application of this particular concept is well documented and more obviously applied in some of his other tales, including the *Squire's Tale* and *Manciple's Tale*. Modern critics, however, have hoped to see the same influence in the *Miller's Tale*. Economou's 1975 reading debates the possible inclusion:

Along with the familiar traits of the fabliau husband—he is old while his wife is young, he is jealous and considers himself a cuckold—we are referred to the bird in the cage image and its literary associations by the words "and heeld hire narwe in cage"... The implications of the bird in the cage reference for this situation are obvious. The circumstances of his marriage bring out John's need to be watchful. At the same time,

Alisoun is clearly a bird that needs careful watching... [Eventually, in the tale,] the hilarious machinery that demonstrates—among other things—that John is doomed to failure with all the other bird-keepers begins to move.<sup>176</sup>

Through his analysis of the tale's marital customs, Economou ultimately argues that Chaucer has produced another Boethian reference to go with the other two. While Chaucer does not specifically mention a bird in this specific "cage" reference in the *Miller's Tale*, as he does with the others, Economou argues that the association still exists, thus providing for the tale a more "meaningful reading" than it has previously received.<sup>177</sup>

If this theory is verifiable, Economou and his contemporaries failed to include early evidence from the eighteenth-century modernizations. Cobb's version of the *Miller's Tale* in 1712 anticipates Economou's "first identification" by over 250 years, as seen in his translation of the same lines:

This Carpenter had a new marry'd Wife,  
Lov'd as his Eyes, and dearer than his Life.  
The Buxom Lass had twice Nine Summers seen,  
And her brisk Blood ran high in ev'ry Vein.  
The Dotard, jealous of so ripe an Age,  
Watch'd her, and lock'd her, like a Bird in Cage. (37-42)

Cobb inserts the word "Bird" directly into the passage, adding some hint of his opinions on Chaucer's source. Subtle differences between Speight's edition and later ones, including Tyrwhitt's, are also important to note. As quoted by Economou, Tyrwhitt describes the Miller's wife as held "narwe [narrow] in cage." (3224).<sup>178</sup> Speight's much-earlier edition of Chaucer alludes more directly to Boethius's "streyt cage" by use of the phrase "strait in cage." Cobb, then, having likely used Speight as his source, could make the link between the tale and *Consolation* more easily than Economou. Whatever the path to his discovery, Cobb makes it well ahead of Economou, and he supports his argument with a completely added moral at the end of the tale:

Thus Doors of Brass, and Bars of Steel are vain,  
And watchful Jealousy, and carking Pain  
Are fruitless all, when a good-natur'd Spouse  
Designs Preferment for her Husband's Brows. (722-725)

Cobb refers once again to the image of a caged figure, in "Bars of Steel," who desires freedom. His moral evokes sympathy for Alisoun's actions as a natural response to the carpenter's stifling jealousy. Indeed, it is a more caring sympathy than expressed by Economou, who only reads the wife as a "bird that needs careful watching." Thus, Cobb's interpretation, in addition to being first, might also be best. By alluding more directly to natural law based on classical notions of liberty, rather than medieval notions of domestic unease, Cobb draws out the true value of Boethius's philosophical matter. Given, at the time, Britain's own preoccupation with national liberty, rather than subjugation at the hands of a husbanding Rome, Cobb's treatment of the tale might work on small, interpretive levels as well as large-scale political ones.

If Chaucer meant to reference Boethius's caged bird argument in his *Miller's Tale*, as Economou suggests, Cobb was almost certainly aware. His call for liberty at the tale's end also displays a more authoritative treatment of the philosophical subject; it should be noted, here, that Boethius was himself imprisoned at the time of writing *Consolation*. Ultimately, Cobb's flourish of classical and medieval knowledge, combined with his interpretive handiwork in the tale, lines up with a general intellectualism shared among artists at the time of the modernizations.<sup>179</sup> This realization grants more potential value to those critics of medieval culture from the eighteenth century, and it adds something to the Chaucerian academy today. If a fault now exists, it is not the insufficiency of recent scholarship to fully speculate on Chaucer's works. Instead, there has been a genuine lack of respect for, and coordination with, those doing the same work of discovery almost three centuries earlier.



In terms of their ability to interpret Chaucer, Pope and Cobb are remarkable examples simply because they were not courting attention from the scholarly world. Their concern was merely the business of translation for the popular esteem of their audience: a reading public that was increasing in literacy but still largely unaware of the nuances of Middle English. Pope and Cobb are, of course, not the only examples. By the very act of modernization, some negotiation with Chaucer's text was taking place, and, in many cases under Ogle's editorial stewardship, this transfer was imparting sophisticated critical ideas to the reader. Of some relevance today, anyone studying the modernization project can begin with serious interpretations of Chaucer happening in the eighteenth century, instead of the twentieth. Modern critics can avoid repeating the work already accomplished by a learned body of medieval theorists—until now, mostly regarded as amateur Augustan and Georgian poets with no real voice in the matter. Also, of course, and of no less value to the modernizers, more credibility can be assigned to the members of Britain's early-eighteenth-century period, who moved with a curiosity that went beyond just the Classical Age. These were a people fascinated with Greek and Roman antiquity, to be sure, but they also marveled at their own national history and their fundamental works of literature. By proving that this fascination was based on a legitimate understanding of the medieval period, the age in which they worked, along with the art and expressionism that came from it, can be more admired.

Taken from a much broader view, Ogle as modernizer and editor is compelling because he followed Dryden's example by continuing to work with Chaucer's tales. Given the many modernizers Ogle is forced to include, his compilation is also very different from Dryden's in terms of style, rhetorical approach, and consistency of voice. While Ogle no doubt wanted to mimic Dryden's form and maintain one artistic impression throughout his edited work, he nevertheless struggled to secure coherency and a singular purpose across all of the

modernizations in *Several Hands*. His political values, those aligned with an independent Britain, are frequently seen and can be loosely referred to as one theme. But this theme, admittedly, only peeps out at unpredictable moments and is often drowned out by the assembly of other loud voices operating separately. Eventually, Ogle's efforts would be redeemed. By the end of the century, the cacophony of his *Several Hands* would blend into something more recognizably whole and harmonious. In the 1790s, William Lipscomb, a country vicar, published *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*. Under the authority of this new edition, Lipscomb reissued Ogle's compilation of the tales and modernized the remaining twelve on his own. After almost a century, Lipscomb finally provides a full version of the *Tales* for readers of the 1700s. He also legitimizes the dream of the eighteenth-century Chaucerians—an assembly of poets who, despite their diverse beliefs and generational gaps, shared a common identity. Lipscomb's work allows for a closer study of this identity. Moreover, his influence over the last dozen tales offers insight on how the modernized Chaucer developed his own clear voice in matters of politics and religion at the close of the century.

#### IV. WILLIAM LIPSCOMB AND THE HOPE OF A COMPLETED TEXT

More than half a century passed between Ogle's 1741 *Several Hands* and the next great phase of the modernization project. As Ogle's work was never finished, the task was left to a new generation of enthusiasts and amateur poets, and it is here that William Lipscomb sets out in the 1790s to complete the remainder of Chaucer's tales. Although little is known about Lipscomb, Betsy Bowden describes him as a well-educated tutor and vicar who, at one point in his life, served as a chaplain for the Duke of Cleveland.<sup>180</sup> In his later years, he found himself preaching in the remote north of England—by his own reckoning, nearly 250 miles from London. In many ways, Lipscomb cuts the figure of an iconic parson and scholar of the Georgian age, supplementing his time shepherding rural congregations with intellectual pastimes. In addition to these ideals, he was also a serious-minded poet whose contributions to Chaucerian studies of the eighteenth century cannot be overlooked.

Like Ogle and Dryden before him, Lipscomb was both an avid translator and a keen observer of societal changes. Bowden notes that he “published translations from Italian... and contributed essays on political issues to the highly respected *Gentleman's Magazine*.”<sup>181</sup> These were skills and ambitions that were well aligned with England's movement toward self-realization throughout the late 1700s. His place in time, along with his unique perspective, allowed him to see and take part in the military and economic anxieties spreading across the Continent. His life and career also prompted him to work out these tensions within the mechanism of Anglican Protestantism, a faith movement that would define what it means to be English over the next two centuries. Added to these influences, Lipscomb was a skilled artist and chronicler, and, like Dryden and Ogle, he put those skills to use in his study of Chaucer's medieval works.

Lipscomb's continuation of the project, entitled *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*, was officially published in 1795. As both a compiler and a modernizer of the *Tales*, Lipscomb had the rather monumental task of collecting Ogle's work and adding to it those remaining tales not yet translated. Completely on his own, he reimagined the tales of the Pardoner, the Franklin, the Physician, the Shipman, the Prioress, Sir Thopas, Melibeus, the Monk, the Nun's Priest, the Second Nun, the Canon's Yeoman, and the Manciple. He also modernized the prologues for each of these pilgrims, as appropriate, and handled other details necessary to complete the whole of Chaucer's original version for a late-eighteenth-century audience. By the end, he had done more than any other modernizer to that point in time, entirely reworking twelve of the tales, including Melibeus's lengthy prose narrative. More importantly, he succeeded in grafting a century's worth of work into one recognizable whole, producing a continuous narrative that organized all the tales in modern verse. One should be reminded here that, technically speaking, a complete and continuous narrative is something Chaucer himself never fully realized. Arguably, too, Lipscomb accomplished more than even he anticipated. By pointing a mirror squarely at the *Canterbury Tales* and creating a recognizable image for his contemporaries, he also reflected a complete picture of the Chaucerian eighteenth century for readers of succeeding centuries to appreciate.

#### **A. THOMAS TYRWHITT'S "MODERN CHAUCER EDITING"**

When compared with Ogle, Dryden, and the members of earlier modernizing cohorts, Lipscomb had at least one major advantage. He benefitted more from a greatly improved edition of Chaucer's original *Canterbury Tales*, against which he could formulate his own seemingly plain-English translations. Published in volumes throughout the 1770s, Thomas Tyrwhitt's newly imagined edition of the *Tales* revolutionized the way that Middle English verse could be

experienced by its readers. His work represented an increased authenticity over previous textual authorities, including John Urry's most-recent and much-maligned 1721 version, for which few critics have expressed even mild respect. William L. Alderson describes the 1721 project in particularly lamentable terms, portraying Urry as a sort of hapless editor who "did not realize the enormity of his task" and describing Urry's eventual cadre of collaborators as a group "marked by basic differences of mind about matters of historical fact and even about the objectives of the edition."<sup>182</sup> Despite the misgivings of even its own time period, Urry's resulting text became the standard reference until Tyrwhitt's rescue of the *Tales* in the 1770s. However, even after Tyrwhitt, according to Alderson, scholars were for a while "obliged to consult Urry" for the rest of Chaucer's work.<sup>183</sup> Tyrwhitt's focus on just the *Tales* helps us understand the emphasis on this work in particular within the study of late-medieval poetry toward the end of the eighteenth century. Whether Tyrwhitt was influenced by modernizers like Dryden and Ogle, or whether Lipscomb as modernizer was influenced by Tyrwhitt—or both—it seems likely that at least an informal cooperation existed among the editors and translators to single out the *Canterbury Tales* among all of Chaucer's work for future scholarly attention.

Tyrwhitt himself was a well-respected academic, antiquarian, and Trustee of the British Museum.<sup>184</sup> B. A. Windeatt describes him glowingly, as someone who combined his "textual training of a classical scholar with exceptional knowledge of Middle English," ultimately deserving consideration as the "founder of modern Chaucer editing."<sup>185</sup> His efforts deserve some elaboration here, as his publication highlighted several innovations in Chaucerian study and affected Lipscomb's own work in significantly positive ways. Although Tyrwhitt worked primarily with Urry's edition in creating his own, his energies were occupied more with renovation, rather than memorialization. Tyrwhitt, in fact, held no regard for his predecessor,

stating bluntly that Urry operated with a “strange license,” whereby he “appears to have indulged himself, of lengthening and shortening Chaucer’s words according to his own fancy, and of even adding words of his own, without giving his readers the least notice.”<sup>186</sup> Tyrwhitt furthers the insult by assigning to Urry the “text of Chaucer... [that is] by far the worst that was ever published.”<sup>187</sup> With these as motivating factors, Tyrwhitt made vast improvements. For one, he challenged the authenticity of several texts previously regarded as written by Chaucer, including *The Flour and the Lefe*, *The Cuckow and the Nightingale*, *The Plowman’s tale*, *The Story of Gamelyn*, and *The Continuation of the Canterbury Tales*. Now considered spurious, these poems surfaced from time to time in several editions from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, but Tyrwhitt disproved their authorial integrity. In most cases, his suspicions arose because of inequalities in the poetic structure. In others, Tyrwhitt simply found the counterfeits lacking Chaucer’s usual skill. For *Gamelyn*, in particular, he closes the case by simply describing the work as “of an author much inferiour to Chaucer.”<sup>188</sup> All of these observations helped untangle Lipscomb’s path toward finishing the modernizations. They also impacted Lipscomb by establishing for him a kind of informed respect for Chaucer and his original works.

The bulk of Tyrwhitt’s contributions to a more authentic version of the *Tales* comes from poetic revelations articulated in his “Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer,” which serves as one of the many prefaces to his improved edition. Within this essay, Tyrwhitt works defiantly against Urry’s revisionist techniques and defends the *Tales*’s original presentation of meter. He begins by suggesting that those who mean to condemn Chaucer for a lack of art are themselves flawed in their attempts to reconcile a literary work “intended for the ear more than the eye, to be recited rather than read.”<sup>189</sup> To account for Chaucer’s apparent negligence of metrical rules, one should, according to Tyrwhitt, only consider how his words in

the medieval period would have sounded in the “recitation, especially if accompanied, as it often was, by some musical instrument.”<sup>190</sup> Tyrwhitt understood that Chaucer and his scribes would not have placed appropriate accents on the syllables because they did not anticipate that the verses would lose their harmony as the language changed and as the mode of articulation turned from out-loud to silent readings. Tyrwhitt supports this theory by suggesting that the exact determination of “metres” would be as difficult to account as the value of “coins of a former age, of whose current rates and denominations we are totally ignorant.”<sup>191</sup> He follows with the now well-received assumption that the final “e” in most Middle English words was pronounced “as the feminine is... by the French.”<sup>192</sup> According to these ideas, if Chaucer lacked as a poet, he wanted only the clairvoyance to anticipate the change to modern English and the foresight to indicate the cadence best suited for a silent appreciation of his works. Tyrwhitt forgives Chaucer for this oversight, and his resulting labors represent a landmark restoration of the text, as well as a critical moment in the way eighteenth-century readers regarded medieval works in general.

#### **B. LIPSCOMB’S CLAIM OF AUTHENTICITY: A “DUTY SOMEWHAT SACRED”**

Tyrwhitt’s interventions are important to this study because they changed the method of Chaucerian modernization, making it more intellectually fashionable to appreciate Chaucer as he would have been experienced three centuries earlier. Lipscomb’s edition of the *Tales* reflects this change. His version is, by-and-large, more devoted to Chaucer’s original poetic form and verse structure than others that came before. This demonstration of textual authenticity is best seen by comparing Dryden’s modernized version of the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* at the beginning of the century with Lipscomb’s interpretation of the same work at the very end. A cross-examination of Dryden’s and Lipscomb’s differing techniques is possible because Lipscomb failed to include Dryden’s version of the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* in his 1795 compilation. In its place, Lipscomb

composed his own modernization, yet he addresses this redundancy in his “Postscript” and attributes it to carelessness on his part.<sup>193</sup>

I HAVE barely time here, the Tales being already almost all printed off, to apologize to the Reader for having inserted my own translation of the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, instead of that of Dryden: but the fact was, I did not know that Dryden’s version existed; for, having undertaken to complete those of the Canterbury Tales which were wanting in Ogle’s collection, and the Tale in question not being in that collection, I proceeded to supply it, having never till very lately, strange as it may seem, seen the volume of Dryden’s Fables, in which it may be found.<sup>194</sup>

Lipscomb’s accident is indeed “strange,” but it presents a convenient opportunity for direct textual comparison across the whole of the eighteenth century, allowing us to document the scholarly approach to medieval modernization as it changed and evolved between 1700 and 1795. This comparison can help us better understand the trajectory toward Chaucer’s critical reception today, which has now justifiably dismissed Dryden-like translations, with their longwinded musings and creative interventions, and focused instead on the genuine language and culture of the poet’s late-medieval world. Any selection from the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* makes this new approach easy to see. With the passage, below, Chaucer offers his audience seven lines:

This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos  
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,  
And gan to crowen loude for the nones:  
And dan Russel the fox stert up at ones,  
And by the gargat hente Chaunteclere,  
And on his back toward the wood him bere.  
For yet ne was ther no man that him sued. (15337-15343)<sup>195</sup>

Dryden’s treatment is typically one of poetic flourish, Augustan allusion, and tediously overextended descriptions. Chaucer’s seven lines are thus transformed into ten:

This Chanticleer of whom the Story sings,  
Stood high upon his Toes, and clap’d his Wings;  
Then stretch’d his Neck, and wink’d with both his Eyes;  
Ambitious, as he sought, th’Olympick Prize.  
But while he pain’d himself to raise his Note,  
False Reynard rush’d, and caught him by the Throat.



Then on his Back he laid the precious Load,  
And sought his wonted shelter of the Wood;  
Swiftly he made his way, the Mischief done,  
Of all unheeded, and pursu'd by none. (665-674)

Lipscomb, however, breaks the pattern. He takes the seven lines from Chaucer and compresses them neatly into four:

Now 'gan the cock, stretch'd on his toes, to rise,  
And, as he crow'd, clos'd fast his piercing eyes:  
Unguarded then the villain seiz'd his prey,  
And bleeding bore him to the woods away. (365-368)<sup>196</sup>

Lipscomb displays an ability to make more from less. He works around an inconvenient rhyme scheme in Chaucer's "toos" and "cloos" and completely avoids the outdated allusions to "nones" pairing with "at ones." His form also adds to the velocity of this scene, converting Chaucer's awkward "For yet ne was ther no man that him sued" into the simple descriptor "Unguarded" and placing it in lock step with the fox's hasty getaway. Lipscomb seems deliberately to have cultivated an unvarnished and abbreviated form of modernized poetry, all for the purposes of greater impact and less ostentation—and seemingly all with Chaucer's core sentiments in mind.

Lipscomb's approach is perhaps more scholarly than Dryden's, and it appears less concerned with personal creativity and fame. If Tyrwhitt as editor established an adherence to Chaucer's style and meanings, Lipscomb as modernizer might have followed with a more measured and studied plain-English translation that was equally true to the original. This theory seems probable, given that the distinction was recognized by Lipscomb himself. He says in the "Preface" to his edition that, because Chaucer's language has "decayed from under him," his modern treatments have "endeavored to adhere to the great original more faithfully."<sup>197</sup> If Lipscomb wants to equate his work to a kind of mission in modernizing, he refers to it again later in his "Preface" as nothing short of a "duty somewhat sacred, to deviate from [the] original as

little as possible.”<sup>198</sup> All of this commentary is substantiated by Lipscomb’s somewhat suspicious conduct, as he was likely well aware of Dryden’s version of the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* but wanted to leave it out on the grounds that it would interrupt his own efforts. Tyrwhitt makes it clear in his new edition that Dryden is closely associated with the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*. He reminds his readers in his “Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales” that the “*Tale of the Nonnes Preest* is cited by Dryden, together with that of the *Wife of Bath*, as of Chaucer’s own invention.”<sup>199</sup> This statement links Dryden to modernizations of both tales. Lipscomb included Tyrwhitt’s “Introductory Discourse” in his own published compilation, thus showing an intimate knowledge of both Tyrwhitt’s and Dryden’s works. It would therefore have been difficult for Lipscomb to have studied Tyrwhitt without knowing about the existence of Dryden’s *Fables*. Given his overall dedication to this project, he would not have progressed through his own modernizations without a complete study of Dryden’s contributing body of knowledge. Even if Lipscomb had not crossed paths with Dryden’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, his admission in the “Postscript” proves that he knew about Dryden’s version at least before publication—if only just before—yet he continued anyway by including his own in its place. Clearly, Lipscomb believed that his modernizations represented a shift in thinking, and he wanted to do as much of the work as possible without relying too heavily on those who came before.

### C. “IMPROVED TASTES” AND THE HINT OF EDITORIAL INTERVENTION

If Lipscomb knowingly ignored Dryden’s work, it is more than just a strange omission. Lipscomb’s treatment of the *Tales* suggests that he set out to change the way Chaucer was modernized, and he did so with a conscious awareness. He altered the pattern in the method of modernization, and, moreover, he valued the integrity of this pattern so much that he could not allow one of the great English poets of the seventeenth century to interrupt it. His decision came

down partly to style, as well as a desire to display Chaucer more succinctly and authentically. However, Lipscomb also had rhetorical motives in mind. He designed the final dozen tales with a unified political message in mind. This message reflected strict Protestant affiliations, ruling out the chance that a discordant Dryden, with Catholic sympathies, would be allowed to peep out in contradiction.

A consideration of political motivation adds something else to our critical understanding of Lipscomb and his devotion to Tyrwhitt's appreciation of the original. If Lipscomb went to such efforts to restore Chaucer's medieval authority, it becomes even more significant when instances of rhetorical alteration do occur. If Lipscomb cared so much about the nostalgia of the original *Tales*, any deviations from the fourteenth-century subject matter should carry some increased level of potency in their intent. As will be seen, Lipscomb is no less guilty than any of the previous modernizers throughout the 1700s when it comes to these poetic attempts at reimagining Chaucer. What does distinguish him is the subtle touch with which he operates. This more-careful technique was driven by his tendency to condense rather than enlarge. Yet, despite the smaller rhetorical space he created for himself, Lipscomb's modernizations were still preoccupied with the politics and religion of his time. His views on these subjects were biased and to-the-point: he wanted to interrogate Catholicism's place in Britain and popularize, for a new generation, a sense of patriotism dependent on Anglican values.

As a kind of forewarning of this approach, Lipscomb admits a preferment for his own cultural beliefs, defining his modernizing efforts as an "improved taste... [that] will make the lovers of verse look up to the old Bard, the Father of English poetry, with a veneration proportioned to the improvements" made by the "elegant arts" of his present day.<sup>200</sup> While he does not refer to any changes in subject matter or content, he does introduce for the reader the

idea that an appreciation for Chaucer in the 1790s requires the lens of eighteenth-century sentimentality. Lipscomb thus proclaims that modernizers do more than simply change the wording. They have the power to import a work from a previous cultural period and force its assimilation to the value systems currently in place. Lipscomb's "elegant arts" stand in for anything of the eighteenth century that makes earlier literature more palatable to its readers. While such improvements can result from merely cosmetic changes, they can also refer to considerations of subject, allowing modernizers to insert their own principled viewpoints somewhat discretely. In doing so, modernizers can have the best of both worlds: they can lean on the credibility and authority of the original creator while, at the same time, changing the meaning for personal effect. Oftentimes, these changes are made with impunity; or, worse, they are so subtle and so well hidden in the translation, the reader accepts them on an unconscious level as belonging to the original.

Lipscomb's part in this deception connects him with Ogle, as both modernizers used Chaucer to cleverly transmit their political concerns about Catholicism. Lipscomb's association with Ogle's techniques, at a minimum, is evidenced in his "Monk's Prologue." Here, through the voice of the Monk, Lipscomb attempts a tongue-in-cheek apology for the work to follow:

But if, my worthy friends, when I relate  
The Hero's fall, or captive Monarch's fate,  
I haply should invent the well-known tale,  
Or in exactness of the dates should fail,  
Blame not my zeal; for this, I hope, 's confess'd,  
That, to deserve your praise, I'll do my best. (86-91)<sup>201</sup>

Lipscomb's choice of message and placement, here, is remarkably clever, simply because it mirrors Ogle's identical approach fifty years earlier. Where Ogle in his "Prologue to the Knight's Tale" disclaims on behalf of all the members of his modernizing cohort that "Low was our Genius, and We did our Best," Lipscomb's Monk offers the same sentiment in the preamble to

his own series of tales (230). The articulation of doing one's "best" in both passages reflects on the ability of the modernizer and anticipates any protests from the reader in the way the text might ultimately be changed. Chaucer's original passage, by comparison, focuses only on the historical sequence of the Monk's *De casibus* narratives:

Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.  
But first I you beseche in this matere,  
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,  
Be it of popes, emperoures, or kinges,  
After hir ages, as men written finde,  
But telle hem som before and som behinde,  
As it now cometh to my remembrance,  
Have me excused of min ignorance. (13989-13996)<sup>202</sup>

Chaucer's Monk is only anxious about how the tales are ordered. This tension might be oddly appropriate, as readers too have sparked a series of scholarly and editorial debates as to where the "Modern Instances," involving the fourteenth-century kings of Spain and Cyprus, along with Barnabo of Lombardy and the Count of Pisa, belong in the sequence. Given that the Monk begins with Lucifer's fall and moves promptly to Adam and other early Biblical figures, there seems an implied chronological order, yet the contemporaries to Chaucer are frequently situated in front of tragic figures of antiquity like Nero and Alexander the Great. Donald K. Fry calculates that "in fifteen manuscripts the Modern Instances follow... the last of the Monk's tales," despite the currently accepted theory that they go in the middle.<sup>203</sup> Interestingly, too, Fry notes that Tyrwhitt himself placed the Modern Instances in the final position for reasons that can be considered critically sound today.<sup>204</sup>

Given the lively disagreement, here, that apparently went as far back as Chaucer and extended with some momentum into the later part of the eighteenth century, it is curious that Lipscomb does not represent the Monk's voice accurately in this passage. Instead, he converts the Monk's anxiety over chronological ordering into something entirely different. Lipscomb's

Monk touches on the “exactness of dates” only as it pairs in the couplet with the concern that he should “invent the well-known tale.” The word “invent” can refer to something that is “false or fictitious,” but it also had a particular meaning in Dryden’s time related to “a work of imagination or literary art... [a] literary or artistic composition.”<sup>205</sup> Dryden privileged such an ability to “invent,” maintaining that a “poet is a maker, as the word signifies; and who cannot make, that is, invent, hath his name for nothing.”<sup>206</sup> Lipscomb may have been alluding to the word in this context. If so, he blots out Chaucer’s Monk’s previous concern and displays a defensive stance for the modernizing touch. It is as if Lipscomb intends to “make” or “invent” in a way reminiscent of Ogle’s earlier work and wants to pacify his reader in advance by appealing to the same appreciation of a poet’s “best” efforts.

The tale itself is a curious setting for this kind of parallel technique. The Monk is introducing a series of stories, much like Ogle’s rendering of the “Prologue to the Knight’s Tale” is meant to set up Chaucer’s tales. Ultimately, Lipscomb draws from Ogle’s technique in order to procure a license for changing Chaucer’s original text. If these changes are more subtle than Ogle’s and Dryden’s, they are no less focused on personal political beliefs appropriate to the modernizer’s time period.

#### **D. THE FAMILY CHAUCER? LIPSCOMB AS EDITOR AND EXPURGATOR**

Many of Lipscomb’s changes are in fact not-so-subtle. Even a quick, cursory reading of his tales reveals a preoccupation with suppression and censorship. Such an observation, too, requires little critical or textual support because Lipscomb admits to it quite self-righteously:

[O]ur veneration for his great and various excellencies is rather the more testified, by purging him from his impurities, and by exhibiting him to a more refined age a safe as well as a brilliant example of native genius... it is hoped, as it is believed, that the pruning away of his indelicacies will not be found to have robbed him of any thing valuable... It is proper here to observe, that this omission hath extended to the two most exceptionable of his Tales (those of the Miller and the Reeve); both of which being

highly indelicate, as well in the sentiments as in the language, are wholly omitted in this collection.<sup>207</sup>

Lipscomb's promise to "adhere to the great original more faithfully" loses ground with these admissions. Furthermore, Lipscomb's now-apparent eagerness to engage in this sort of proto-Bowdlerizing might be setting up an editorial sleight-of-hand. That is, when readers find themselves willing to accept revisions in the name of delicacy and virtue, they might unwittingly consent to further manipulations and yield to the notion that Chaucer's first voice is not always the most sacred. Lipscomb's intentions might be pure, in that he wants to clean up Chaucer's coarseness and present him to an assumedly more gentele audience. However, there may be a less innocent motive, as well, in that an implied permission here allows the modernizer a gateway to more meaningful interventions.

Lipscomb's inclination to censor Chaucer, at first, before moving toward outright editorializing, fits well within the whole of the eighteenth-century modernization project. Even beginning with Dryden, Chaucer's broad language was noticed—and not in particularly favorable terms. Dryden was helped by his technique of selective modernization, whereby he only translated the Middle English of a very few of Chaucer's tales. He admits in his preface that this process allowed him to avoid some of the more salacious stories:

I have leave, I say, to inform my Reader, that I have confin'd my Choice to such Tales of Chaucer, as favour nothing of Immodesty. If I had desir'd to please more than to instruct, the Reve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Merchant, the Sumner, and above all, the Wife of Bathe, in the Prologue to her Tale, would have procur'd me as many Friends and Readers, as there are Beaux and Ladies of Pleasure in the Town.<sup>208</sup>

Shortly after this bit of joviality, Dryden puts some of his humor aside by suggesting that he has offered too much "Scandal" due to his own "loose Writings" and cannot afford more of the same.<sup>209</sup> By this admission, he blends kinship with alienation; at once, he holds up Chaucer for admiration but distances himself from some of the more offensive tales. Ultimately, Dryden's

approach enabled him to pick and choose. His goal was not to produce a complete version of the *Tales*. For those characters, as he stated, with “obscene Words... proper in their Mouths,” Dryden had the privilege of leaving their stories untold—at least by him.<sup>210</sup>

Ogle, too, perceived a danger in the potential vulgarity in his modernizations, though his approach was decidedly bolder. Just before presenting Cobb’s version of the *Miller’s Tale*, he advises his readers to pause and consider:

Convey the Ribaldry from Vulgar Sight,  
Peruse it in the Closet, and by Night;  
Or with a female Friend in private read,  
So may the Miller, if you chuse, proceed (114-117).<sup>211</sup>

Admittedly, Ogle’s introduction of the tale is more enticing than cautionary. He conflates the secrecy of indulging in the *Miller’s Tale* with sexual dalliance, as if both should be carried out under the cover of night or within dark seclusion. Ogle’s words also reflect a cultural and economic movement in the mid-eighteenth century, whereby individual readers found themselves more enabled and perhaps more encouraged to favor solitary reading over public recitation. Blended within is an ominous warning to his mid-century audience; the message is clear that Chaucer’s storylines should be handled with care.

Lipscomb, then, is following a pattern set by Dryden and Ogle. For all three, there is a tense relationship with the source material of the *Tales* that leads to some nervous disregard for Chaucer’s original poetry. Lipscomb, however, is forced to publish his modernizations without Dryden’s advantage of selective editing and without Ogle’s cheeky humor. He has only the remaining tales to work with and present to his readership; added to this challenge, he must attach his name as a compiler to those already published by Ogle earlier in the century.

Lipscomb’s approach, therefore, is one of hard-handed censorship. As noted earlier in this study, he elects not to include the Miller’s and Reeve’s tales at all and scrubs the mention of these



pilgrims from the *General Prologue*, thereby completely removing any trace of their influence from his final edition. As for those tales remaining, Lipscomb scrutinizes Chaucer's original verses, omitting some sections and tailoring others for what he considers to be the delicate sensibilities of his readers. One should be reminded again: if this approach leads to a cleaning up of the original language, it could also lead perhaps covertly to more substantial changes.

At first glance, Lipscomb's censorship operates only at the surface level, especially in the uniform way he deletes all mention of the oaths and curses that appear frequently in Chaucer's writing. Yet, in some cases, he still manages to maintain the poetry's original message.

Chaucer's prologue to the *Monk's Tale*, for example, contains a passage rich in the profane arts:

By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,  
She bringeth me the grete clobbed staves,

[...]

And if that any neighebour of mine  
Wol not in chirche to my wif encline,

[...]

[She] cryeth; false coward, wreke thy wif:

By *corpus Domini*, I wol have thy knif,

And thou shalt have my distaf, and go spinne.

(13903-13904; 13907-13908; 13911-13912)

Given the diversity of people and personalities in Chaucer's tales, and given the sometimes volatile nature of their interactions, such objectionable language is regularly found in the medieval text. Here specifically, the Host interjects with an opinionated reaction to the previous tale. He comments on the *The Tale of Melibee* and compares, unfavorably, the patience and virtue of Prudence to the actions of his own wife. Lipscomb's treatment of the same lines does not pay equal homage to the Host's profane outbursts, yet he does maintain the character's rather brutish temperament. Lipscomb removes Chaucer's curses from the text while appearing to offer a faithful characterization of the Host and his wife.

Thus when, with rage o'ercome, I beat my knaves,

Instant she brings me more and heavier staves  
 [...]
   
 And if in church, by bow submiss and low,  
 Honour to her a neighbor should now shew  
 [...]
   
 O heartless coward! wild with rage, she cries,  
 Whose dastard spirit will not vengeful rise,  
 When thy poor wife bears such indignities!  
 A man art thou? creation's mighty lord?  
 No! take my distaff, and give me thy sword! (7-8; 11-12; 17-21)

Lipscomb takes exception to the instances of oaths directed at holy bodies. He purges “Goddess bones” with an easy poetic manner, while still maintaining Chaucer’s stresses and meters, as well as the rhyming of “knaves” and “staves.” Chaucer’s oath, “By *corpus Domini*,” receives a more drastic transformation, but the Host’s wife’s message is still intact, with her accusations of cowardice and her threat to usurp the assumed apparatus of masculinity brutality still in place. In the bargain, however, Lipscomb adds to the wife’s rebukes a quick reference to man as “creation’s mighty lord”—a credit she dismisses entirely in the next line. If this passage anticipates a Romanticized divinity of self, it adds a layer to the Host’s frustration by breaking his natural link with God. While Chaucer’s Host represents a sense of desperation in the family unit, brought out through domestic squabbling, Lipscomb’s Host stands in for the desperate individual. He is a victim of psychology and excessive self-consciousness who longs for heavenly affirmation but is ultimately rejected. Whether the modernization effort here improves Chaucer’s original sentiment is debatable, but what is evident is Lipscomb’s tendency to supplement his censoring with the personality of a late-century Anglican minister.

**E. FROM CENSORSHIP TO SPONSORSHIP: LIPSCOMB’S ANGLICAN VALUES REVEALED**

If Lipscomb saw much to be removed from Chaucer’s relatively tame *Monk’s Tale*, he had a great deal more to consider in his treatment of the *Pardoner’s Tale*, a story rife with

instances of cursing, oath-taking, and profanity. Chaucer's Pardoner is a unique case, in that the story's central religious figure sermonizes on the perils of sin, while at the same time he represents the very examples of those sins. The Pardoner's *Prologue* and *Epilogue* thus anticipate and gaze backward at the actions of the tale's "riotours"; in the process, they emphasize the teller's own hypocrisy with greater poignancy. Chaucer, then, was perhaps commenting on the ease of falling into sin's trap, or he simply sought an outright condemnation of the Pardoner and his ilk for his own personal gratification. In either case, the narrative picture of the Pardoner serves as a better exemplum than the teller's own articulation of his tale. Thus, Lipscomb has to modernize both with an eye for censorship and a bit of caution, lest he scrub away Chaucer's central message.

The *Pardoner's Prologue* is easy enough for Lipscomb to treat. In the first few lines, Chaucer's Host again reacts aggressively to the previous tale, lashing out at the Physician's villainous judge "by nailes and by blood" (12222). Lipscomb predictably only carefully discloses to his audience that the Host "roundly swore" (1).<sup>212</sup> In the tale that follows, Chaucer's Pardoner demonstrates his self-contradictory nature by beginning with a lecture:

Now wol I speke of othes false and grete  
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.  
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,  
And false swering is yet more reprevable. (12563-12566).

Chaucer's Pardoner then gives an example of these seemingly destructive oaths. Even if one considers the positive instructional value of such a technique, there is a noticeable lack of delicacy in the Pardoner's delivery to the other pilgrims and its resulting ironic effects:

By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,  
And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hailes,  
Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treye:  
By Goddes armes if thou falsly pleye,  
This dagger shal thurghout thin herte go.

This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two,  
Forswering, ire, falsenesse, and homicide.  
Now for the love of Crist that for us dide,  
Leteth your othes, bothe gret and smale.  
But, sires, now wol I tell you forth my tale. (12585-12594)

Chaucer's Pardoner's demonstration is an artful one, especially in its manner of placing greed, gaming, and oath-taking in one highly compacted scene, such as his tale to follow will likewise remonstrate against. Lipscomb, however, tends to avoid all manner of curses in his modernization, even when their vocalization provides a richer characterization of the Pardoner as a raging hypocrite. He therefore provides a link between gambling and cursing, stating that "'Tis from this fertile seed-bed oaths arise" (313). His explication of the moral to follow is both shortened and nullified in its intensity:

To this the prophet's holy words accord,  
Swear if thou dost, maintain thy sacred word:  
In the first table of the dread commands,  
Second in order this great mandate stands,  
"Take not my name in vain;" this law precedes  
That which forbids man's most flagitious deeds,  
And him shall vengeance' keenest stroke o'ertake,  
Whose tongue rebellious dares its force to break.  
But to my promis'd tale— (317-325)

Lipscomb's editing here seems only an act of omission, as he deftly avoids Chaucer's original vulgarity in the mouth of the Pardoner. This caution reflects a circumspect English culture in its reception of the *Tales* that goes at least back to Dryden. Lipscomb, however, adds a few dimensions to his modernization. For one, he treats this portion of the exemplum more briefly, shortening Chaucer's 32 lines to just 13. Within this smaller space, he also focuses more on the "law" of the Torah. In fairness, Chaucer's version does quote from the Old Testament, albeit with a "keenness of satire," as footnoted by Bowden, which draws "the picture of an ignorant and unprincipled Priest... [who] misquote[s] the Commandments—the third for the second."<sup>213</sup>

But Lipscomb's lesson is decidedly more Bible-based, removing the emphasis from the sinners' part in the cautionary tale and focusing more on the strict act of sinning itself, with its forbidden elements and hellfire consequences. This drive toward sermonizing admits a rhetorical shift from the humorous story telling that carried religious instruction in Chaucer's time. In its place is something less illustrative and more dogmatic. Chaucer's approach aligns with that of the traditional medieval exempla, as defined by Frederic C. Tubach, as a means for "converting the unbelievers" in early Christianity—for propagating the faith "beyond the limited confines of a small learned minority."<sup>214</sup> However, Lipscomb's technique assumes an already-indoctrinated Christian audience in need of steady encouragement. With this change in perspective, he adjusts to a new target audience and reflects a political expedient in the late eighteenth century—one that replaces anecdotal marvels with strict and unimaginative interpretations of doctrine. Censoring, in this case, may keep the original medieval message intact, but the religious principles of Lipscomb's tale, along with the methods for their delivery, are drastically different.

There is, within this scene, another curious alteration. Where Chaucer refers to the "blood of Crist, that is in Hailes," Lipscomb's modernization is completely silent, with no mention of the Pardoner's oath or his reference to the worshipful relic. Once a Cistercian monastery in Gloucestershire and the site for holy pilgrimage before Henry VIII's dissolution, Chaucer's mention of "Hailes" Abbey recalls both the relic and the value it imparted on its faithful believers. Chaucer's Hailes reference grants a kind of religious mysticism to the taking of oaths and demonstrates that the real power of blasphemy comes from the verbal summoning of the body, as if through an inverted transubstantiation or by means of a corrupted Eucharist. By removing the curses and sanitizing the text for a Protestant congregation, Lipscomb rejects the idea that the spoken word can carry this kind of performative power. In the process, too, he

effectively wipes away a belief opposed by Anglicanism. By removing the religious potency of Hailes, he erases the memory of a pre-Reformation England and nullifies the “spell” value that was so critical to Christian understanding in Europe’s Middle Ages.

Tracy Borman’s exploration of witches in the new post-Reformation world of James I supports the idea that verbal recitations were important to the medieval Roman Catholic church, and it was this act in particular that demonized proponents of the old faith by the start of the seventeenth century:

Even after the Reformation, the chanting of Catholic prayers in Latin remained a key ingredient in the treatment of illnesses by magical means. The seventeenth-century astrologer William Lilly recorded a popular formula for curing dental problems. The patient had to write the following verse three times on a piece of paper: “Jesus Christ for mercy sake / Take away this toothache.” They were then advised to repeat the verse aloud and burn the paper. As the witch hunts gathered ground in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, some of those accused claimed that they had healed not by magic, but by seeking God’s intervention through prayer.<sup>215</sup>

At a minimum, Borman’s research shows the link between the power of the spoken word and the perception of medieval religious practice. It also reveals the often-damning connections the post-Reformation British made between Catholic practice and magic, especially when verses were read aloud from a book or even, in Borman’s case, a piece of paper. This replacement of Catholic with Anglican values can be seen as a recurrent pattern in Lipscomb’s modernizing technique, and it ultimately reveals his tendency to ease his poetry from innocent censoring into something more stridently political.

#### **F. LITERAL OR ALLEGORICAL? THE *PRIORESS’S TALE* AND A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION**

These more significant revisions, of course, do not match well with Lipscomb’s expressions of editorial piety in his “Preface” to the 1795 modernization. Despite his initial assurances to preserve Chaucer’s original text for his readers, Lipscomb reveals—albeit with

some subtlety—that he has every intention to rewrite the Canterbury narratives. However, it is not initially clear whether he earnestly struggled against the allure of adding his own voice, or if he consciously and eagerly meant to shape his readers to his own place and time. If the latter is true, Lipscomb’s modernizing hand operates somewhat disingenuously. In his “Preface,” after all, he seems to draw only from a sense of Protestant prudishness as a reason for violating Chaucer’s sacred original. It is likely, however, that Lipscomb added to this devoted Protestantism a duty to cast away, not only objectionable language, but also a memory of English Catholicism. As a vicar, he would have conflated the two within his concept of religion. As a chaplain for the late-eighteenth-century British aristocracy, he would have had political reasons. Whatever the motivation, Lipscomb’s seemingly good intentions directed at “pruning away [Chaucer’s] indelicacies” seem only a pretext for more dramatic and dogmatic censorship—ultimately, an imperative for blatant revision that operated less on the level of textual clarity and more on the level of Church and State.

With the “problem” of Catholicism now in focus, Lipscomb’s rendering of the *Prioress’s Tale* deserves a more thorough analysis. Chaucer’s Prioress, after all, is a bastion of Catholic values, and her tale matches her professional sentiments. Critics have often wondered if Chaucer harbored these same beliefs, or if he merely meant to attach the pilgrim to the tale, as he did with most of the others. Regardless, when the Prioress has her turn in the contest, what she offers to the modern reader is the most distressing account of medieval Christianity gone terribly awry. At the heart of this narrative is the tale’s blatant anti-Semitism, but woven throughout is the repetition of the “Miracle of the Virgin,” which appears to advocate murder and other forms of brutality against a town’s Jewish population. Understandably, the *Prioress’s Tale* has endured a backlash of criticism, famously going back at least as far as Wordsworth and gaining more

momentum in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>216</sup> This critical history is a justifiable one to be sure, but it also had the negative effect of removing attention from any of the story's other elements, including perhaps the more inspirational themes associated with the Catholic faith and its healing qualities. Albert B. Friedman alludes to this problem when he says that, admittedly, "the *Tale* could not help but keep alive hatred of the Jews, but the miracle and its illustration of Mary's graciousness to her devotees, is the real center on which all interests and incidents in the *Tale* converge, not anti-Semitism."<sup>217</sup> It should be noted here that Chaucer is only repeating a type that, according to Christopher Cannon in his notes to the Oxford edition of the *Tales*, was "extraordinarily popular in the later Middle Ages."<sup>218</sup> Cannon apologizes for Chaucer when he characterizes the basic story itself, often repeated in the poet's time, as one dependent on "differences in faith to provide the villains to which Mary's devotees fall victim."<sup>219</sup> If such an interpretation is accurate, and if Chaucer is only expressing himself through a popular medium of the time, he uses it nonetheless to stress the epic marvelousness of medieval Catholicism.

This technique is evident in the opening *Prologue*, in which the Prioress, in no fewer than 35 lines, evokes the power of Mary to grant her the ability to tell the story. Within the tale's arguably most powerful passage, the Prioress calls out to her muse:

O mother maide, o maide and mother fre,  
O bushe unbrent, brenning in Moyses sight,  
That ravishedest down fro the deitee,  
Thurgh thin humblesse, the gost that in thee alight:  
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light,  
Conceived was the fathers sapience:  
Helpe me to tell it in thy reverence. (13397-13403)

Lipscomb's treatment of the *Prioress's Tale* is only 186 lines, compared to Chaucer's fulsome 238, and most of this anxiousness to clip is exhibited in the opening *Prologue*. Lipscomb spends only 20 lines on the opening passage, before he strides forward into the action of the story, and



his particular invocation never mentions Mary by name. Instead, the modernizer condescends only to utter titles in her place such as “bright Maid,” “Gem of purity” and “virgin Flower” (20-21).<sup>220</sup> These epithets in fact might better suit a description of Elizabeth I, England’s own beloved Protestant muse. Matching Lipscomb’s lines to Chaucer’s particularly emotive ones, quoted above, the reader gets an even stronger sense of a post-Reformation monarch and patron of the arts:

O lovely Queen! O bright heav’n-favour’d Maid!  
Grant to thy suppliant thy all-potent aid!  
For powers so mean, so infantine as mine,  
Ill suit the grandeur of a theme divine. (29-32)

If, at the beginning, Lipscomb is only hesitant to mimic the medieval type, he proves to be not-so-squeamish in other parts of the tale, carrying forward with equal intensity the wrath brought against the Jews for their part in the child’s murder, once the plot is revealed:

With vengeance just the provost now pursues  
Each vile accomplice of the murderous Jews,  
And with wild horses each asunder draws,  
The hopeless victims to th’ offended laws. (144-147)

Lipscomb intentionally adds to this scene, offering adjectives not originally brought forward by Chaucer, such as “vile” and “hopeless.” He also comments on the “just”-ness of this Christian vengeance, which is something Chaucer noticeably left out of his account. It therefore seems significant that Lipscomb would maintain an animosity toward one religious group—perhaps even increasing it—while downplaying the majesty of its rival faith, Catholicism. If, as Cannon states, the essence of this story lies in “differences in faith” to showcase Mary’s power over non-Christians, Lipscomb alters the theme rather lopsidedly, allowing the tale to barely acknowledge Marian imagery on its way to a wholesale condemnation of Judaism.

Suggesting that Lipscomb's treatment of Marian imagery is barely acknowledged is actually a generous statement, as it seems that every instance of Mary is purged throughout. Chaucer's poetic use of the "bushe unbrent, brenning in Moyses sight," for example, is removed completely in the modernized version. This aspect of Chaucer's opening *Prologue* refers to Mary and reflects a topological interpretation of Scripture widely accepted in medieval theology. According to belief, the burning bush's ability to proclaim the Word of God without being consumed anticipates Mary's equally remarkable ability to deliver the Word and Flesh together without being consumed by sexuality. In her analysis of the Mystery Plays in England, Rosemary Woolf suggests that there was a common understanding of this "beautiful and important type of the virgin birth," and she quotes the *Moses* play in which the titular hero points to the hidden meaning by commenting on the marvel: "It figuryth sum thyng of rygth gret fame."<sup>221</sup> Lipscomb's pruning away of this rather eloquent allusion both undermines the ruling influence of Mary in the tale and erases the memory of a typological reading of Christian texts. Thus the modernizer here allows his translation to affect, not only the reading of the *Canterbury Tales*, but the Bible too.

Robert Grant and David Tracy remind us that in the Middle Ages the "most important and characteristic method of biblical interpretation was not literal but allegorical."<sup>222</sup> The Scriptures, for Chaucer's audience, needed strong theological institutions to bridge the gap between what was written and what could be considered true. These interpretations came not from individuals but from the medieval Church, which teased out hidden meanings from the Biblical text: "Scripture was like the medieval cathedral, which spoke to the people in a language of symbols."<sup>223</sup> Typology moved within this structure of symbolism, helping to uncover prefigured insights that God reserved for his people. The awareness of typologies, too, in the

instructive pageant plays so often referenced by Chaucer—but rarely if ever in the Georgian modernizations of the *Tales*—linked the religious episodes to create coherent works of art. It therefore represents a shift in the way Biblical instruction is articulated when Lipscomb, like Ogle and his cohort before him, consciously remove references to the Mystery Plays. In this case, he does so by removing the typological reference altogether and, from his Anglican perspective, wants to restore the tale’s singular moral meaning, as opposed to the multiple levels of allegory previously possible under Roman Catholicism.

Chaucer’s ending to the tale projects the idea of a vulnerable collective body of sinners, with a dependence on the impenetrable mysteries of Mary:

Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,  
That of his mercy God so merciablen  
On us his grete mercie multiplien,  
For reverence of his moder Marie. (13617-13620).

Lipscomb instead drives to “one simple solid sense” in his final line.<sup>224</sup> His Prioress finishes with the utterance, “And henceforth, true to him, we’ll sin no more” (198). Lipscomb’s tidy ending empowers the tale’s now-Protestant audience to overcome sin freely and points to individual agency rather than Church-oriented absolution. It also unravels the story’s more complicated elements in a stroke and glories in Lipscomb’s own understanding of meaning. If this interpretation by the modernizer is a gross oversimplification of the Prioress’s offering, Lipscomb perhaps found it gratifying to remove Mary’s power in the opening invocation as a means for installing his own moral authority at the end.

#### **G. FROM PERFORMING TO REFORMING: LIPSCOMB’S TREATMENT OF MAGICAL CHAUCER**

England’s view of Catholicism in the late-eighteenth century almost certainly contained a level of trepidation associated with magical, mystical, or otherwise supernatural qualities.

Lipscomb's insistence at the beginning of the *Prioress's Tale* that the Mary invocation be downplayed couples suspiciously with his ending, whereby a simple moral aimed at the individual takes the place of Chaucer's institutionalized appeal for mercy. For Lipscomb and his readers, England's grasp of the medieval depended also on a memory of the Roman church. In the case of both, mystical performances played a big part. Kurt Tetzeli Von Rosador suggests that the concern over magic, in particular, figured prominently in the reforming acts of the sixteenth century.

For the Catholic church, the emphasis is on the "Church Visible, its saints and sacraments, its rites and exorcisms. This is the stuff antipapistical polemics thrive on, by pointing out the identity of magical and Catholic thought and ritual. In other words: it is the visual signs' appeal to the eye which is attacked because it obscures or annihilates the Word speaking to the ear, heart, and spirit. In its reliance on the sensual, tangible sign Roman Catholicism is, in the Protestant view, indistinguishable from magic."<sup>225</sup>

Lipscomb, then, would have wanted to remove from the Prioress's offering a reliance on the signals and images of saints, relics, and physical bodies, along with the rituals that manifest from their worship. If at least part of the reason for these excisions is a reluctance to acknowledge certain magical rites existing before the Reformation, Lipscomb has ample room to continue his revisionist strategy in his modernization of the *Franklin's Tale*.

There is currently some debate as to how much magic Chaucer actually endorses in his initial version of the *Franklin's Tale*. Using the tradition of the Breton lai, with its often fantastical elements, Chaucer explores the perils of the so-called rash promise. His tale highlights a loving and faithful wife who, hoping to make the way safe for her returning husband, grants her love to a dotting squire if he can somehow remove dangerous rocks from the coastline. The squire eventually sees the boon fulfilled through the patronage of a "tregetoure," a mysterious figure glossed as an "illusionist" or "magician."<sup>226</sup> Just stopping for a moment to consider these two drastically different terms, it is easy to see the divided opinions concerning the presence of

real magic in the tale—a division that apparently exists in Chaucerian scholarship even today. For her part, Joyce Tally Lionarons attributes most of the demonstrations of strange and mysterious acts in the *Tales* to mere technological trickery. She concedes that an explanation for the disappearance of the rocks is “difficult to pinpoint exactly,” but it could have resulted from “an unusually high tide.”<sup>227</sup> Also disbelieving is Anthony E. Luengo, who assigns supernatural sequences in the *Franklin’s Tale* to stage magic—in his words, “theatrical tricks... pivotal to the treatment of the theme of illusion and delusion which is the major preoccupation of the tale.”<sup>228</sup> Luengo elaborates on how he believes Chaucer’s understanding of clever devices used in pageant performances can be reimagined in the Breton lai. He argues that “the clerk merely calculated mathematically the period of an upcoming high tide which will *cover* the rocks: much of the astrological terminology which is laid on so thickly is so much hocus-pocus or, at best, irrelevant to the matter at hand.”<sup>229</sup> Luengo and Lionarons agree that the disappearing rocks so central to the tale are only washed over by the encroaching sea and subject to return when the tide next recedes; thus, Chaucer’s tregetoure is an illusionist and a trickster, not a magician *per se*.

That said, Chaucer’s use of the thickly laid “hocus-pocus” is significant, and Lipscomb’s treatment of the same section is different enough to suggest a critical reinterpretation of magical influences in the eighteenth century.<sup>230</sup> Chaucer’s moment of wonder, whereby the rocks are secreted away from view, devotes several lines to the astrological arts:

Whan he had found his firste mansion,  
 He knew the remenant by proportion;  
 And knew the rising of his Mone wel.  
 And in whos face, and terme, and every del;  
 And knew ful wel the mones mansion  
 Accordant to his operation; (11597-11602)

Chaucer uses the word “knew” three times in this short passage, and each is associated with a somewhat-scientific awareness of heavenly motions, as if the tregetoure’s ability to observe far

outshined his ability to affect. His images run well with medieval understandings of the astrological arts, especially as they were used to consult on matters of weather, agriculture, births, and the medical sciences. For his part, Lipscomb avoids this demonstration of the astrological, along with any practical knowledge of the celestial cycles. In their place, he deliberates on the prospect of authentic magical powers:

At length, propitious to the wizard's prayer,  
The hour is come, and bids him quick prepare  
His books, and tables fraught with magic lore,  
That teach the heaven's kind aspects to explore: (502-505)<sup>231</sup>

Lipscomb's "wizard"—a term that by itself deserves some consideration—operates with a darker and less knowable power, and the use of the word "prayer" is reminiscent of a conjuring act, attaching a ritualized religiosity to the scene. In line 503, the reader is made aware that the "hour is come," as if the time is called forward and has assumed some agency of its own. It "bids" the magician "quick prepare," beckoning him ominously to continue. While Chaucer's *tregetoure* studies the natural world around him and recognizes patterns within it, Lipscomb's wizard associates directly with "magic lore," evoking at once a previous historical period and the superstitions that profoundly affected its system of beliefs.

Chaucer continues in this passage with the result that, "thurgh his magike, for a day or tway, / It semed all the rockes were away" (11607-11608). The use of the word "semed" implies that the principal characters in the story are duped and, in fact, no real act of conjuring has occurred. Instead of pointing to a precise demonstration of mystical abilities—that is, by simply giving credit to the *tregetoure* for inexplicably relocating the rocks—Chaucer only allows a passive mention that they are "away." He has intentionally sidestepped the potential for practical magic. Within this passage, too, there is some disagreement between Tyrwhitt's and Speight's editions. Speight's earlier version references a "weeke or tway," during which the rocks cannot

be seen (567).<sup>232</sup> Tyrwhitt changes this duration to only a “day or tway,” suggesting a more realistic period of time for the flood tide to support the illusion. If this alteration was a purposeful and meaningful one, he supports it indirectly, reminding his reader that Chaucer’s word, *tregetoure*, is derived from “*tricheur, tricherie, trick, &c*” and seems also to be “formed from *treget*, which is frequently used by Chaucer for *deceit, imposture*.”<sup>233</sup> He follows with the argument that Chaucer’s magician in this tale depends on “a great deal of machinery... to produce the *apparences*, or illusions” that help win the squire’s patronage, and, within the literary tradition of late-medieval England, the *tregetoure* was no more respected than a “*Juggler* [with] mere sleight of hand.”<sup>234</sup> By tinkering with one of the most important aspects of the tale—that is, by covering the rocks for only a few days, instead of a few weeks—Tyrwhitt emphasizes nature’s part in a clever allusion rather than the mystical qualities of unexplainable magic. Chaucer therefore, and especially Tyrwhitt’s Chaucer, was not anxious to give credence to the magical arts in his *Franklin’s Tale*, a reading supported by modern and eighteenth-century scholarship alike.

Lipscomb, however, despite his use of Tyrwhitt’s edition as both a source and a critical guide, is quick to highlight the assumed mystical qualities of this story in his modernized version. If one considers the conclusion of this identical scene, a description of the wizard’s unnatural skill is revealed:

In them strange charms and potent spells he finds,  
And human eyes with vain illusions blinds;  
By these dark arts each rock’s terrific head  
Seems whelm’d and sunk ‘neath ocean’s gulphy bed. (506-509)

Lipscomb’s use of words such as “strange charms,” “potent spells,” and “dark arts,” has no similarity with Chaucer’s original verses, allowing the reader to arrive at the realization that this magic is, in fact, practiced in earnest. If Lipscomb means to establish a heightened tension with

these phrases, he also undermines the threat by neutralizing the wizard's powers throughout. He reveals the magician's performances as "vain illusions" and arrives at the ultimately unsatisfying conclusion that the rocks are merely "sunk 'neath ocean's gulphy bed." For all of Lipscomb's determinations of the dark and sinister, he seems himself in the end to interpret any display of magic as merely the high tide.

Within this small scene, Lipscomb makes two deliberate changes. First, he magnifies the powerful potential of magic, calling it out more precisely in his choice of words. In doing so, he projects excitement, if not fear, on the reading audience, transporting it to England's medieval past when Catholic "magic" was supposedly most maliciously practiced. Second, he allows the heightened sense of this magic to fail, and to do so more conspicuously. Where Chaucer remains ambiguous on the subject, stating minimally that the rocks went away, Lipscomb pulls the curtain on his wizard, pointing more directly to the tide's natural occurrence and falling back in line with Tyrwhitt's editing. If this combined approach is designed to marginalize Catholicism, it does so by intentionally challenging the ceremonial. In Lipscomb's tale, the officious display of the Church of Rome, with its performing of the supernatural, is defeated by the ebb and flow of nature. Thus, the reader's faith in the visible and the rational is called into question, allowing a perception of truth to collide with and sink beneath God in nature. A direct reference to "blind"-ed "eyes" occurs here, which as will be shown is a theme often repeated in Lipscomb's revisions.

Finally, Lipscomb refers back to the magician's book as a source of these dark, but foolish, displays, as if connecting prayerful recitations to the incantations of charlatans. Von Rosador argues that

The Scripture, the Word, which, internalized and preached, is the main concern of the Protestant reformed clergy, is contrasted with the pragmatics of alleviating petty



everyday misfortune, achieved by the help of charms written on slips of paper, amulets, shears, crystal stones, and similar objects used and distributed by the cunning men and women.<sup>235</sup>

By all appearances, Chaucer's portrait of the "legetoure" seems well aligned with just this sort of "cunning" person, and Lipscomb's reinterpretation does much to bring the wizard's actions within hailing distance of a prejudiced eighteenth-century Britain. Lipscomb sheds more light on the story's use of "books" and "tables" as instruments of deceitful magic, while at the same time condemning the Catholic faith for its own assumedly peculiar and inscrutably Latin texts.

Perhaps not accidentally, Lipscomb follows the tradition of other literary figures like Marlowe's Faustus and Shakespeare's Prospero—both, of course, devotees of high-minded and notoriously book-based learning practiced at the expense of simple Puritan humility. Lipscomb stresses this conflict at an earlier moment in the *Franklin's Tale* when he obsesses over the magician's book and moves quickly to nullify it by emphasizing Protestant religious discourse:

This book spoke much of operations  
Touching the eight and twenty mansions  
Belonging to the moon, and tales like these,  
Which now no credence gain, no longer please:  
For pure religion now her light unfolds,  
And the free mind no more in bondage holds. (381-386)

Seemingly in this one reference, Lipscomb attacks the authority of Roman Catholicism and touches a little self-referentially on the family of "tales" in its vicinity. This word is curiously applied and allows the reader to wonder if the concepts of "pure religion" and "free mind" work as antidotes to Chaucer's original set of tales, with Lipscomb's own modernization project as an instrument of theological and literary reform.

It is not difficult from this point to see in Lipscomb's version of the *Tales* something on the level of national ideology. It seems from his changes in the text that Catholicism is likened to a conspiracy against the state. Despite his vow to adhere to Chaucer's original text, Lipscomb

takes up where Ogle and his co-modernizers left off, by presenting for his readers a version of British politics that is dependent on Anglican patriotism. This propagandized zeal for the Church of England acts as a substitute for the assumed mystical illiteracy of the past, when a Latin-speaking church held sway over the English people. Moreover, it follows the popular movement of casting Catholics into the margins of British society, which, minus the reign of Mary I, occurred with varying levels of severity from the reign of Henry VIII to the modernizer's own time.

#### **H. LIPSCOMB'S ALL-SEEING BRITAIN; OR, THE MAGIC TRICK REVEALED**

Lipscomb, then, converts his obligation to censor Chaucer's writing into something more impactful for his readers—in this case, a means for accomplishing religious and political awareness in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. Returning to the *Pardoner's Tale*, Lipscomb's subtle efforts begin to seem a little more transparent. In one early section, according to Chaucer, the audience is given some insight on the Pardoner's tricks:

And after that than tell I forth my tales.  
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,  
Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe,  
And in Latin I speke a wordes fewe,  
To saffron with my predication,  
And for to stere men to devotion. (12275-12280)

Lipscomb enlarges this section, which only by itself is sufficiently anti-ecclesiastical. Here he seems preoccupied with the Pardoner's methods for sermonizing and for selling indulgences. His first four lines in the passage are, therefore, true to the original:

Then I amuse their ears with idle tales,  
Decrees of popes and learned cardinals,  
Of holy patriarchs and of bishops shew,  
And sentences of Latin spout a few. (48-51)

Even Lipscomb's rhyme scheme is the same, although his pairing of "tales" with "cardinals" loses something in the modern verse. Interestingly, Lipscomb decides to treat the "tales" line slightly differently, adding the verb "amuse" and the adjective "idle," trivializing the Pardoner's approach along the way and perhaps attacking again Chaucer's use of the fictional story-telling genre in the original. The last two of Chaucer's lines in this passage are increased twofold.

Where Chaucer speaks of the people being stirred to devotion, Lipscomb is less complimentary:

This o'er my words spreads an imposing glare,  
And at my depth of learning makes them stare:  
By arts like these their willing eyes I blind,  
And in deep reverence hold the passive mind. (52-55)

Lipscomb's reference to blindness in these lines is reminiscent of similar moments in the *Merchant's Tale*, when magic is used to hold the people in a state of ignorance and subjugation. Here, the Pardoner also refers to his high learning and, in particular, his use of Latin to "blind" his followers' "willing eyes." There is also the important difference of tone between Chaucer's and Lipscomb's poetry. Chaucer's description of "Latin" leads his audience to feelings of devotion, while Lipscomb wants to confer upon his Latin a secret articulation that promotes fraudulent activity and impoverishment. With words like "glare" and "stare" associated with this blinding act, it becomes apparent that Lipscomb wants to link the signs, symbols, and language of the Pardoner's faith with deception and ignorance. As he bluntly points out, where real instruction should occur, his followers exhibit a "passive mind" bent on reverence but little else.

The political illustration of "blindness" is also explored by Ogle in his earlier reworking of the *Clerk's Tale*. Ogle changed the narrative structure in his *Gualtherus and Griselda*, allowing the reader's ignorance of the husband's tricks to parallel the people's own oblivion under papal rule. When the pope's edict arrives, Ogle's description is far from a light touch:

Handed from heav'n the scroll, the crowd believ'd;

To slav'ry prone, and form'd to be deceiv'd.  
Moles, that in darkness center'd their delight!  
The day to them had been a pain of sight. (1591-1594)

Whether or not he used Ogle as a starting point, Lipscomb's dedication to the "blindness" motif becomes a defining element of his modernizing approach. It occurs, as noted, in the face of general charlatanism, but Lipscomb finds a way to weave it throughout Chaucer's tales—something he accomplishes with more political potency in his reworking of the *Second Nun's Tale* and *Physician's Tale*.

Given that Lipscomb wanted to preclude any positive interpretations of Catholicism in his modernizations, he would have had much to consider with the *Second Nun's Tale*. In it, Chaucer's central figure, Cecilia, works to promote the early Roman church by bringing all of those around her into Christianity. Cecilia's martyrdom is eventually realized when she is brought before the intractable prefect, Almachius, who begins a gruesome series of execution attempts. Cecilia is miraculously preserved and able to continue preaching for three days, leading eventually to her canonization. This tale in particular would have required considerable reworking, as Cecilia's hagiography is filled with intense Catholic imagery and storytelling devices—most of which Lipscomb would not have wanted to recreate for his audience. He does however preserve its basic premise, deviating only at critical moments. He stubbornly refuses to refer to the holy figure, Urban, as "pope," despite Chaucer's insistence that he is the historical third-century pontiff. Lipscomb also uses the tale as an opportunity to enlarge his commentary on the blindness of the people. In doing so, he magnifies the need for political upheaval as a necessary response to Roman tyranny and allegorizes Cecilia's eventual triumph as a model for Britain amidst the religious conflicts in eighteenth-century Europe.

During her trial and sentencing at the hands of Almachius, for example, Cecilia engages in a theological argument undermining Rome's ancient adherence to polytheism. When presented by Chaucer, Cecilia is preoccupied with the judge's inability to rule:

Thou saidest no word sin thou spake to me,  
That I ne knew therwith thy nicetee,  
And that thou were in every manner wise  
A lewed officer, a vain justice. (15962-15965)

Chaucer's Cecilia sees Almachius as a fraudulent judge. More importantly, her observations rely on his demonstrations of speech, the "word" he "spake," which is something critical to the poet's own locus of power and, again, reflective of the spiritual sanctity of the verbal recitation.

Lipscomb, on the other hand, uses this passage to nullify the emphasis on speech and refers again to the theme of blindness:

O! would kind Heaven, with waken'd warmth, she cries,  
Tear the thick film from thy benighted eyes!  
Then thou at length the simplest truths might'st learn,  
And see, what eyes of infants can discern (304-307)<sup>236</sup>

Instead of condemning the prefect for his words, Lipscomb's Cecilia is only concerned with what is visible. The power of articulation, with its sometimes secret intricacies, gives way to the physical manifestation of truth. With Lipscomb, it is the revealing power of the judge's body that is privileged. Specifically, it is the "film" over Almachius's "benighted" eyes that, when compared to subtitles of speech, can more powerfully evoke the prefect's blindness and his accompanying inability to rule.

Chaucer continues with his own reference to blindness in this scene, but he directs it only at Almachius in his worship of stone idols. His Cecilia contends that "Ther lacketh nothing to thin utter eyen / That thou n'art blind; for thing that we seen alle / That is a ston, that men may wel espien" (15966-15968). Lipscomb reacts by broadening the political scope of blindness and

referring to the judge's followership as well. He converts the attack against Almachius only to a much more general condemnation of all Rome's people. Lipscomb's Cecilia refers to the "huge form" of the stone idol as something "to which such thousands bend, / To which a blinded nation's vows ascend" (304-305). The effect of these lines is to enlarge the inability to see—to apply ignorance and sin, in this case, to the vastness of the Roman polity.

Where Chaucer wants to highlight Cecilia's power to proselytize and convert the citizens of Rome, Lipscomb essentially abandons the Roman people. As a result, they become part of an alienated race. They occupy a polluted and infertile ground instead of Chaucer's rich soil by which the early saints would plant the roots of Christianity. Lipscomb's Rome is now a problem that exists at the highest levels of state and religion. It provides an impetus for Cecilia, with an urgency that works in accordance with Lipscomb's Britain of the 1790s: rather than inclusion of foreign influences, there must be isolation from the Continental apparatuses of power.

## **I. A BRITISH NATION UNDER GOD'S CARE: DIVINE JUSTICE IN THE *PHYSICIAN'S TALE***

Lipscomb's reworking of Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* continues this persistent call to separate from the supposed evils of mainland Europe. In Chaucer's story, the wicked judge Appius attempts to use false testimony to gain control of the innocent Virginia. His resulting decree to remove the girl from her father's house thus stands in for a legal system that is fundamentally rotten. Virginius, the girl's father, kills his daughter, seeing this ritual as her only escape from dishonor, and is subsequently sentenced to death by Appius. It is only at this critical point that the people rise up to defend Virginius and attempt to restore justice. Chaucer's version of the story pairs well with his *Second Nun's Tale*, in that each holds up for contempt an immoral absolute ruler. Both also shed light on the vulnerability of a state suffering under such brutality.

John C. Hirsh comments on this pattern in the so-called Roman tales, whereby the judge figures are more than just corrupted individuals; they stand in for a corrupt political system.

[I]n each case Chaucer has taken care to let the emphasis fall less upon the character or the person of the judges than upon the moral and ethical corruption which, through their actions, has now permeated the state. The point is not simply that these judges are personally corrupt, or even bad judges. The point is that the depravity of those who wield the state's power has quite undermined it. Not only are the actions of Almachius and Appius utterly unjust and indefensible, but because of their actions the state has lost its sanction, and the people are set free from their duty to submit to it.<sup>237</sup>

In Chaucer's version of the *Physician's Tale*, the people fulfill this duty, stepping in to restore justice after Appius condemns Virginius to death. Chaucer recounts the actions of a group of rebellious citizens, acting with knowledge of the judge's false decree and a unified sense of agency to set it right. He sets into action "a thousand people in thrast / To save the knight, for routh and for pitee, / For knowen was the false iniquitee" (12194-12196). Lipscomb's treatment maintains the fundamental sense of this scene, yet he conspicuously adds a higher power of intervention as catalyst for reform:

but righteous Heaven  
To suffering worth hath ever shelter given.  
Thus did it now; for ere his curs'd commands  
Obey'd might be, out of his murderous hands,  
The people, madly rous'd with fierce uproar,  
The hapless victim of his vengeance tore,  
And with just rage himself to prison bore. (210-216)<sup>238</sup>

Lipscomb's addition of Heaven's intervention provides more of the classical element of *Deus ex machina* to the scene. His subtle changes also apply a more pronounced political dimension to Chaucer's tale, exciting the notion that an overseeing god can work in concert with the people of the state to restore law and order. If Hirsh's analysis is correct—if Chaucer's Rome has failed its populace, prompting the challenge to governmental rule—Lipscomb's Rome is driven to reform by the simultaneous actions of a faithful people and their protectorate God. Linda Colley reminds

us that this divine right characterized by the Protestant movement in Britain in the eighteenth century, especially as it stood against Catholic powers in Europe, was at its apex:

Protestant Britons believed they were in God's special care. They knew that they were bound to be regularly tested by periods of extreme sin and suffering, and they took it for granted that struggle—especially struggle with those who were not Protestants—was their birthright.<sup>239</sup>

Lipscomb embraces the idea that a simple reimagining of Chaucer's tale could reflect this strife, with a remedy in the hands of an intervening god and its congregation of high-minded reformers. Lipscomb's tale thus deviates meaningfully. Along its new path, it becomes like similar British art of the period, proclaiming a chosen people who can secure their own deliverance under the watchful gaze of a caretaking deity.

#### **J. A "PATRIOT BAND" AND THE SLASHING OF ROME'S POLITICAL BODY**

Ultimately, Chaucer's Roman tales provided an interesting study for Lipscomb—something he could refashion for the sake of a British nation obsessed with its own sense of liberty and justice. Indeed, Lipscomb found ample opportunity to stretch his interpretation of the *Tales* into the political realm, at once extending his theme of blindness under the Roman church and representing a British nation blessed by God in its attempt to separate from Catholic powers. Accordingly, he does not overlook Caesar, Rome's most iconic historical figure and someone generally lionized throughout England's medieval period. Chaucer included Caesar as a subject of one of the Monk's *De casibus* narratives. In his version, the state of Caesar's death is clear to the audience. Chaucer prompts his Monk to characterize Brutus and Cassius as "false" (14624). Merely envious of Caesar's "high estat," they are cast as dark figures acting "prively" in their "conspiracie" (14616; 14617). When the murder is finally described, Caesar is portrayed as someone so personally respectable as to cover his nude body at the moment of his death:

So manly was this Julius of herte,



And so wel loved estatly honestee,  
That though his dedly woundes sore smerte,  
His mantel over his hippes caste he,  
For no man shulde seen his privetee: (14629-14633)

With Chaucer, hierarchy and class are upheld, as well as the perceived social decencies they represent. He also connects Caesar's flesh to the body of the Roman republic, casting his hero as one who, in the midst a violent death, avoids nakedness and likewise shields the political corpus of Rome from the vulnerabilities of attack and dismemberment.<sup>240</sup>

In Lipscomb's version of the *Monk's Tale*, the characters of Caesar and the conspirators are drastically altered:

But Rome's stern patriot band, untaught to bear  
One, whose high soul with none in fame would share,  
E'en while the sun beheld the daring deed,  
From slavery's dreaded yoke their country freed...<sup>241</sup>

While Chaucer's version exalts Rome's republic through the actions of its leader, Lipscomb brings glory to the state by linking the assassins to a "patriot band" that frees its country and people from "slavery." Lipscomb's telling here presents no ambiguity. In fact, it moves lock step with other alterations to the *Tales*. It is little wonder that, in the place of Chaucer's articulation of a murder, Lipscomb would narrate a restoration—and one, not coincidentally, that snuffs out any instances of imperial Roman rule.

The apparent difference between Chaucer's and Lipscomb's way of representing Caesar is not new to literature. Norman Holland tells us that a traditional opinion existed, at least until the time of Shakespeare, that considered Caesar "a 'great Emperour' and Brutus a vile murderer, an attitude represented in Dante's *Inferno*, Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, [and] Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*."<sup>242</sup> Beginning with Shakespeare and the English Renaissance, writers and critics reinterpreted Caesar as a "Roman Tamburlaine, a monstrous tyrant" and

Brutus as a “tragic hero... seeking moral perfection.”<sup>243</sup> If this major shift in thinking truly happened, it seems to have taken seed in Elizabethan England, essentially at the moment of the country’s religious transition. Lipscomb’s reworking of the *Monk’s Tale* might then substantiate a sea change in Britain’s popular view of Caesar’s death after the Reformation. It could also support the notion that Georgians were reading and understanding Shakespeare on a level that critics would not realize for another century.<sup>244</sup> At a minimum, it is fitting that Lipscomb would add this dimension to the character of Chaucer’s Monk, whose portrait in the *General Prologue* describes a person who strides two worlds—that is, someone who “lette olde thinges pace, / And held after the newe world the trace” (175-176). Lipscomb’s Monk accomplishes the same, carrying the torch for a newly idealized Britain, now more dedicated to its people’s liberty than to individuated rule. Whether or not this perception of late-eighteenth century Britain is a fair or historically accurate one, it seemed to occupy the minds of its writers and poets, and it is therefore appropriate that Chaucer’s ever-fashionable Monk should change with the times.

Lipscomb’s modernizing approach to Chaucer is thus a steady one. By starting with a call to censorship, he is able to undermine images of Catholicism and disassociate his poetry from all vestiges of England’s old faith. In doing so, he paves the way for a political message hoping to glorify the British state in the late 1700s. With Lipscomb’s simple pastoral world beginning to wriggle violently with Catholic powers across the Channel, his modernizations reject the subjugating “spell”-power of the spoken word and demonstrate blindness brought to bear on the people under its control. This approach proves to be a powerful transmitter, displaying clear pictures of a physical body in disrepair, as if afflicted by its own ruling government. Lipscomb’s reinterpretation of Caesar as a brutal dictator completes the picture, linking his defeat and usurpation to the fate of Appius and Almachius and imagining a defeated Rome in the wake of

the Protestant Reformation. Lipscomb's modernizations thus come together into one discrete narrative—a singular work that is at times fearful of the Catholic apparatus but always responsive by attacking its fundamental concepts and the perceived brutal nature of its classical history. When Lipscomb is finished, he has installed something new—in effect, something that projects a sense of what it means to be British just before the start of the nineteenth century.

#### **K. LIPSCOMB'S FINAL PERFORMANCE AND HIS EXALTED VOICE**

Lipscomb's *Manciple's Tale*, his last tale in the modernized collection, builds on these editorial strategies. Lipscomb also attempts a master stroke to legitimize the translator as *auctore*, a creator who deserves just as much authorial credit as the original poet. This approach is strangely ironic, considering that Chaucer may have originally intended for his Manciple to begin voicing a retraction, in hopes of apologizing for all the previous tales.

As it is, Chaucer's original comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and is concerned with the myth of Phoebus and the etiology of the crow's black feathers. Chaucer's crow witnesses Phoebus's wife in an act of infidelity and makes the mistake of recounting the story to his master. As this tale in particular seems to lament the effects on society of idle gossip, the unhappy Phoebus tears out the bird's white feathers, leaving black ones in their place and blotting out its ability to sing and speak. While this story seems largely taken from antiquity, Chaucer adds a great deal by including the crow's song and human-like voice—both of which are taken from him at the end, by Phoebus, as part of the tale's moral. Donald Howard maintains that Chaucer's placement of the *Manciple's Tale* near the end of the Canterbury narrative was a conscious one. He claims that Chaucer's talkative bird and its need for punishment presents a “last image” for the audience to consider, whereby a “wagging tongue makes meaningless noise.”<sup>245</sup> Lee Patterson supports this reading, arguing that the Manciple prepares Chaucer's

audience for the Parson, “by casting doubt upon the whole poetic enterprise” and pushing the idea that “silence is the best policy.”<sup>246</sup> Such interpretations assume that Chaucer is for some reason showing contrition for the tales that came before—in effect, that he is shame-faced about his own poetry in the face of the more sober-minded commentaries of his time. If his *Manciple’s Tale* is operating as a preamble to his formal retraction, it allows the Parson to more effectively swoop in and make amends. Peter Herman draws from this interpretation the “parallel between the Crow’s tale-telling and the poet’s fictive acts,” with the natural conclusion that “Chaucer wanted to demonstrate the deficiencies of poetry in particular and of language in general.”<sup>247</sup> Michaela Paasche Grudin summarizes: “simply put, we are to believe that Chaucer concludes the *Canterbury Tales* by negating the assumptions about language and poetry that shaped it,” as if “bitterly attack[ing] the great received tradition of language as an enhancement given to man by God.”<sup>248</sup> If Grudin *et al* are correct, Lipscomb noticed it too. He did so by altering, in particular, those critical moments of the tale so focused on speech, song, and punishment to suit his own needs for his own audience.

Lipscomb’s manipulation of the original text begins with his description of the crow. In Chaucer’s version, the bird’s ability to speak and sing is described as a singularly remarkable talent.

Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,  
And contrefete the speche of every man  
He coude, whan he shulde tell a tale.  
Therwith in all this world no nightingale  
Ne coude by an hundred thousand del  
Singen so wonder merily and wel. (17082-17087)

Chaucer’s crow is taught to copy human speech and, from this learning, is able to craft a fiction. It is easy to see how critics have longed to associate the tale-telling bird with Chaucer, who might have also considered himself something of a counterfeit poet, but for his ability to sing his

verses more artfully—in his words, so “merily and wel.” Lipscomb’s reaction to this passage is to enlarge and fortify with more poetic details.

Him soon he taught to catch each note he heard;  
He nicely mimick’d each harmonious bird.  
Of the provok’d, beneath the neighbouring grove,  
The tender Philomel to own her love:  
So true he sung, e’en her his notes deceiv’d,  
And her fond partner him she oft believ’d: (86-91)<sup>249</sup>

Lipscomb’s portrait of this crow is, like Chaucer’s, centered on the idea of mimicry. However, where Chaucer begins his description with the bird’s tendency to speak, Lipscomb starts with song. In doing so, he avoids portraying the bird as a teller of tales. Instead, this creature copies other birds, not human speech, with an image so emotionally powerful that deception and seduction are brought together. The additional reference to Philomel by Lipscomb is a suitable device and especially provocative. It supports Chaucer’s original nightingale imagery and trains the reader on Ovid’s story of Philomela, whose tongue is cut out after her sister’s husband, King Tereus, kidnaps and rapes her. Philomela is able to reveal her assailant’s crimes only by weaving the narrative onto a fabric and sending it to her sister. Both women then kill the king’s son and feed him to his father at a great feast. After the plot is known, in the mad escape that follows, Philomela is turned into a nightingale.<sup>250</sup> Lipscomb’s rather easy addition, here, adds volumes to the meaning of the tale and provides the modernizer’s own commentary on losing the power of speech. The Philomela image is a powerful one, especially if we consider how her tongue, once sliced out and cast to the ground, tried to wriggle back to its mistress’s feet.

Lipscomb clearly wants to emphasize the tragedy of losing one’s voice, and he carries this anxiety forward in his treatment of Chaucer’s crow. In the modernized version, the bird’s ability to speak is noticeably overshadowed by its ability to sing. Lipscomb only provides the following couplet after devoting the entire passage, above, to its “harmonious” “notes”: “Nor

sylvan songs alone his voice could reach, / But all the various forms of human speech” (92-93).

Lipscomb’s decision to privilege song proves to be intentional as the tale moves forward.

Chaucer, after all, gives his crow multiple lines of dialogue, amplifying its voice by using its words as an instrument in the development of the story. The bird, in fact, works with great conviction in its interaction with Phoebus, and its freedom of speech is perhaps made more significant when we consider Phoebus’s place in the aristocracy, according to Chaucer’s telling of the story. By any measure, the bird’s contributions of dialogue are important:

Phebus, (quod he) for all thy worthinesse,  
For all thy beautee, and all thy gentilnesse,  
For all thy song, and all thy minstralcie,  
For all thy waiting, blered is thin eye,  
With on of litel reputation,  
Not worth to thee as in comparison  
The mountance of a gnat, so mote I thrive;  
For on thy bedde thy wif I saw him swive. (17198-17205)

By comparison, Lipscomb’s crow does not speak at all. Instead, when its articulation is required to further the plot, the reader is only given spare lines of description: “With generous rage he stretch’d his swelling throat, / And cuckoo, cuckoo, was his only note” (160-161). The use of the word, “cuckoo,” associates with both a traditional avian utterance and a sound similar to “cuckold.” By merely acting naturally, the bird is still able to convey meaning. Despite the trick, Lipscomb employs less anthropomorphic qualities in his rendering, blotting out the crow’s command of actual human language. Thus, his earlier emphasis on song and communication among birds, instead of between bird and man, becomes the modernization’s main focus.

Chaucer’s version of the tale strengthens the bond between the crow and his human owner, placing them on a communicative level ground. As the moral against careless gossip emerges, Chaucer’s crow relates the truth with discernable language, and it is this blatant act that causes the unravelling. The result is that very little sorrow is generated for the crow from a

medieval audience that traditionally had honored the secrecy of courtly love affairs. Whether or not Chaucer was commenting on his own writings, his victimization of the crow is largely without pity. His memorialization of the punishment scene brings the brutality of the story's message into sharp focus:

And to the crowe, o false thefe, said he,  
I wol thee quite anon thy false tale.  
Thou song whilom, like any nightingale,  
Now shalt thou, false thefe, thy song forgon,  
And eke thy white fethers everich on,  
Ne never in all thy lif ne shalt thou speke;  
Thus shul men on a traitour ben awreke. (17241-17247)

Chaucer's words are harsh. Peppered throughout this tirade are references to the bird as a false thief and a traitor. Both of these accusations are, in fact, repeated in the text, and both deliver to the audience the idea of the crow as a danger to the state. If, as some critics believe, these lines are meant to be self-reproachful on Chaucer's part, it is clear that the bird is to blame, and the very language he uses, whether representing the truth or not, is chiefly under attack.

What results instead from Lipscomb's version is more sympathy for the crow. His modernization of the punishment scene purposely fails to direct Chaucer's level of hatred and spite to the reader. Lipscomb's Phoebus does begin by referring to the crow as a "traitor vile"—that is, one who meant to "deceive" (182; 184). However, in the place of any mention of "false"-ness, a word generously applied by Chaucer, Lipscomb's poetry lapses into moments of warm praise. At the heart of Phoebus's sentencing, the modernizer draws again on the crow's ability to sing and attaches to it a sense of the positive, repeated throughout:

Henceforth no more shall thy melodious voice  
The listening tenants of the woods rejoice;  
Rival no more of the sweet bird of night,  
Shall thy soft songs the melting groves delight; (192-195)

Words like “melodious,” “rejoice,” and “delight” are undeniably pleasing additions. Lipscomb also attaches to this woodland scene a feeling of the pastoral, with “tenants” blending harmoniously with the land. Instead of following Chaucer’s lead and enunciating for his reader a relief from the anxiety of a gossiping tongue, Lipscomb refers not to the crow’s speaking tongue at all and adds to the punishment vivid imagery of a natural peace taken away from a very real political landscape.

If Chaucer’s *Manciple’s Tale* is an apology, Lipscomb’s is an affirmation. If Chaucer wants to remonstrate against his crow as an act of self-sacrifice for his own misuses of language, Lipscomb looks only at the beauty of his own song and the false doings of those who interpret it wrongly. It should be noted here, again, that Lipscomb does not modernize the *Parson’s Tale*, which is by itself a rather strange fact. Especially given Lipscomb’s overall approach, it is curious that an eighteenth-century country parson should not include Chaucer’s own Parson in the *Tales*. This pilgrim in particular would be best poised to sermonize in a way friendly to Anglicanism and contrary to the Roman faith. However, Lipscomb’s non-inclusion of this prose work makes sense, as he would have had no desire to undermine his own message in the *Manciple’s Tale*. Instead of marginalizing language, Lipscomb ennobles its articulation in verse form. He highlights the beauty of the crow’s song; he deletes any reference to the perils of misspoken gossip; and he laments the loss of the bird’s voice. All of these methods ultimately convert Chaucer’s moralizing into tense misgivings connected to the act of silencing. Lipscomb does not wish to be muted, and he chooses not to blot out his version of the *Tales* with the beginnings of a formal retraction. He would have hoped for the opposite: to reinforce political ideals with his poetry. Through his own kind of perceived artful mimicry, Lipscomb would have been proud of his ability to sing. It is therefore telling that his final response is to hold up



Chaucer's "silencing" punishment as a moment for the reader to ponder. Lipscomb frames this moment as a regrettable conclusion to the modernized *Tales*—not, as with Chaucer, a hopeful anticipation of the Parson's moralizing finale. Lipscomb was his own parson, and his message was best left on this final note.

## V. GOTHIC CHAUCER AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL

Like most of the eighteenth-century modernizers before him, Lipscomb wanted to reanimate Chaucer and depict him as a poet who moved with the political times. Lipscomb's final edition of the modernized *Tales* in 1795 is the culmination of those efforts. Effectively masked as a work of translation, it is instead a rewriting of the medieval text—one that also rewrites the text of Britain, amidst the growing fear of war with Catholic powers across the Channel. Perhaps not coincidentally, it is during the 1790s too that the development of the Gothic novel reaches new heights, with a peculiar popularity that extends well into the nineteenth century. At its heart, this movement in gothic prose is dependent on the same ideals reflected in the Chaucerian modernization project, both with their tendencies to accentuate dark medieval themes by attaching them to a memory of Roman Catholicism. With these similarities in mind, the eighteenth-century Chaucer should be reevaluated within the context of other literary movements happening at the same time. Specifically, its potential influence on both the development and the success of the gothic writers at the century's end should be fully explored.

It is often reported that eighteenth-century Britain is the setting for the officially recognized beginnings of the Gothic novel. While admitting that the term "Gothic," itself, has only recently been attached to the "literature of terror," E. J. Clery documents Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* as the "generally regarded" first novel of the genre.<sup>251</sup> Describing the "Gothic novel" as a "twentieth-century coinage," she argues that its critical reviews from the 1920s onward "identified Walpole as the progenitor."<sup>252</sup> Marie Mulvey-Roberts supports this history, alluding to *Otranto*'s "chief legacy" as the "urtext for the gothic novel."<sup>253</sup> While these are likely the true literary beginnings for substantial prose works in the English language dedicated to fearful themes, Walpole was not the first to associate the gothic period with

apprehensions of England's medieval past. As noted, Addison and his contemporaries philosophized on the subject early in the century, evoking at once a fascination with the period predating the Reformation in England and attaching to it a sense of horror arising from its apparent child-like superstitions.

Such observations in the time before Walpole were not even confined to editorialized journals and pamphlets. Novels that predated *Otranto* shared in the conceit, if only briefly and tangentially. Tobias Smollet's preface to *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, first published in 1748, references a time when "the minds of men were debauched by the imposition of priestcraft to the most absurd pitch of credulity, [when] the authors of romance arose, and losing sight of probability, filled their performances with the most monstrous hyperboles."<sup>254</sup> While "monstrous hyperboles" are not the same as actual monsters, it can certainly be said that Britain's fear of its medieval past was part of the landscape of culture and critical thought long before readers opened the pages to *Otranto*. On this point, Clery looks back specifically at Hurd's groundbreaking historicism, which she believes "inform[ed] Walpole's treatment of the relation between the medieval setting and manifestations of the supernatural."<sup>255</sup> Clery is also quick to cite Hurd's equating of the romances' ubiquitous fictional giants with those "oppressive feudal Lords" of the period and the "class conflicts" they engendered in their readers.<sup>256</sup> Knowing now that Chaucerian modernizers might have stumbled upon these connections earlier and with more poetic flare than Smollett, Hurd, and Walpole, some regard for their larger contributions to the development of the Gothic novel is finally due.

When comparing, for example, Ogle's group of early eighteenth-century modernizers to Walpole, there begin to appear fundamental similarities. In terms of basic structure, Walpole, in his initial publication of *Otranto*, masquerades as a modernizer. His first edition of the story

published on Christmas Day 1764 attempts to establish a fictional pretense reminiscent of the Chaucerian modernizers before him:

The following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism... If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the æra of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards.<sup>257</sup>

Walpole's references here to the "language" of "barbarism" align with the beliefs of those foundational critics of medieval literature, such as Sidney, Dryden, Addison, Percy, and Hurd. Such observations, while prefacing his "urtext" of the Gothic novel, could also serve as recommendations for the modernization project exactly as undertaken by Dryden with *Fables*.

Within the next few lines, Walpole adds another dimension to this deceit. He certifies that the text under his review was likely meant to counter the "flourishing" letters designed to "dispel the empire of superstition, at that time so forcibly attacked by the reformers."<sup>258</sup> Perhaps most brazenly of all, he manufactures for his readers a Catholic plot to use the story's 1529 printing as a resistance to those letter-writers of the Reformation:

It is not unlikely, that an artful priest might endeavour to turn their own arms on the innovators; and might avail himself of his abilities as an author to confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions. If this was his view, he has certainly acted with signal address. Such a work as the following would enslave a hundred vulgar minds, beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of LUTHER to the present hour.<sup>259</sup>

Clearly, Walpole means for both the ridiculously supernatural storyline, along with the fictional history of its telling, to bring about strong feelings from his readership. Those feelings obsess over the unsettling mysteries from a time and geographical space removed from Britain's mid-century Anglicanism.

At a minimum, Walpole's crafting of both the plot and the frame narrative for *Otranto* taps deep into British anxieties in the 1760s—not just those associated with the medieval past but also those ready to cringe at the thought of Catholic plots against Protestant regimes. If this latter fear operating as a setup to his novel is indeed a cringe-worthy moment, it peers back at the Jacobite uprisings in the eighteenth century, as well as those frightening near misses like the Gunpowder Plot and the invasion of the Armada over the two previous centuries. Ultimately, Walpole's desired effect is achieved, if only in the immortality of his approach. His publication date helps establish the Christmas ghost story popularized further by Dickens, Henry James, M. R. James, and others in the 1800s and 1900s.<sup>260</sup> Importantly, and like Ogle and his cohort from before, it does so through negative associations with both the literary form and political practice of Roman Catholicism.

While Walpole's approach to *Otranto* seems reminiscent of both the Chaucerian modernizers' craft and content, there is evidence too that Walpole was an eager consumer of the reinterpreted *Canterbury Tales*. Alice Miskimin notes his "preference for reading the Chaucer modernized in Dryden's *Fables*."<sup>261</sup> Walpole confirms these tastes in a 1781 letter, admitting to be a "Goth, so modern" as to "love Chaucer better in Dryden... than in his own language and dress."<sup>262</sup> This confession alone attaches Walpole to the larger modernization project, even if he mentions Dryden, only, and not the others. Ogle had included Dryden's treatments of Chaucer in his publication from 1741. Walpole, then in his middle twenties when Ogle released *Several Hands*, would have likely been interested in other modernizations of Chaucer's tales at such an impressionable age. Of course, while Dryden's Chaucer in *Fables* avoids Catholic prejudices, large sections of Ogle's text exploit this theme persistently. And they often do so through constructions of fear associated with the gothic past, Continental Europe, or both. Walpole's

probable history as a reader of all the modernizations published in his life, combined with his phony frame narrative in *Otranto* and his story to follow, all seem a tribute to Ogle as both poet and editor.

If Walpole's *Otranto* is an attempt to emulate the Chaucerian modernizers in novel form—that is, if he means to convert the strategy and purpose of their poetry to prose—he certainly hit upon a popular idea. His first edition was so successful he was compelled to confess the trick to his readers in the second and subsequent editions of the novel:

The favourable manner in which this little piece has been received by the public, calls upon the author to explain the grounds on which he composed it. But, before he opens those motives, it is fit that he should ask pardon of his readers for having offered his work to them under the borrowed personage of a translator... It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern.<sup>263</sup>

Walpole's decision to blend the "ancient" with the "modern," along with his desire to take on the "borrowed personage of a translator," only adds to his homage to Dryden. His belabored representations of the "darkest ages of Christianity," along with their "errors and superstitions," also work like natural follow ups to Ogle's *Several Hands* from decades earlier.

Assuming then that Walpole's Gothic novel follows the literary legacy of *Fables* and copies the style and sociocultural pitch of *Several Hands*, its subsequent boom of popularity in the 1790s and early 1800s runs alongside the religious and political propagandizing of Lipscomb. Patrick R. O'Malley confirms that, in "its ideological structure, the English Gothic novel, though it typically represents Catholicism, is fundamentally a Protestant genre."<sup>264</sup> More than just dry works of Puritan instruction, such novels were popular with readers because of their ability to entertain. This value in particular reached outside of Sunday worship. It appealed to a reading audience in ways that printed sermons from the dusty pulpits of Anglican ministers never could. Like Ogle's and Lipscomb's modernizations of Chaucer, the Gothic novel invested less in

obvious theological instruction and worked more with indulgent fascinations with the medieval. This strategy allowed the memory of England's past to stalk the dark places of Britain's crumbling edifices and haunt the minds of its reading populace. Furthermore, the numerous references in these texts to the iconography of Catholic influence, even if only in passing, were rarely accidental. Irene Bostrom counts no fewer than twenty-four works of fiction, "published between 1796 and 1828," with the word "monk" in their titles, "while six referred to friar and eleven to nun."<sup>265</sup> One other work from this period includes a hardly noticeable mention of a convent in its title; however, few fans of the genre can forget Catherine Morland's conversation with Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, in which both confess a love of sentimental, so-called horrid novels. It is particularly Henry, in a piece of dialogue that perhaps most ably demonstrates his suitability to Catherine, who displays great affection for Anne Radcliffe:

The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure. The 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again;—I remember finishing it in two days—my hair standing on end the whole time.<sup>266</sup>

Radcliffe's *Udolpho* is certainly one of the truest examples of popular Gothicism flourishing in the mid-to-late 1790s. If Walpole set out to copy the structural design of Dryden's *Fables* and the new British values stressed in Ogle's *Several Hands*, texts like *Udolpho* inscribed the last decade of the eighteenth century in much the same spirit as Lipscomb's final edition of Chaucer.

Trusting Austen's Catherine and Henry as credible judges, *Udolpho* is a sufficient model of gothic sentimentalism at the height of its popularity. It also possesses a strain of religious discourse that persists throughout, with a singular purpose shared by Lipscomb in his treatment of the *Tales*. O'Malley describes *Udolpho*'s intentions as working to "shore up its fundamentally English and Protestant ideological structure," moving further to separate "a corrupt and Catholic Paris and Italy from an idealized French countryside that turns out to be reassuringly English."<sup>267</sup>

Radcliffe was herself a devoted Anglican. According to her nineteenth-century biography, she “was educated in the principles of the Church of England; and through life, unless prevented by serious indisposition, regularly attended its services.”<sup>268</sup> Robert J. Mayhew adds to these facts, characterizing her belief system as belonging specifically to Latitudinarian Protestantism, an approach that privileged nature as central to the devotion to God.<sup>269</sup> This understanding helps resolve the novel’s overriding tension, as the heroic Emily in *Udolpho* must negotiate with constant demonstrations of the unexplainable and unnatural, all of which turn out to be mere performances. Owing to her strength of character and eventually drawing upon her persistent virtue and reason, she manages in every case to discredit the show of supernatural, often proving wrong her credulous servant and other members of the story’s marginalized lower classes.

Latitudinarians also rejected the existence of miracles; they were attuned, instead, to “providential” outcomes or “interventions from God.”<sup>270</sup> Miracles, in fact, were more than just an antiquated notion under Catholicism or an unpopular alternative to Providence. They were viewed as demonstrations of a devilish character. Thus, the distinction between providence and a miracle was an important one for both Radcliffe and Lipscomb: “a miracle was an action against the course of nature... where providence was God’s guiding human actions to a favorable outcome by means consonant with natural laws.”<sup>271</sup> Followers of this Anglican sect formed officially under Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson in the 1690s—notably, but not coincidentally, just after William of Orange sailed smoothly to the English throne in 1688.<sup>272</sup> English devotees of Tillotson immediately bore witness to William’s unmolested journey and peaceful usurpation, much like the failed invasion of the Spanish Armada a century earlier, as a product of favorable winds. It was thus a well-deserved reward for God’s faithful Britons.



It would be impossible to bring such spiritual interpretations to mind without remembering Brooke's Man of Law, who tells an equally remarkable tale of Constantia's deliverance to English shores, followed by judicial combat as a sober alternative to Chaucer's miraculous display. Radcliffe's rejection of unnatural phenomena in her Gothic texts should also unravel the logic of Lipscomb's tales published in the same decade, including those of his Prioress and Franklin, which substitute the wonders of Catholic ritual and the appearance of magic with easily explainable natural occurrences. Tyrwhitt's scribbling of two days, to replace Speight's two weeks, for the submerged rocks in the *Franklin's Tale* is a testament to the same natural theology experienced by Radcliffe and interpreted in her writings. Tyrwhitt, of course, came well before Radcliffe, yet he seems to have inspired both her and Lipscomb in their privileging of simple Protestant virtue over the assumed theatrical tricks of Catholicism.

Of course, any description of natural causation or God's judicial providence is best applied by these artists when sanctioning the forceful hand of government ideology. Lipscomb's interventions in Chaucer's Roman tales seem most forceful when he attempts to transform devoted Catholic populations into heart-swelled liberty seekers, all of whom work with divine inspiration to topple the regimes of confessional governments. As shown, this was a special touch Lipscomb most likely gleaned from Ogle's *Several Hands*. Assuming too that the Gothic novel provides a ready site for negotiation between state religion and national politics, one should again see the potential value of Ogle as a source for these novelists of the late-eighteenth century. Maria Purves makes a case for the sense of national identity present in the Gothic texts. After acknowledging the 1790s as a backdrop for the Gothic novel at its most popular, she describes the decade as a time when "religious sympathies of the middle and upper classes were greatly influenced by the conservative Whig agenda of Burke."<sup>273</sup> James J. Sack notes, too, that

this period in particular was one defined by conservatism, now operating within “a largely religious context.”<sup>274</sup> He adds: “Toryism as a practical idea and as a philosophy, or even more widely, an emerging right-wing or conservative agenda, involved the preservation of religion and the Church. This is what gave “the Right” its identity and its abiding character.”<sup>275</sup> If this identity is one shared across the Gothic novels of the time, it is also shared across the Chaucerian modernization project, particularly at those moments when foreign Catholic governments face off against unified populations set on anachronistically Georgian ideals of British patriotism.

Maggie Kilgour might agree. Although she does not mention modernizations of Chaucer, she characterizes the eighteenth-century Gothic in terms of the conflict between Anglo-Saxon political independence and classical, “especially Roman and later French neoclassical,” tyranny.<sup>276</sup> What results from this conflict, in her words, is the “myth of a continuous British inheritance of freedom... a recurrent British argument that a better future is to be found by recovering the past.”<sup>277</sup> She adds that the Gothic is “thus haunted by a reading of history as a dialectical process of alienation and restoration, dismembering and remembering.”<sup>278</sup> While many of the modernized tales, as discussed, could mirror this strategy of reading history and rewriting the present, Brooke’s *Man of Law’s Tale* seems the most fitting preamble to the development of Britain’s gothic character. By altering Chaucer’s medieval saint’s life—that is, by transforming the pious figure of Custance into the nationalized hero of CONSTANTIA—Brooke promotes separation from the Continent and empowers Protestantism as the means for unifying the Anglo-Saxons during the time of their greatest religious and political crises. Brooke’s performance of remembering and restoring—of mythologizing the inheritance of liberty to the late-Georgian present—is displayed very much out loud, as prominently as the capitalized letters in his main character’s name.

Some consideration again for Walpole is appropriate for the end of this study, if only to better see how his life and interests seem to mimic the life of the modernization project. Mulvey-Roberts attests to Walpole's own preoccupation with English history, especially those pivotal moments contributing to Britain's strong feelings of justice and liberty at mid-century. Walpole, for example, owned a copy of the execution warrant for Charles I and hung a copy of the Magna Carta next to his bed, both of which stressed his allegiance to individual freedoms in the face of monarchical, particularly Catholic, overreaching.<sup>279</sup> Mulvey-Roberts also cites critical reviews of *Otranto*, whereby usurpations and questions of legitimacy in the story are designed metaphorically to uphold William III's claim to the Stuart throne.<sup>280</sup> As Walpole gazed back with fascination at the events of the Glorious Revolution, so too did Dryden with *Fables*. As Walpole moved from this fascination to a treatment of Gothic texts that stirred uneasy feelings about the medieval past and the Catholic plots to challenge British ideals, so too did Ogle with *Several Hands*. As Walpole inspired a Gothic novel genre that favored rational thinking and naturalism above miraculous displays and oppressive Continental governments, so too did Ogle inspire Lipscomb's *Tales* with similar articulated themes.

Perhaps it is at this point that the eighteenth-century Chaucer should be given his own personal identity. Perhaps he should stand no longer as a project or an edited work, but as a player in the unfolding drama from 1688 to 1795, with influences extending well beyond. Like Walpole and the Gothic novelists, this Chaucer writes back to William's accession and reflects on the changes happening throughout the century that followed. He also witnesses these new events through the lens of medievalism, with an active, observing mind that meditates profoundly on the religious implications of a Hanoverian succession and the politics of a Georgian age. If he is shaped by these events, this Chaucer should be recognized for the way he

also shaped popular literary and cultural movements at the century's end. Especially in the way he looks to his past life in the pre-Reformation period as a means for writing Britain's present and future, and especially in the way he proclaimed a Protestant superiority in the bargain, he participated in no small way to the birth and maturity of the Gothic novel. Given the motivations and literary techniques he bequeathed to Walpole, at the start, and shared with writers at the dawn of the nineteenth century, the modernized Chaucer deserves a better understanding. Ultimately, he should be credited for the way he engendered a cultural fear and fascination of the medieval that continues in earnest today, across many mediums. Even minimally, a more careful study of this Chaucer should cast a brighter light on those unknown translators, scholars, and poets who brought him into existence. This continued study should recognize the collaboration of these artists who were known only briefly, but who nonetheless might have anticipated scholarly approaches and inspired literary genres that have endured to the present day.

## VI. NOTES

1. Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357-1900*, xl.
2. Ibid., xlii.
3. Ritchie and Sabor, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, 3.
4. Ibid., 5.
5. Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, 13.
6. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, 40.
7. Ibid., 42.
8. Bowden, *Chaucer Aloud*, 185.
9. Ibid., 332.
10. Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, 104.
11. Dryden was of course still publishing his modernized poetry in book form, which commanded a higher price than Shakespeare's plays. Dryden, however, provided a cheaper option than the original manuscripts from which he worked. In a letter to Elizabeth Thomas on December 29th, 1699, Dryden mentions that a "specimen" of Homer's *Iliad*, among other poems, "will make a volume in folio, of twelve shillings' price" (*Works of John Dryden* 454). A manuscript of the *Iliad* would have been far more expensive. Watt prices Pope's personal copy of his *Iliad* at "six guineas [for] the set" (41). Given that twelve shillings at the time was approximately half a guinea, this price for Pope's original text was roughly twelve times the amount proposed by Dryden for his modernized version.
12. Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern*, 152.
13. Addison, *The Spectator, Number 419*, 507. He attributes this "horror" more specifically to "the apprehensions of witchcraft, prodigies, charms, and enchantments" (507).
14. Ibid., 507.
15. Addison, *The Spectator, Number 70*, 115.
16. Ibid., 115.
17. Sidney, "Defence of Poesy," *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, 130.
18. Ibid.

19. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, 434.
20. Ibid.
21. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century*, 6.
22. Johnston supports this assertion, but it was opposed by Percy's rivals at the time. Johnston argues that Percy's love of antiquarianism stemmed from this famous discovery of a manuscript "'being used by the Maid to light the Fire' in the house of Humphrey Pitt" (75).
23. Roy Palmer, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. A guinea was roughly equivalent to a pound sterling in the eighteenth century and contained a quarter ounce of gold.
24. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century*, 75.
25. Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, (vi).
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., vii.
28. Ibid., xvi.
29. Ibid., xvi-xvii.
30. Morley, "Introduction," *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 33.
31. Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 44.
32. Ibid., 46.
33. Ibid., 44-45.
34. Ibid., 115.
35. Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, xvii.
36. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, 3-4.
37. See John M. Bowers, *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Alterations*.
38. Ibid., 24.

39. Wawn, "The Genesis of 'The Plowman's Tale,'" 21.
40. Ibid.
41. Bywaters, "The Problem of Dryden's Fables," 37.
42. Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*.
43. Ibid.
44. Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, 150.
45. Ibid., 153.
46. Thomas Speight, ed., *The Works of our Ancient, Learned, and Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer*. For the purposes of comparing Chaucer's versification with Dryden's, quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* used in these comparisons are taken from Speight's 1687 text, an edition of Chaucer's works originally published in 1598. Verification that Dryden used Speight as his source goes at least back to 1897. Frederick Tupper, Jr. referenced in *Modern Language Notes* the "uninspired notes of Speight [*sic*]" and describes the text in this discussion as the one "used by Dryden" (348).
47. Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*. Any reference to Dryden's modernization of the *Knight's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, and the portrait of the Parson in the *General Prologue* is taken from this source.
48. Melville, "Translators Note," *Metamorphosis*, xxx.
49. Dryden, "Dedication," *Aeneid*.
50. McMurrin, *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century*, 4.
51. Venuti, "Translation, Heterogeneity, Linguistics," 93.
52. Ibid.
53. Nelson, "Translating Cultures, Cultures of Translation," 361.
54. Ibid., 362.
55. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, 186.
56. Ibid.

57. Dryden, "Preface By Mr. Dryden," *Ovid's Epistles*.
58. Nokes, "Pope's Chaucer," 180.
59. *Ibid.*, 180-182.
60. *Ibid.*, 182.
61. *Ibid.*
62. H. F. Cary, ed., *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, 37.
63. Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*.
64. Speight, ed., *The Works of our Ancient, Learned, and Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer*. For the purposes of comparing Chaucer's versification with Pope's, quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* used in these comparisons are taken from Speight's 1687 text, an edition apparently owned by Pope. To understand Pope's use of Speight, see Nokes, *Pope's Chaucer*.
65. Pope, "January and May; or the Merchant's Tale: From Chaucer." Any reference to Pope's modernization of the *Merchant's Tale* is taken from this source.
66. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX.
67. Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 110.
68. Jackson Campbell Boswell and Sylvia Wallace Holton, "Index of Chaucer's Work," *Chaucer's Fame in England: 1475-1640*, 381-390.
69. Bowden, *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations*, 3.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Lowe, *Thomas Betterton*, 186.
72. What is now considered the *Prologue of the Man of Law's Tale* was treated by Speight and Brooke as part of the actual tale. The *Introduction* to the tale, as it is now known, was viewed in the eighteenth century and earlier to be the *Prologue*. Despite the differences in organization across editions, line counts always compare Chaucer's sections with the same modernized sections.
73. For this calculation, Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* does not include the dialogue at the end between the Summoner and the Friar, as Pope did not include this part of the narrative in his modernization. William Lipscomb intervenes later with his own treatment of this tiny



section to give some continuity to the original design. Lipscomb's line count for this section is compared with Chaucer's original at the top of Table 4.

74. Ogle wrote prologues for *The Knight's Tale*, *The Miller's Tale*, *The Reeve's Tale*, *The Cook's Tale*, *The Man of Law's Tale*, *The Squire's Tale*, *The Merchant's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Friar's Tale*, and *The Summoner's Tale*.

75. Miskimin, "The Illustrated Eighteenth-Century Chaucer," 31.

76. *Ibid.*, 32.

77. For purposes of this comparison, the number of lines in Chaucer's *Cook's Prologue* is added to the number in his *Cook's Tale*. Ogle put these two works together in his modernization and followed both with Samuel Boyse's reworking of the *Tale of Gamelyn*, which is now considered spurious.

78. As did Speight, Ogle used Chaucer's *Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale* as the basis for his modernized *Prologue to the Man of Law's Tale*.

79. Ogle used Chaucer's *Epilogue of the Man of Law's Tale* for his *Prologue to the Squire's Tale*.

80. Where Chaucer's Franklin interrupts the Squire at the end of the latter's tale, Ogle starts his *Prologue to the Merchant's Tale*. He adds to this section Chaucer's own *Merchant's Prologue*. For the purposes of a true line comparison, these two works are combined together, here.

81. Ogle's *Prologue to the Sumner's Tale* starts with line 1645 of Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*, after the Friar has finished his story and begins to speak with the company again. Ogle then combines this section with the *Summoner's Prologue* from Chaucer to create a unified whole.

82. Lipscomb failed to modernize only the *Parson's Tale* because, according to the postscript of his *Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, he "did not wish to swell the work with what was dry and unentertaining" (xi).

83. See Bowden, *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations*.

84. As noted in Table 3, Lipscomb modernized the final portion of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* to compensate for Pope's omission and to provide a link to the Wife's subsequent tale.

85. In Lipscomb, the first six lines are not counted. Lipscomb was modernizing a section of the *Physician's Prologue* since proved spurious.

86. Lipscomb's *Prologue to the Shipman's Tale* is not counted, here, as he was merely recreating Ogle's efforts when Ogle modernized the same lines for his *Prologue to the Squire's*

*Tale*. In most twentieth-century editions, including the *Riverside*, this section becomes the *Epilogue of the Man of Law's Tale*.

87. Navier, "Extract from the Register of the Deliberations of the Patriotic Society of Dijon," *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 24-25.

88. Stanhope, "Extract from the Society for commemorating the Glorious Revolution of 1668," *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 11-12.

89. Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*, 363-365.

90. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*, 108.

91. *Ibid.*, 109.

92. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 22.

93. "Obituary for Rev. William Lipscomb," *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1842, 100-101.

94. "Lipscomb's Canterbury Tales of Chaucer," *The English Review; or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, Volume XXV*, 459.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, 460; 461.

97. *Ibid.*, 461.

98. William Van Lennep, *The London Stage 1660-1800*.

99. Dryden, "The Preface to 'The Tempest.'"

100. Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, 14.

101. Ritchie and Sabor, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, 8.

102. Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode: The Fables*, 2.

103. *Ibid.*

104. Wood, "Endnotes," *Ivanhoe*, 491.

105. "Lipscomb's Canterbury Tales of Chaucer," *The English Review; or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, Volume XXV*, 461.

106. Ibid., 459.

107. Wright, "Some Sidelights on the Reputation and Influence of Dryden's 'Fables,'" 30.

108. Ibid.

109. Ernest De Selincourt, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years, Vol I*, 458c. Wordsworth prefaces this comment by applauding Dryden's political writings, saying that he is "curious to see your [Scott's] notes on Dryden's political Poems, which are, in my opinion, far the best of his works." (458c).

110. Wordsworth had clearly conducted a thorough study of Dryden's treatment of Chaucer in *Fables*. In an 1805 letter to Scott, he gives a vivid explication:

I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden has neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity: where his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects; such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this, that there is not a single image from Nature in the whole body of his works (*The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* 541).

111. Scott was also a modernizer. During the early part of his career, he published *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a collection of medieval ballads. His work in this field would have provided some insight on the market value of *Fables* at the time, resulting in his conclusion that *Palamon and Arcite* was an indispensable accompaniment to *Ivanhoe*.

112. This theme is a Christian one repeated throughout *Paradise Lost*; however, Satan's attitude regarding his resulting freedom of will is admittedly jubilant, in contrast to Arcite's expression of a woeful exile. Christopher Marlowe's Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus* presents the point a little more explicitly when he states: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it. / Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God / And tasted the eternal joys of heaven, / Am not tormented with ten thousand hells / In being deprived of everlasting bliss?" (4.78-82).

113. Locke, "Of Property," *Two Treatises of Government*, 310.

114. Chaucer may have taken on this idea as an accompaniment to the "pagan" subject matter; at a minimum, the pre-Christianity setting would have protected him. He may also have been styling the scene to echo Virgil's *Aeneid*, as particularly similar imagery can be found in the description of the death of Turnus at Aeneas's hands.

115. Admittedly, this Chaucerian passage is by itself difficult to unravel and has sparked scholarly debates. Dorothy Yamamoto describes the conventional argument by suggesting, at the start, that the incubus had originally done something to the women that the Christian friar does not do—but what this act might be is unclear. Yamamoto continues with the traditional notion

that the friar only brings dishonor, while the incubus impregnates (275). Even in this interpretation, with a rather apologetic nod to the churchman's less destructive tendencies, Chaucer still wants to leave his reader with a negative impression of the "limitour," who is like an incubus in his own way, and who facilitates evil intentions through the tasks of a holy order.

116. See Browne, "Thomas Shadwell," *The Sewanee Review*.

117. *Ibid.*, 260.

118. Shadwell, "Prologue," *The Royal Shepherdess*. Originally from 1669, this text was reprinted in London in 1691.

119. See Mary Hamel, "The Wife of Bath and a Contemporary Murder," *The Chaucer Review*. Hamel discusses the Wife's involvement in the murder of her fourth husband. With this perspective, the *Tale* itself is a piece of evidence, thereby suggesting that this part of the story might act as a mechanism for looking back at the *Prologue* and commenting on her need to confess to the murder. Thus, Chaucer's Wife of Bath could not help herself and felt, like the wife of Midas, an overriding desire to pass along salacious rumors—even potentially at her own expense. Dryden's reluctance to mimic this theme shows off a more pressing political concern.

120. Of course, these methods are recognized more easily today as property tax, income tax, and interest fees placed on loans, but, in the late seventeenth century, they were new and largely unpopular.

121. William and Mary were first cousins, as Mary was the daughter of James II and thus, like William, the grandchild of Charles I.

122. See J. V. Beckett, *The Agricultural Revolution*. See also Beckett, "Land Tax or Excise," *The English Historical Review*, 285-308. A land tax was implemented in the 1690s by William and Mary to account for the expenses of the war with Louis XIV. It was later deemed unfair as it was taxed at a higher-than-normal rate and was meant to be permanent instead of just in times of war. This tax was also levied on cattle and crops, as well as all traded agricultural goods in the cities. This new plan attacked landowners in three ways: tax on the land, interest on loans to purchase or mortgage the land, and a tax on goods produced from the land. This economic policy was abandoned in 1698 and would not return for just over a century; thus, the eighteenth century returned England once again to an agrarian economy.

123. See Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*, 371. Pincus points out that the value of property figured greatly in the debate between the Tories and Whigs at the turn of the eighteenth century. Dryden and the Tories argued for the continuation of imperial trade because they believed land was a finite resource and that the exchange of the products of land was the basis of power and wealth. Whigs believed that, by promoting manufacture, labor could draw on an infinite supply of raw materials through agriculture and thus provide an unending supply of wealth through exportable goods.

124. See Bruce G. Carruthers, *City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution*. Carruthers attests that England's 1690s were characterized by a national budget "at its worst" because of war debts (73). Imported by William from the United Provinces, this new long-term borrowing scheme resulted in a debt that "obliged the nation," in that "Parliament set aside specific revenues to meet the loan payments" (73).

125. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*, 109.

126. See Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: the English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720*.

127. *Ibid.*, 129. Later, Newton accepted wardenship of the Mint and spent the bulk of his energies pursuing counterfeiters as traitors against the public trust—thus deserving execution. Again, according to Wennerlind, "Newton personally traveled to prisons, taverns, and inns—often in disguise—to investigate counterfeiting rings," and, after obtaining convictions for crimes, he "ruthlessly denied pardons or remissions" (149). The image of Newton personally imposing capital punishment against non-violent criminals is not as iconic as his other, more scientific pursuits in modern popular culture, yet it demands awareness today in order to truly understand the seriousness of England's political economy in Dryden's later years.

128. Dryden's preoccupation with William's "recoinage" is not particular to this text. His *Amphitryon's Country Gentleman; or, Sosia's Two Stomachs*, which was also published in the 1690s as a translation of Plautus's original play, demonstrates the doubling of bodies as a cruel trick put on by the Roman gods. When Sosia, one of the victims, attempts to describe this phenomenon, he also turns to monarchs and coins:

SOSIA. Have you not seen a Six-pence split into two halves, by some ingenious School-Boy; which bore on either side the Impression of the Monarchs Face? now as these moieties were two Three-pences, and yet in effect but one Six-pence— (III, i, 96-99)

Sosia alludes to a recognizable trick in late seventeenth-century England, whereby an outline of the king's face, in profile, is traced and cut away, leaving two halves of the coin—each with a jagged edge resembling the monarch's facial silhouette. Comical as it is, Dryden's use of Sosia's rhetoric here is also a serious digression, and the historically factual allusion to clipping and counterfeiting is placed in the minds of the audience members. Sosia brings to their consciousness the image of a mutilated coin that maintains its value—either as a three-pence piece when separated from the whole or as a full six-pence when joined together again with its other half. More significantly, he assigns these concepts to the image of the king, perhaps pointing subtly to the king's two bodies as a phenomenon called into question by the cunning artifice of schoolboys. Ultimately, he points out the potential consequences of such a split in terms of the symbol value and the real economic value—both of which guided his audience toward a condemnation of their present monarch.

129. Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, 41.

130. Ibid., 42.

131. Thompson, *Models of Value: Eighteenth-Century Political Economy and the Novel*, 16-17.

132. Editions of Chaucer's work were rare in the seventeenth century. As mentioned, Dryden was likely working from a 1687 reprinting of Speight's version first published almost a century earlier. Paul Ruggiers also suggests that Speight's later edition was only brought forward for copyright reasons—not for any associated popularity. He says of the 1687 edition: “this publication, it has been suggested, was not so much a response to public demand as an attempt to preserve the title to the work in the hands of a particular group of publisher” (91).

133. Dobbins, “Dryden's ‘Character of a Good Parson’: Background and Interpretation,” 51.

134. Ibid., 55.

135. The nonjurors—or, those members of the clergy who, as the name implies, could not swear an oath—felt at least morally obliged to remain loyal to James II in the wake of William's accession to the throne.

136. Kinsley, “Dryden's ‘Character of a Good Parson’ and Bishop Ken,” 157.

137. Sloman, “An Interpretation of Dryden's Fables,” 205.

138. As noted, Bowden cites many authorities who attribute these modernized tales to Pope. She mentions that, “during the eighteenth century only Pope himself, footnoting a letter for publication, claims that Betterton had anything to do with them” (*Modernizations* 3).

139. Bowden, *Modernizations*, 14.

140. As a testament to the complete lack of respect that even Pope's modernizations have suffered at the hands of contemporary critics, no one has bothered to review Betterton's work on the subject to see if Pope had any involvement. Bowden laments this fact more than once, bluntly calling for a “Pope specialist [to] confront yet another possible addition to [his] canon” (*Modernizations* 3).

141. Colley, *Britons*, 55.

142. Ogle relied on creative interpretation to link the framing narratives to the tales with some coherence. For example, he combined Chaucer's original *Cook's Prologue* and *Tale* to create his version of the *Cook's Prologue*. He also used Chaucer's *Introduction* and *Epilogue* to the *Man of Law's Tale* for the *Man of Law's Prologue* and *Squire's Prologue*, respectively.

143. Ogle, "The Clerk or Scholar of Oxford," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Ogle's portrait of the Clerk in his modernized *General Prologue* is taken from this source.

144. In her short biographical note, Bowden points in particular to the fact that Ogle cared more about "translation theory" than he did for money. Ogle's mother was the "daughter of one nobleman and the widow of another, [and] Ogle himself married an heiress" (80).

145. Speight, ed., *The Works of our Ancient, Learned, and Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer*. Aside from the evidence that Dryden and Pope used Speight as their source, there is little research to suggest the edition of Chaucer's *Tales* used by Ogle's modernizers in his *Several Hands*. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, a separate edition of Chaucer from John Urry was issued in 1721, but most practitioners in the field found it fundamentally flawed. For the purposes of this study, until more definitive research can be completed, when analyzing Chaucer's original tales alongside those of the modernizers in Ogle's *Several Hands*, Speight's edition will continue as the text for comparison.

146. Betterton, "Chaucer's Characters, or the Introduction to the Canterbury Tales," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*.

147. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 198.

148. *Ibid.*, 200. Minnis goes further to say that Chaucer's *Retraction* unravels this tense relationship: "The 'shield and defense' of the compiler has slipped, and for once we see Chaucer as a writer who holds himself morally responsible for his writings" (208).

149. Ogle, "Prologue to the Knight's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to this portion of Ogle's modernized *General Prologue* is taken from this source.

150. Betterton's modernized version of the *General Prologue* is silent on this point. His *Chaucer's Characters* ends with the portrait of the Pardoner and provides no further reference to the framing narrative. In Lintot's *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations*, this abbreviated rendering of the *General Prologue* is immediately followed by the *Reve's Tale from Chaucer*.

151. Finlayson, "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale,'" 257. Finlayson explores this controversy in greater detail and adds evidence that may suggest Chaucer's direct sourcing of the Griselda story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as well. In Finlayson's words, this translation included "innumerable small but significant additions and verbal felicities which make the *Tale* a typical Chaucerian production" (274).

152. See J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerkes Tale*. Severs contends that Chaucer was himself a kind of modernizer.

153. Ogle, "Gualtherus and Griselda: or, the Clerk of Oxford's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century*

*Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Ogle's modernization of the *Clerk's Tale* is taken from this source.

154. Betterton, "The Miller of Trompington, or, the Reve's Tale from Chaucer," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*.

155. Cobb, "The Carpenter of Oxford: or, the Miller's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Cobb's modernization of the *Miller's Tale* is taken from this source.

156. John Smith's modernization of the *Miller's Tale*, from almost exactly the same period as Cobb's, treats the scene in a similar way by exchanging the mystery play account with a more authentic Biblical reference. Chaucer's original *Miller's Tale* also includes a characterization of Absolon, whose ability to perform alludes to his acting role as Herod in the same family of plays: "Somtime to shew his lightnesse and maistrie, / He plaieth Heraudes on a skaffold hie" (196-197). This reference, too, is missing from both Cobb's and Smith's versions.

157. Bowden suggests that Grosvenor is really Eustace Budgell, a cousin to Joseph Addison and a regular contributor to *The Spectator*. Bowden, here, once again calls for follow-up research to verify Grosvenor's identity, stating plainly that "[f]urther investigation into the authorship question would be most welcome" (73).

158. Grosvenor, "The Farmer and the Fryar: or, the Sumner's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Grosvenor's modernization of the *Summoner's Tale* is taken from this source.

159. See Alexander Chalmers, "The Life of Henry Brooke, Esq.," *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper; Volume XVII*, 329-335.

160. *Ibid.*, 334.

161. Delany, "Womanliness in the 'Man of Law's Tale,'" 64.

162. See Brooke, "Constantia; or, the Man of Law's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Brooke's modernization of the *Man of Law's Tale* is taken from this source.

163. When Brooke refers to a negative personification, such as "Ambition" here and "Disappointment," "Enmity," and "Dissentation" in earlier moments, he does so with lower-case letters in the typeface. As with CONSTANTIA, the positive personification of "VIRTUE" is exalted with all capitalized letters, reinforcing both the heroine's own positive quality and her general allegorical purpose.

164. The South Sea bubble was a private business venture based on the sale of stock on the London market in trading companies primarily in the South Pacific but, in actuality, all over



the maritime world. In 1720, the bubble burst. Between September and December, stock prices plummeted, and thousands of investors were almost irrevocably undone. Public indignation led to riots, and scenes of violent unrest filled the same streets that had, only a few months earlier, housed a bevy of almost drunkenly enthusiastic revelers. See Lewis Melville, *The South Sea Bubble*.

165. The imagery that makes up Constantia's rudderless journey across the Mediterranean and into the North Sea is too overwhelming for the scope of this discussion. Yet the theme of divine guidance permeates throughout. Especially here, Brooke also anticipates part of the movement toward Romanticism, with a description of the woman's trials almost indistinguishable from that of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Full many a day, and many a night, forlorn,  
Thro' shelves, and rocks, and eddying tempest born,  
Thro' drizzling sky, and nightly damp severe,  
No fire to warm, no social face to cheer;  
On many a meal of tainted viands fed,  
The chill blast whistling round her beauteous head;  
The pensive innocence attends her fate,  
Amidst surrounding deaths, and storms, sedate. (756-763)

Where Brooke's focus is on the perseverance of goodness, Coleridge explores the guilty mind; for each, a lonely austerity delivers salvation. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* perhaps borrows from this imagery, or arrives at the same place independently, when it mentions "blast" and "chill" in close connection, in the context of the titular hero's misery (I.IV.4).

166. In her *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations*, Bowden generally provides no commentary on the texts, themselves; yet, even her silence is broken in the face of this major change. In Brooke's short biography, she documents his propensity to provide "frequent digressions," saying that he transforms Chaucer's brief mention of a lack of champion into five-hundred lines about a "mysterious black knight [who] appears to slay the false accuser" (119).

167. Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 95.

168. *Ibid.*, 91.

169. *Ibid.*, 96.

170. Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England*, 29.

171. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, 52-53.

172. Leslie Stephen, ed., "Brooke, Henry (1703?-1783)," *Dictionary of National Biography, Bottomley—Browell*, 424-427. See Miss Brooke, ed., *The Poetical Works of Henry Brooke, Esq., Vol. I*, 7-61.

173. The critical investigations of the Wife of Bath as an accused murderer are numerous and sometimes reach the level of forensic analysis. See Beryl Rowland, "On the Timely Death of the Wife of Bath's Fourth Husband" and Dolores Palomo, "The Fate of the Wife of Bath's 'Bad Husbands.'"

174. Pope, "The Wife of Bath from Chaucer," *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*. Any reference to Pope's modernization of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* is taken from this source.

175. See Economou, "Chaucer's Use of the Bird in the Cage Image in the Canterbury Tales." Quotations from Boethius are taken from this article instead of the original medieval source in order to display more effectively Economou's textual analysis and to compare his discoveries directly with Cobb's.

176. Ibid., 682-683.

177. Ibid., 679.

178. Tyrwhitt, ed., *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*.

179. See Nokes, *Pope's Chaucer*. The works of "Boece" can be found in Pope's library, and these, too, contain many of the poet's notes. Nokes points out in particular that "Pope translated one of the more notable passages from *De Consolatione Philosophiae* during his youth" (182).

180. Bowden, *Modernizations*, 177.

181. Ibid.

182. Alderson, "John Urry (1666-1715)," *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, 95-96.

183. Ibid., 95.

184. See Sarah A. Kelen, *Tyrwhitt's Urry's Chaucer's "Works": The Tracks of Editorial History*.

185. Windeatt, "Thomas Tyrwhitt (1730-1786)," *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, 118.

186. Tyrwhitt, "Appendix to the Preface," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, xxiv.

187. Ibid.

188. Tyrwhitt, "Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 123.

189. Tyrwhitt, "Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 61.

190. *Ibid.*, 62.

191. *Ibid.*, 75.

192. *Ibid.*, 82.

193. As noted, Lipscomb overlooked a great many other modernizations of Chaucer's tales published between the time of Ogle's edition and the 1790s. These instances, so meticulously drawn out by Bowden, are numerous enough to arrive at some suspicion that Lipscomb was intentionally privileging his own work above those of his contemporaries.

194. Lipscomb, "Postscript," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*, xi.

195. Tyrwhitt, ed., *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*. As noted, Lipscomb used Tyrwhitt as his source while Dryden pulled from Speight's edition. In terms of this particular passage, the two editions are almost in complete agreement. The most significant differences lie in spelling; for example, "Russell the foxe" with Speight converts to "Russel the fox" with Tyrwhitt. Even these small alterations are infrequent.

196. Lipscomb, "Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* is taken from this source.

197. Lipscomb, "Preface," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*, vi.

198. *Ibid.*, vii.

199. Tyrwhitt, "Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 151.

200. Lipscomb, "Preface," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*, v.

201. Lipscomb, "Monk's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Monk's Tale* is taken from this source.

202. Tyrwhitt, ed., *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*. As discussed, Lipscomb used Tyrwhitt as his source for modernizing the remaining tales in his edition. For the purposes of

comparing Chaucer's versification with Lipscomb's, quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* used in these comparisons are taken from Tyrwhitt's text.

203. Fry, "The Ending of the 'Monk's Tale,'" 358.

204. *Ibid.*, 358. As one of the major objections for putting the Modern Instances at the end, Fry admits that the Host interjects and "echoes the ending of the tale of Croesus." However, Fry quotes from Tyrwhitt here to explain away this bit of textual proof: "Long ago, Thomas Tyrwhitt, who put the Modern Instances in final position in his edition, explained: 'as the Hoste declares himself to have been half asleep, he may very well be supposed to speak from a confused recollection of what had been said 88 verses before'" (358).

205. "Invent, v.," *OED Online*.

206. Dryden, "Dedication," *Aeneid*.

207. Lipscomb, "Preface," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version*, viii.

208. Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*.

209. *Ibid.*

210. *Ibid.*

211. Ogle, "Prologue to the Miller's Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*.

212. Lipscomb, "Pardoner's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Pardoner's Tale* is taken from this source.

213. Bowden, ed., "The Pardoner's Tale," *Modernizations*, 180.

214. Tubach, "Exempla in the Decline," 409.

215. Borman, *Witches: James I and the English Witch-Hunts*, 71. Borman focuses on a specific incident from 1613 involving the Earl of Rutland but also documents the crazed persecution of witches throughout four centuries in Europe.

216. Wordsworth, who himself modernized the poem in the early nineteenth century, provides a note at the beginning of his version that cites the "fierce bigotry" of the Prioress as forming a "fine background for her tender-hearted sympathies with the Mother and Child" (*The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth IV*: 6).

217. Friedman, "The 'Prioress's Tale' and Chaucer's Anti-Semitism," 127.

218. Cannon, "Explanatory Notes," *The Canterbury Tales*, 503.

219. Ibid.

220. Lipscomb, "Prioress's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Prioress's Tale* is taken from this source.

221. Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 155.

222. Grant and Tracy, "The Bible in the Middle Ages," *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 85.

223. Ibid., 86.

224. See Richard M. Edwards, *Scriptural Perspicuity in the Early English Reformation in Historical Theology*. This phrase is attributed to Luther to demonstrate his breaking away from allegorical interpretations. Likewise, William Tyndale asserted in "The Obedience of a Christian Man" that:

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err, or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. (339)

225. Von Rosador, "The Sacralizing Sign: Religion and Magic in Bale, Greene, and the Early Shakespeare," 33.

226. Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer, Third Edition*, 1141.

227. Lionarons, "Magic, Machines, and Deception: Technology in the 'Canterbury Tales,'" 381.

228. Luengo, "Magic and Illusion in 'The Franklin's Tale,'" 1.

229. Ibid., 12.

230. The *OED* first cites the use of "hocus pocus" from the early part of the seventeenth century, referring generally to anyone who attempts to play tricks or deceive through conjuring. The etymology of the term points also to its use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a pejorative refiguring of Catholic ritual. John Tillotson, the Archbishop of Canterbury between 1691 and 1694, asserted "in all probability" that "those common juggling words of *hocus pocus* are nothing else but a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the priests of the Church of Rome in their trick of transubstantiation."

231. Lipscomb, "Franklin's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Franklin's Tale* is taken from this source.

232. Speight, ed., *The Works of our Ancient, Learned, and Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer*.

233. Tyrwhitt, "Notes on the Canterbury Tales," *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 267.

234. *Ibid.*, 268.

235. Von Rosador, "The Sacralizing Sign: Religion and Magic in Bale, Greene, and the Early Shakespeare," 32.

236. Lipscomb, "Second Nun's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Second Nun's Tale* is taken from this source.

237. Hirsh, "Chaucer's Roman Tales," 49.

238. Lipscomb, "Physician's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*.

239. Colley, *Britons*, 29-30.

240. Chaucer seems to be continuing a classical tradition. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* depicts Polyxena's ritual sacrifice similarly to Caesar's assassination:

On the ground,  
Her knees failing, she sank and held her look  
Of fearless resolution to the last;  
And she took trouble, even as she fell,  
To wrap what should be kept in privacy,  
And guard the honour of her chastity. (309)

See E.J. Kenney, "Explanatory Notes," *Metamorphoses*, 450. Kenney suggests that this image was later copied in Suetonius's *Divus Julius*. If we assume Chaucer copied it again for his Monk, it is significant that Lipscomb abandons the conceit.

241. Lipscomb, "Monk's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*.

242. Holland, "The 'Cinna' and 'Cynicke' Episodes in 'Julius Caesar,'" 443.

243. Mildred E. Hartsock, "The Complexity of Julius Caesar," 56.

244. Lipscomb unravels Caesar's legacy a little further by adding to Chaucer's verses in his treatment of the *Second Nun's Tale*. Within Cecilia's climactic dialogue with Almachius, Lipscomb attaches the brutality of Rome's polytheistic governance to "great Caesar's laws" and condemns them for their "Avow'd abhorrence to the Christian name"—something not at all mentioned in Chaucer's version (276-277). Lipscomb follows with Cecilia's bold accusation that predictably attributes the woes of a nation to its political and religious shortsightedness: "Tyrants, I know, to truth's fair dictates blind, / In purest innocence oft guilt will find" (278-279). If these lines mean to reinterpret historical thought, they do so with strict adherence to British and Protestant jingoism.

245. Howard, *Chaucer: His Life, His Works, His World*, 494-495.

246. Patterson, "The 'Parson's Tale' and the Quitting of the 'Canterbury Tales,'" 377-378.

247. Herman, "Treason in the 'Manciple's Tale,'" 318.

248. Grudin, "Chaucer's 'Manciple's Tale' and the Poetics of Guile," 330.

249. Lipscomb, "Manciple's Prologue and Tale," *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*. Any reference to Lipscomb's modernization of the *Manciple's Tale* is taken from this source.

250. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 134-142.

251. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, 21.

252. Ibid.

253. Mulvey-Roberts, "Catholicism, the Gothic and the Bleeding Body," 16.

254. Smollett, "Preface," *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, xiv.

255. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, 26.

256. Ibid.

257. Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition," *Castle of Otranto*, i.

258. Ibid, ii.

259. Ibid.

260. The BBC continued this tradition well into the twentieth century, offering its *Ghost Story for Christmas* as a continuous holiday broadcast throughout the 1970s and reviving it often, if sporadically, in the 2000s and 2010s.

261. Miskimin, "The Illustrated Eighteenth-Century Chaucer," 32.

262. Peter Cunningham, ed., "Letter to the Rev. William Mason, Strawberry Hill, Nov. 13, 1781," *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, 108.

263. Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," *Castle of Otranto*, vi.

264. O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, 32.

265. Irene Bostrom, "The Novel and Catholic Emancipation," *Studies in Romanticism*, 159.

266. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 85.

267. O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, 33.

268. Talfourd, T. N., "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe," 66.

269. See Mayhew, "Latitudinarianism and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe."

270. *Ibid.*, 276.

271. *Ibid.*

272. Tillotson's "Sermon CLXXVII" delivers particularly strong language against the perceived evils of miraculous intervention:

The Miracles of the Church of Rome, supporting several of them to be true, have such Marks and Characters upon them, as render it very suspicious that they are not Operations of God, or good Spirits; but the Working of Satan. If any Man have but the Patience to rake into these Dunghills, and to read over these Legends, even as they have by the later Collectors and Compilers been purged and reformed, he shall find the Miracles recited in them, to be generally of one Stamp, very foolish and absurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any necessity, upon no good Occasion, to no wise End and Purpose; so that one may know them by their very countenances, to be the tricks and pranks of the Devil; and not the great and glorious works of God, such as are the Miracles recorded in the Holy Scriptures. (511-512.)

273. Purves, *The Gothic and Catholicism*, 13. See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke conflates religion and politics when he argues that "religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort. In England we are so



convinced of this, that there is no rust of superstition... We are protestants, not from indifference but from zeal" (90).

274. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832*, 49.

275. *Ibid.*, 50.

276. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, 14.

277. *Ibid.*, 14-15.

278. *Ibid.*, 15.

279. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "Catholicism, the Gothic and the Bleeding Body," 18-19.

280. *Ibid.*, 18.

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