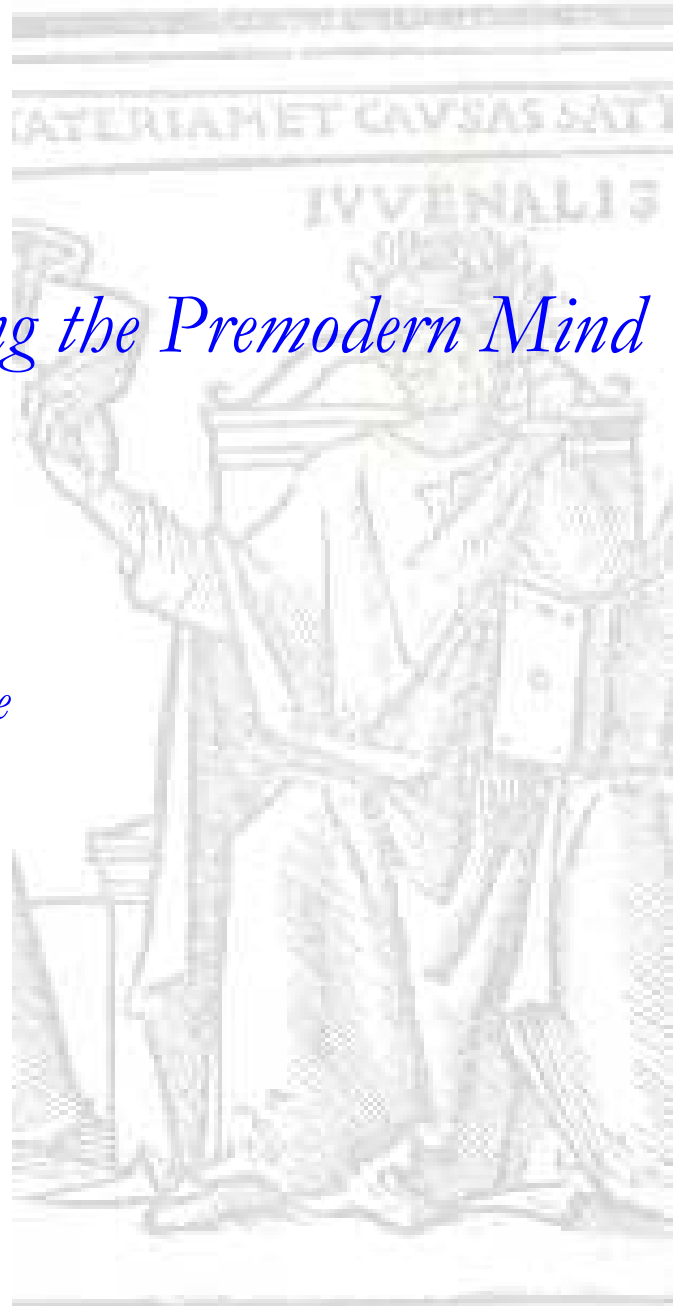


*Education:  
Forming and Deforming the Premodern Mind*

*Selected Proceedings  
Of the Newberry Library  
Center for Renaissance Studies  
27<sup>th</sup> Graduate Student Conference*

Chicago, Illinois  
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*Education: Forming and  
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Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies  
27<sup>th</sup> Graduate Student Conference*

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## *Preface*

*by* Megan Moore

As a public research institution the Newberry Library serves a diverse and ever-expanding community of scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds, with an ever-increasing variety of interests. Recently, the Newberry's online cataloging project has been completed, giving users expanded access to our collections and making it possible to peruse our holdings from afar. This means that graduate students, too, who may be unfamiliar with our collections and have limited resources to come to Chicago, are able to browse a Midwestern treasure trove of primary source medieval, Renaissance, and early modern materials from their own computers. This enables them to access our collections and use our primary source materials in their work as never before. The Center for Renaissance Studies, which will soon celebrate its thirty-year anniversary as one of the leading centers for the study of early European and American literature, history, and culture, is also home to one of the few annual venues for discussion of graduate student work in premodern studies. This conference has undergone considerable change as more graduate students have become aware of the richness of our collections. The Center operates as a consortium of forty-nine universities and offers specialized programming, including lectures, seminars, symposia, graduate student seminars, and workshops, to a broad audience of scholars interested in Renaissance studies. It serves as one of the most important meeting grounds for scholars from across the country and the world to gather and discuss highly specialized topics in premodern studies.

The graduate student conference, now in its twenty-seventh year, has traditionally offered a place for students interested in premodern studies to meet graduate student colleagues and obtain feedback on often preliminary findings of work contributing to later dissertations. The proceedings here showcase some of the best work from graduate students working broadly on the topic of premodern education. We are committed to sponsoring new and emergent means of dispersing our knowledge of the period, and digital publication allows us the best means of doing so. By going digital but working within a (non-blind) peer-review system, our proceedings allow graduate students to present their work within a larger environment of readers on the Internet soon after its appearance at the conference, while ensuring that students retain the rights to further use their work in other media, scholarly work, and possible later publications. This is crucial for graduate students who seek to create a dialogue about educational theory and praxis in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, but who ultimately hope to incorporate early stages of thinking showcased at conferences into their dissertations.

## Preface

At the Newberry we support the emergence of alternative forms of scholarly publication that can pave the way for the creative and multidisciplinary thinking vital to the health and liveliness of teaching, research, public outreach, and publication in the humanities. Because of its situation as an academic meeting place centered in academic thought but distinctively outside the purview of any one institution the Newberry remains uniquely poised to support interdisciplinary and interinstitutional publication and collaboration possibilities. We are grateful for the creativity and insight of each of the papers in this volume and also for the creative work of the graduate student planning committee members, session chairs, and editors, representing different institutions and departments:

Andrew Donnelly	History, <i>Loyola University Chicago</i>
Kathleen Smith	German, <i>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</i>
Lee Spitzer	English, <i>Washington University</i>
Sarah Waurechen	History, <i>University of Alberta</i>

*Megan Moore, Ph.D., was assistant director of the Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies at the time of the 2009 Graduate Student Conference.*

# *Education: Forming and Deforming the Premodern Mind*

## *Introduction*

by Karen Christianson

From September 2008 to January 2009 the Newberry Library mounted a major exhibition, “Artifacts of Childhood: Seven Hundred Years of Children’s Books at the Newberry.” The displays, incorporating works written for, about, and by children from the Middle Ages to the present, illustrated a breathtaking variety of “educational” books, from an exquisite manuscript alphabet and calligraphy book made for Princess Elizabeth of Scotland, daughter of James I, to a toy theater from the early twentieth century complete with cutout scenery, a script, and cardboard tickets. The earliest works on view, such as medieval psalters and early editions of Aesop’s *Fables* and Cato’s *Distichs*, demonstrated two key elements. First, medieval and early modern teachers made little distinction between children’s and adult’s books. Those few fortunate enough to learn to read were as likely to begin in adulthood as in childhood. Second, education never aimed only at transmitting information or skills. Instead it focused on forging learners’ ideas, morals, and character.

This exhibit inspired the theme for the Center for Renaissance Studies’ twenty-seventh graduate student conference, held January 23, 2009. We extended the idea of education from applying only to children to include all forms of disseminating information and molding people’s behavior and beliefs. The conference’s subtitle, “Forming and Deforming the Premodern Mind,” selected by the student organizers of our 2008 conference, raises the question of how “educators” in the most universal sense attempted to control thoughts, ideas, and behaviors. The conference’s call for papers invited prospective participants from multiple disciplines to expand how we think about learning and teaching in a wide variety of medieval and early modern contexts. Suggested possible topics included gender and education, cloistered learning, the master/disciple relationship, missionary work and colonial learning, confessionalization, the effects of the printing press, propaganda, literacy, the education of the prince, and illustrated treatises and educational primers. The number and quality of the thirty-plus abstracts submitted demonstrated tremendous interest in education broadly defined: we received proposals exploring a wide range of literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, political, and historical materials from the perspective of how and what they were used to teach.

The Center’s annual conference remains entirely organized and run by graduate students. Thus in

## *Introduction*

addition to furnishing a venue for budding scholars at all levels of their graduate education to present papers, participate in discussions, and develop collaborations with others across disciplines in medieval, Renaissance, and early modern studies, the conference also provides its organizers with valuable experience. Advanced graduate students nearing completion of their doctoral degrees are selected from member institutions of the Center for Renaissance Studies consortium. For the twenty-seventh conference the student organizers met at the Newberry in November 2009 for the formidable task of accepting just sixteen of the abstracts submitted and organizing the chosen papers into conference sessions. Organizers then took responsibility for all aspects of the conference: contacting presenters, keeping them informed of schedules and time limits, and chairing their sessions. But at the close of the conference the organizers' work was not complete; they met the following day to decide which papers presented should appear in our conference proceedings publication. They then took on the demanding role of editors, working closely with student authors to expand and revise their conference papers into publishable form. This publication comprises the culmination of their efforts.

Thus the meta-story of the Center for Renaissance Studies Graduate Student Conference itself embodies education as construed by the conference's topic, providing guidance and experience in a collegial forum to help mold graduate student organizers and presenters into scholars and future colleagues. In turn the scholarship contained in this volume now enters into larger conversation with the academic community, hoping to educate—in the broadest sense—its readers.

*Karen Christianson, Ph.D., is assistant director of the Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies.*



## *Spectacle: Visions of Education*

### Introduction

by Lee Spitzer

As the title of our panel suggests, each of our four contributors engaged with a curious admixture of visual and pedagogical practice. I say curious because the panel testified to sensorial pedagogies from the early modern and medieval periods that were very different from those of the present. Spectacle was an ocular transaction, a potent scene in which one's body/one's passions/one's self could be literally moved, exchanged, and transformed for the better. Laura Kolb refers to a line from Sir Philip Sidney's canonical work on pedagogy, *Defense of Poesy*, in which he asks "who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught?" It is not at all clear that he is speaking metaphorically. In fact, as recent work on the history of emotions teaches us, he is likely speaking literally: teaching was a matter of molding the desiring body/mind. Each of our panelists joined the ongoing interrogation of somatic understandings and pedagogical practices that informed early modern and medieval culture. Their essays invite us to reappraise many familiar pedagogical scenes with the knowledge that the bodily movements and displays that instructors, playwrights, architects, and illuminators choreographed were integral rather than incidental to the morality and knowledge they wished to inculcate.

Our first panelist of the day, Laura Kolb, is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago working on English drama in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Her contribution to the panel, which has been expanded for inclusion here, aims to recover Sir Ralph Freeman's largely unknown revenge tragedy *Imperiale* as a work of literary significance. She situates this work and other revenge tragedies between humanist defenses of drama and anti-theatrical tracts. By her measure *Imperiale* challenges the humanist model of affective education through tragedy, as established by Sidney, Heywood, and others after the model of Aristotle, by performing brutal scenes in which an onstage audience of noblemen responds only to the sufferings of other noblemen. They seem to care little for their wives who have been raped or their slaves who have murdered each other. The play "associates tragic action and tragic affect with 'noble' characters and rampant duplicitous theatricality with people on the margins." In so doing *Imperiale* uses the failures and successes of dramatic education of affect to "demonstrate the inadequacy of traditional legal, social, and governmental systems to deal with an increasingly polyglot society."

Kerry Paul Boeye, our second panelist, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago,

specializes in French medieval art, specifically illuminated manuscripts. His paper analyzed the depiction of Solomon in the ornamental letters appearing in manuscript copies of the Book of Proverbs from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He has located a shift in the traditional attribute of the Old Testament king from scepter to switch at the same time that pedagogue arose as a distinct profession in medieval French society. Yet in depicting Solomon with the traditional bundle of reeds used to whip students, the illuminators are not, according to Boeye, simply producing vignettes of typical classroom behavior of the period. Rather in these scenes “the student disciplined by the royal *magister* would have presented a subject position to readers that invited them to apply the lessons of Proverbs to their own self-discipline.”

Our third panelist, Julia Finch, is working on her Ph.D. in medieval art history at the University of Pittsburgh. Her work focuses on what she terms the “hybrid literacies” of the medieval cathedral. She uses this term to describe “combinations of texts, orality, and other sensory experiences, supported by the constructs of memory and narrative.” She argued that hybrid literacies served as a support and a reward for children as they saw their domestic moral education represented before them in the windows of Chartres cathedral. These windows not only confirmed a child’s home education, they also in many instances depicted children in morally laudable narratives. The windows then would have served to delight not only children but also their parents, who would have found the crucial task of training their sons and daughters to be good Christians that much easier.

Our final panelist was Jennifer Haraguchi, who is working on a Ph.D. in Italian at the University of Chicago. Her essay, which also appears in expanded form in this collection, examines the pedagogical practices of two Florentine lay conservatories that operated in the seventeenth century, Il Conventino and La Quiete. At these conservatories girls received their moral education by performing dramatic monologues written in the voice and about the life of a female saint. These autohagiographic monologues were written by Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo, who also devised accompanying performances that involved dressing like and carrying attributes associated with the saint, so that the girls might more fully embody their sacred character. In becoming St. Ursula, for example, a performance would begin with the declaration *Ursula son*, “I am Ursula.” The student then recounted the saint’s life in great detail. In these performances girls not only found themselves practicing the sort of religious meditation advocated by Saint Ignatius of Loyola but also, Montalvo hoped, becoming more moral creatures who drew closer to Christ.

*Lee Spitzer is a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at Washington University.*

“Fury into Compassion”:  
The Lessons of Spectacle  
in Sir Ralph Freeman’s *Imperiale*

by Laura Kolb

Sir Ralph Freeman’s revenge tragedy *Imperiale* is an all-but-forgotten play. First published in 1639, three years prior to the closing of the theaters and the outbreak of the English Civil War, it was reprinted in 1640 and again in 1655; it was probably never performed.<sup>1</sup> It did not leave many traces of an early modern afterlife beyond its third printing in 1655, though in 1691 the cataloger Gerard Langbaine included it in his *Account of the English Dramatic Poets* with the judgment that this “excellent play . . . far better deserv’d to have appear’d on the Theatre than many of our modern Farces that have usurp’d the stage, and depos’d its lawful Monarch, Tragedy.”<sup>2</sup> Despite Langbaine’s interest, the play—Freeman’s only dramatic work—languished in obscurity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the past hundred years two full-length scholarly articles have been devoted to *Imperiale*; both focus on the play’s sources, and both assume it was intended for either a limited audience or no audience at all.<sup>3</sup> In a brief negative assessment of Freeman’s play in his compendious *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, G.E. Bentley dismisses it as an essentially private literary “exercise.”<sup>4</sup>

The assumption that *Imperiale* was meant to have little or no impact on the wider world rests primarily on a misunderstanding of the pedagogical value and potential political impact assigned to closet drama and later to print drama. Recent work on Civil War era print drama has demonstrated that playwriting, far from remaining an outlet for private literary interests, provided many writers the

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<sup>1</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider whether Freeman intended the play for performance, it seems highly probable to me that he intended it for print publication. However, Bentley is quite right to point out that the playwright’s name does not appear on the 1639 or the 1640 editions, indicating that he may only have authorized the 1655 edition, to which he attached a prefatory letter. See G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Volume III (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 469.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An account of the English dramattick poets, or, Some observations and remarks on the lives and writings of all those that have publish’d either comedies, tragedies, tragi-comedies, pastorals, masques, interludes, farces or opera’s in the English tongue* (Oxford, 1691), 226-27.

<sup>3</sup> These are a 1917 critical introduction by Charles Clayton Gumm, which appeared independently of the still-unpublished edition for which it was prepared, and a 1968 article by Kenneth Richards. Both pieces focus on the play’s sources. Gumm describes Freeman’s considerable debt to Senecan tragedy for a number of speeches and for the choice between Stoic acceptance and violent revenge that preoccupies the main characters. Richards emphasizes the influence of Italian *novelle* and Cavalier romance, suggesting a wider set of literary influences and hinting at a broader range of contemporary political interests. Charles Clayton Gumm, “Sir Ralph Freeman’s *Imperiale*,” *Studies in English Drama*, first series, ed. Alison Gaw (1917): 105-29 and Kenneth Richards, “The Sources of Sir Ralph Freeman’s *Imperiale*,” *Studia Neophilologica: A Journal of Germanic and Romance Philology*, Vol XL, no. 1 (1968): 185-96.

<sup>4</sup> Bentley, 469.

means for addressing controversial issues veiled—thinly or not—in fictional situations.<sup>5</sup> With this in mind, *Imperiale* deserves a critical reappraisal, first as part of the general, slowly emerging project of re-evaluating forgotten works of literary merit from the 1630s, and second as an investigation of its unique application of classical theories of aesthetic effects as a way of discussing the emerging political, social, economic, and moral issues of slavery. In the copious front matter, in the dramatic action, and at the level of language, *Imperiale* engages classical and English theories of the affective, pedagogical, and political value of drama; it also participates in certain traditions associated with stage performances, particularly performances of revenge plays.

Far from practicing inert imitation, however, the play reanimates classical ideas and dramatic tropes by deploying them as part of an intervention into contemporary English life. Following what I see as the major formal and thematic preoccupations of *Imperiale*, this paper will first look broadly at theories of pedagogy and tragedy that form the background to Freeman's work, then touch on how revenge tragedy as a genre troubles these theories. It will end with an examination of the specific language of the final scene, which is at once typical of revenge tragedy and highly innovative. It is my argument that *Imperiale* re-energizes classical and early modern models of theatrical pedagogy, using them to think through the practices and political consequences of the emerging institution of New World slavery.

### The classical model

Helpfully, Freeman begins the play with a brief summary of the plot. Two noblemen of Genoa, *Imperiale* and *Spinola*, have vowed revenge on one another for slights real and imagined after years of seething but generally quiet enmity. Each noble owns an African slave; each slave longs for revenge on his master. Ingeniously pitting the nobles against one another while gaining their masters' trust, the slaves set the stage for brutally spectacular revenge: in the final scene, they rape two noblewomen, kill them in public view, declare their natural equality to their masters, and shoot each other.<sup>6</sup> At the end of his plot summary, which he titles "The Argument," Freeman describes

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<sup>5</sup> For the politics of playwriting in the decade prior to the Civil War, when Freeman first published *Imperiale*, see Martin Butler, *Theater and Crisis 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For playwriting and publishing during the Civil War, while the theaters were closed and when Freeman republished *Imperiale* with expanded front matter, see Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Marta Straznicky's argument that closet drama and print-only drama were conceived of as pedagogically useful for the upper classes in particular seems relevant to *Imperiale*, modeled on classical sources and brimful of learned allusions as it is. See "Closet Drama" in *A companion to Renaissance drama*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell 2002), 416-30.

<sup>6</sup> Freeman's "Argument" constitutes a useful summary of the play's action, though it omits the grisly details of the final scene. It runs as follows: "Imperiale and Spinola, Noblemen of Genoa having bin ancient enemies, and lately reconciled by the mediation of Justiniano, a friend to both; Spinola endeavored to marry his Son Francisco to Angelica, daughter of Imperiale; but finding his Son rejected, and Doria entertained, by that conceived affront, accompanied with other jealousies, suspects the old enmity not fully eradicated from the breast of Imperiale, and moved with indignation, hireth a Brave to kill him in a crowd at a Festival: this being accidentally discovered by Sango the slave of Spinola, he reveals it to Molosso the slave of Imperiale, as acceptable news to him, who had waited an opportunity to be revenged on his Patron for severe and unusual punishment, inflicted upon him. Molosso to ingratiate himself with his Lord, thereby to work a greater mischief, not only reveals the plot to him, but diverts the same upon Spinola's own Son, at which unexpected encounter Spinola through rage fall's into a strange kind of Phrensy, but at length being an eye-witness of the misery which through the cruelty of the slaves befell Imperiale, his wife Honoria, Angelica, and Doria, he recovers his senses and turns his fury into compassion."

the result of this spectacular scene: Spinola—the more wickedly bloodthirsty and tyrannical of the two nobles—sees the error of his ways. Freeman writes:

Spinola through rage fall's into a strange kind of Phrensy, but at length being an eye-witness of the misery which through the cruelty of the slaves befell Imperiale, his wife Honoria, [his daughter] Angelica, and [her betrothed] Doria, he recovers his senses and turns his fury into compassion.<sup>7</sup>

The moral to the tale—that the sight of suffering inspires compassion—would of course have been familiar from classical and Renaissance literary criticism and from a number of near-contemporary stage plays. In case his readers miss the point, however, Freeman surrounds the “Argument” with a number of epigrams. The gist of these quotations from Ovid, Seneca, and Aristotle is that tragedy, as the noblest form of poetry, instructs the individual spectator in proper feeling, renews social bonds, and forms a necessary component of the well-run state.<sup>8</sup> With the vivid particularity of a well-wrought *exemplum*, the play’s final scene brings these precepts to life.

Despite Freeman’s obvious interest in controlling the reader’s approach to the text, the interpretive strategies suggested by the front matter prove incommensurate with the grisly spectacle on display in the final scene. Taken together, the “Argument” and the epigrams articulate a classical view of plays as instruments of learning. The final scene—slaves and women on the balcony, noblemen watching below—echoes the common masque- or play-within-a-play trope, and suggests that *this* spectacle, too, may bear pedagogical value. And it does, to an extent. As the “Argument” promises, Spinola and Imperiale learn compassion and reconcile with one another. But their education through spectatorship includes lessons only about each other and their proper relationship as two bereaved nobleman. Neither seems to remember the slaughtered, defiled women, let alone the slaves whose murderous impulses—and the play is quite clear on this point—result from their

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<sup>7</sup> Except where otherwise noted, all quotations from *Imperiale* are from the 1639 edition, printed in London by Thomas Harper. I have modernized some spelling and punctuation.

<sup>8</sup> Slight changes to the front matter over the three printings indicate increasing interest on the part of the author or printer in casting the play as a moving, instructive tragedy. The most prominent quotations in the 1639 edition are from Plutarch; these deal with the central role of the drama in a well-run state. For example, from the *Lives of the Ten Emperors* (now attributed to pseudo-Plutarch): “Licurgus ordained that statues of brasse should be erected to the memory of the Poets, Æsculus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and that their Tragedies should be carefully preserved, and often publicly read by the Notary of the City, when Stage-players were not admitted to act them.” Here, drama is a civic necessity even when it cannot (should not?) be performed—a sentiment that suggests Freeman was aware of the conditions under which his play would be consumed, with print circulation substituting for a public reading. The 1640 edition witnesses the prominent introduction of a quotation from Aristotle’s *Poetics*: “History and Poesie (*wherein he prefers Tragedie*) differ not, in that one is written in prose, the other in verse, but in this: that the one represents things as they be, the other, as they may be or ought to be. And therefore Poesie is a thing more Philosophicall and grave, than history.” The 1655 edition adds, to the epigraphs, a dedicatory letter addressed to the book collector John Morris, which inscribes the classical front matter into the immediate present: “I have prefixed some testimonies [ . . . ] that the rigid men of our age may see what use the Grecians and Romans made of Tragedy to prevail upon the affections of the people.” To the play’s reflections on slavery and familial tyranny we may add another political dimension: the play is in part about the role of the theater in English society in the 1630s, ’40s and ’50s.

exclusion from the economies of reward and retribution that structure Genoese society. The lesson in *Imperiale*, then, cannot be the lesson of *Imperiale*.

Almost universally, Renaissance defenders of theatrical practice claim drama's primary virtue to be a pedagogical one. One very common argument holds that theater teaches by example. Onstage, the good end happily and the bad unhappily; afterwards, offstage, the audience emulates the good and avoids behaving like the bad. The English poet and playwright Thomas Heywood takes this view in the *Apologie for Actors* of 1612. His discussion of the uses of tragedy makes theater sound like an impressive self-help regime:

Art thou addicted to prodigality? enuy? cruelty? periury? flattery? or rage? our Scenes afford thee store of men to shape your liues by, who be frugall, louing, gentle, trusty. . . . Wouldst thou be honourable? iust, friendly, moderate, deuout, mercifull, and louing concord? thou mayest see many of their fates and ruines, who haue beene dishonourable, iniust, false, gluttonous, sacrilegious, bloudy-minded, and brochers of dissention.<sup>9</sup>

Also prominent is the more theoretically complex argument that theatrical instruction arises not from self-interest, as above, but from a *loss* of self that occurs when the spectator is moved by dramatic spectacle, very often a spectacle of suffering. Heywood avoids this argument, but it forms the backbone of Sir Philip Sidney's discussion of instructive poetry in the *Defense of Poesy*. Sidney argues that poetry teaches because it moves. Typically, Sidney's illustrative examples show readers and listeners moved to wonder or to compassion: Orpheus and Amphion move beasts and stones with their songs; the bloody tyrant Alexander Pharaeus is moved to pity by onstage suffering.<sup>10</sup> But Sidney consistently links the affective dimension of poesy with the instructive:

And that moving [i.e. of poesy] is of a higher degree than teaching [i.e. of philosophy], it may by this appear: that it is well nigh both the cause and effect of teaching. For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught?<sup>11</sup>

Sidney and other Renaissance defenders of the stage, in Stephen Orgel's phrase, "read Aristotle through Horatian glasses"<sup>12</sup>; that is, they combine Aristotle's account of the tragic purgation of the emotions through catharsis with Horace's well-known claim that the aim of poetry is to delight and to instruct. English Renaissance protheatrical writers tend not to focus on the Horatian category of

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Heywood, *An apology for actors Containing three briefe treatises. 1 Their antiquity. 2 Their ancient dignity. 3 The true use of their quality* (London, 1612).

<sup>10</sup> Sidney offers the tyrant Pharaeus as an example of a tyrant "mollified" by the sight of onstage suffering in the *Defense of Poesie* (London, c. 1595). Heywood, too, takes up the trope of tragedy acting as a kind of mirror for tyrants. Unlike Sidney, he is interested in the reactions of ordinary audience members as well, giving several accounts of the involuntary responses of "guilty creatures sitting at a play."

<sup>11</sup> All quotations from the *Defense* are from the Renaissance Editions texts, ed. R.S. Bear (1995).

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/816/defence.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed December 16, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Orgel, "The Play of the Conscience," *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 133-51, 134.

“delight,” though their opponents in the antitheatrical camp were fond of discussing the dangers of theatrical pleasure. Rather, they replace pleasure with affect, rewriting the Horatian formulation with an Aristotelian twist: tragedy’s prime virtue is *to move and to instruct*.

Ironically, in England some of the strongest claims regarding theater’s power to move appear in antitheatrical writings, which were in fact far more common than defenses of the theater. English antitheatrical writings serve wider religious and political agendas; for our purposes it is useful to note a broadly Platonic strain running throughout antitheatrical discourse that remains central to understanding early modern English notions of theatrical instruction. Plato’s Socrates exiles poets from the ideal Republic because of the irresistible power of their works. Mimetic art, his argument runs, causes a kind of mimesis in its audience; spectators imitate what they see and this imitation spills out into life beyond the theater. Show Achilles grieving Patroclus and pretty soon upright men will weep freely (and ignobly) both at the theater and at real-life losses.<sup>13</sup> This is dangerous for a number of reasons, partly because it causes men to deviate from their true single nature, but especially because rampant mimesis obscures the proper relationship of inner nature and outward appearance. So too is the case in the much-discussed antitheatrical tracts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Moved psychologically, morally, even physically, the theatrical spectator deviates from his “true” self and is therefore degraded, unstable, and threatening. Once identity is recognized as a fiction, *a thing that is made*, then behavior ceases to signify inward nature and social rank. In a way antitheatrical writers simply take their opponents’ pedagogical argument a step further: if you look to the theater for “men to shape your lives by,” you become, well, *actors*.<sup>15</sup>

If both defenders and detractors of the theater saw its primary virtue or vice in its capacity to move, instruct, and transform its viewers, it is striking that so many plays seem to reject this view. The ingenious layering of life and play in *The Tempest* teaches its villains precisely nothing; *Hamlet*’s play-within-a-play, the *Mousetrap*, causes Claudius and Gertrude some discomfort, but it certainly does not elicit the reaction that Hamlet, or Heywood, might wish. Viewed in light of the antitheatrical debate, the equation of plays with dreams familiar from Shakespearean comedy seems to assert that theater is harmless and that it is contained. Once the play ends and the audience claps actors and spectators alike are released from their shared “dream” and everyone can become his or her own true self once more. Revenge tragedies, equally if not more intensely metatheatrical, allow no such clearly drawn or redrawn border between life and stage. The theatrical-pedagogical moment is never figured so often or with such complexity as in these plays. The originator of the genre in England, Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*, features one of the earliest plays-within-a-play, and subsequent revenge plays like *Hamlet*, *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, *The Roman Actor*, and *Women Beware Women*, to name just a few, feature some variation of this scene: A revenger who has suffered a personal wrong and who has generally also lost his previously secure place in the social order stages a play or a masque

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<sup>13</sup> This episode from Homer’s *Iliad* is discussed along with other “dangerous stories” in Books II and III of Plato’s *Republic*; see especially III.391.

<sup>14</sup> See in particular Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> Barish offers well-informed treatment of the discourse surrounding the dreaded spillover of acting into life in early modern England (66-189).

for an audience consisting of one or more people who have done him wrong. He casts other wrongdoers or people dear to the wrongdoers in the play, and then kills them as part of the performance.

Astonishingly, this version of the play-within-a-play is usually figured by the stage manager/revenger as a pedagogical opportunity. The audience, witnessing a play that is also a murder, should learn a whole host of feelings: conscience, compassion, guilt, similarity to the originally wronged and now wronging revenger. This usually fails. After murdering his fellow actors and patiently explaining his reasons for doing so *The Spanish Tragedy*’s Hieronimo is baffled that his horrified audience continues to ask him, “Why?”<sup>16</sup> After re-presenting Claudius’ and Gertrude’s guilt in his altered *Mousetrap* Hamlet is still left without a clear confession of guilt.<sup>17</sup>

If the onstage audience fails to be moved and taught, however, theatricality seems to infect the figure of the revenger himself. Revengers like Hieronimo and Hamlet are very much aware of their own status as actors, and they say so over and over. Forced to hide their sense of injury as well as their plots, revengers become what Thomas Hobbes later called “feigned persons”—not just duplicitous but *multiplicitous*, able to display an antic disposition or a show of melancholy on cue. For revengers acting and action become the same thing, especially in the metatheatrical final or penultimate scenes. In *The Spanish Tragedy* the act of revenge takes place during the performance of a play, as it does in *The Roman Actor*; in *Hamlet* multiple acts of revenge occur during a highly theatrical fencing match; in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* the last of a string of very spectacular murders involving disguises and concealed identities is executed during a masque. In these climactic scenes the *acting* that conceals vengeful intent converges with the *act* of revenge. With brutal literalness, the Renaissance notion of man as actor—both “agent” and “player”—comes to life in the figure of the revenger. If we look for a political message in this trope it would run something like this: a man robbed of justice or of social and political agency becomes an actor in order to reclaim these things.

Revenge tragedy often figures the paradigmatic scene of “good” theater—a moving spectacle educating a moved spectator—as a failure. And it seems to draw a connection between feigning and killing, acting and murderous action. At once undermining the dominant defense of theater and apparently staging the dominant critique, this genre accepts, even revels in, theater being neither harmless nor contained. The question then arises: if the “lessons” attributed to drama in humanist and neoclassical accounts of its pedagogical virtues do not function *in* revenge tragedy—what is the lesson *of* revenge tragedy?

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<sup>16</sup> Hieronimo’s audience reacts:

KING: Why hast thou done this undeserving deed?

VICEROY: Why hast thou murdered my Balthazar?

CASTILE: Why hast thou butchered both my children thus? (IV.iv. 165-67).

<sup>17</sup> For the plays within *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* as examples of failed theatrical pedagogy, see Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995), 70, and Orgel 146-47, respectively.



I have raised a larger question than I can answer here, but I think Freeman's late, strange revenge tragedy *Imperiale* is at least a good place to start, for two reasons. First, as we have seen, Freeman situates his play in the tradition of pedagogical tragedy, both in the interpretive frames suggested by the front matter and formally through his reworking of the play-within-a-play trope in the final scene. Second, Freeman's use of slaves as revenger-actors sharply illuminates a fact that humanist theorists like Sidney largely ignored: the interest of plays in contemporary political issues.

Like Hieronimo, the *metteur-en-scène* of *Imperiale's* final spectacle includes instructional as well as vengeful aims. Molosso and Sango stand on a balcony along with Imperiale's wife and daughter. The balcony functions as a kind of stage, and everyone is aware of it. A noble friend to Imperiale and Spinola standing with them on the street below admonishes his fellow spectators: "Stand . . . and be silent." Acutely aware of his spectacular status, Molosso declares, "I lament to finde so narrow a Stage / To act my vengeance on, as but two women." Molosso in particular tries to educate his audience. His final speech reminds the spectators that he and Sango once belonged to a proud nation of free men:

Though fortune made us wretched slaves to you,  
We both retain some sparks of th'active fire,  
Which the traditions of our country tell us  
Did sometimes flame in our Numidian breasts.

Revealing the pistols with which he and Sango are to execute one another, he continues:

Behold our liberty: these shall restore us now  
To that equality that nature gave,  
In which blind chance hath put a difference:  
One blow from these deliverers can make  
An abject beggar equal to a king.  
Sango, keep time.

The speech ends with a command: "Sango, keep time," and the accompanying stage direction reads: "They pistol each other." In his words and his actions Molosso locates "equality" first in "nature," second in the frailty of flesh, its susceptibility to sensation and its eventual demise. All men are equal in birth and death.

Given the horrors they have witnessed the spectators may be forgiven for ignoring Molosso's lesson on equality and natural rights. But none offers the obvious retort that the inhuman acts of rape and murder severely undermine the slaves' claim to equality with the (relatively) innocent nobles gathered below. No one even responds to these claims. Imperiale, who has by this point gouged out his eyes, acknowledges his own status as a tragic spectacle, saying, "I see not . . . but I am seen." Indeed, when Spinola *does* feel his fury melt into compassion, it is this sad sight, not the

one on the balcony, that moves and teaches him. Perhaps Spinola recognizes in blind, bleeding *Imperiale* a second Oedipus, whom Aristotle identified as the epitome of tragedy. Certainly he reacts with an appropriately Aristotelian mixture of wonder, fear, and especially pity. After watching in dumbstruck silence he finally speaks: "I truly am mov'd with pity. Thy sad story / Would melt a flinty heart into compassion." *Imperiale* responds with a lengthy apology for his role in the death of Spinola's son, which elicits from Spinola a confession of his plot against *Imperiale's* life. The dead slaves and their victims seem forgotten as the two former enemies wordily forgive one another below. The play ends as Spinola offers *Imperiale* a new home and *Imperiale* refuses, vowing to "wander to a desert" or "climb some remote mountain." Again he echoes Oedipus; again, he fashions himself as the appropriate object for the spectatorial gaze, for compassion, for learning.

Brutally effective as murderers, Sango and Molosso turn out to be invisible and inaudible as revenger-tragedians. Prince Doria, Angelica's erstwhile fiancé, another witness to the scene, articulates precisely why this is so. Just prior to the double suicide he laments that Sango and Molosso are "not capable of my revenge" and argues:

Since honor cannot stoop to punish slaves,  
Whose vile condition sinks beneath that vengeance  
'bove which no tyrant's power could hope to climb,  
And since thy cruel sufferings (blest soul)  
Require strict satisfaction, lo, I turn  
My fury on my self, and punish thus  
Mine own malignant fortune.

To Doria slaves cannot be the objects of revenge nor can they be its perpetrators. Ontologically "other"—or rather *lower*—slaves exist outside the economies of retribution and reward that are after all the very warp of the social fabric binding these noblemen. This is why the onstage audience fails learn from the murder-suicide but succeeds in learning from bleeding, self-exiled *Imperiale*.

## The warning

*Imperiale* associates tragic action and tragic affect with "noble" characters and rampant duplicitous theatricality with people on the margins, especially, as discussed above, slaves; but women and criminals also participate in misleading self-portrayal.<sup>18</sup> But by doing so the play does not quietly reinforce traditional hierarchies; rather it demonstrates the inadequacy of traditional legal, social, and governmental systems to deal with an increasingly polyglot society. Casting doubt on the

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<sup>18</sup> See in particular II.v. and III.i. In II.v., Verdugo, the hired assassin, discusses the "mystery" of craft in terms of dissembling and disguise. Throughout the play Verdugo is referred to by others as "the Actor"—he who performs an action, and he who feigns. In III.i. Angelica and her waiting woman Nugella discuss the feminine art of flirtation; Nugella champions pretence and argues that one's interior self cannot change no matter what kind of lascivious exterior one presents to the world. Angelica claims that acting is as good as doing and that she will never put on a painted or a feigned face.

effectiveness of classical or classicizing tragedy to educate through affective means, it participates in another educational technique: predictive warning. Early in the play, Honoria notes grimly that “Cassandra’s true predictions were despised,” after she has a prescient nightmare early in the play. Slightly later, the Chorus reflects on Honoria’s experience, concluding:

Then as it is a rash misprision  
To count each idle dream a vision;  
So ‘tis an error at the least  
To think all visions are quite ceased.

Substitute “play” for “dream,” and we find ourselves rereading another familiar theatrical-pedagogical model: drama as a visionary “mirror” in which the wrongs of the contemporary world are shown so that they may be righted.<sup>19</sup>

If Freeman saw himself as a Cassandra figure, much of the bad news he preaches to deaf ears has to do with the subject of slavery.<sup>20</sup> In many ways Sango and Molosso represent a classical, more or less Roman version of slavery. Captured after military defeat in their home country (they identify themselves as Numidians, Berbers from Algeria), they work and live in their captors’ homes, where they seem to enjoy close if uneven relationships with members of the household. But this is not the full story. I would like to close by suggesting that Freeman’s Numidians had a contemporary analogue. Molosso’s assertion of natural equality comes straight from Seneca, but his name does not. A clear echo of the word “molasses”—for which “molossos” was a variant spelling—the name Molosso invests the classical figure of the slave with historical particularity and contemporary urgency. “Sango” too is very evocative, with its resonance both with Romance language words for blood and with “Sambo,” which would become a standard epithet by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup>

Freeman was writing in the 1630s when England’s involvement in the enterprise of slave-run sugar plantations was already well underway. This enterprise mirrored earlier sugar plantations in

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<sup>19</sup> Butler, 6. See also John M. Wallace, “‘Examples are the Best Precepts’: Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth Century Poetry” *Critical Inquiry* 1.2 (1974): 273-90. While Wallace does not explicitly address plays as vehicles for political messages, his analysis of the perceptual, axiomatic import assigned to fictional exempla seems particularly relevant for a play like *Imperiale*, heavily invested both in the particularities of its own fiction and in the applicability of the lessons that fiction shadows forth.

<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly little work exists on the impact of slavery on English drama, especially seventeenth-century drama. See Gustav Ungerer, “The Presence of Africans in Elizabethan England and the Performance of Titus Andronicus at Burley-on-the-Hill, 1595/96” in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism and Reviews* 21, (2008): 19-55 and Camille Wells Slight, “Slaves and Subjects in Othello,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.4 (1987): 377-90. Ungerer also writes about cross-cultural and diplomatic encounters between North Africans and the Elizabethans in “Portia and the Prince of Morocco,” *Shakespeare Studies* 31 (2003): 89-126.

<sup>21</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary gives the first use of the word “Sambo” as a generalizing name for a person of African origin in 1704, but William Tryon’s 1691 *Friendly advice to the gentlemen-planters of the East and West Indies* gives this name to one of the speakers in dialogue regarding the inhumane treatment of slaves. It seems a stretch that “Sango” actually is meant to invoke “Sambo” but it does seem possible that both words are meant to signify otherness sonically, in roughly the same way. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Madeira, the Canary Islands, and Saõ Tomé in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. With these Portuguese and Spanish colonies, heavily backed by Genoese capital and enterprise, an institution characterized by mass labor and large-scale transportation and sale of Africans was born. It is no accident then that Freeman chose Renaissance Genoa as an allegory for 1630s England. Though the formalized debasement of Africans had not yet been systematically codified in law and custom, and though it would be a quarter century before arguments for and against the humane treatment of New World slaves began appearing prominently at printshops in England, the play seems to speak to precisely these issues.<sup>22</sup>

The play ends with speech that sounds a great deal like a moral. Justiniano, the very stoical friend of the two feuding nobles, views the spectacle before him philosophically rather than feelingly, and he draws a wise conclusion:

The cause  
That on our heads heaven's indignation draws,  
Springs from our selves, against which ther's no defence  
Like th'armour of a spotlesse innocence.

The lesson is clear: self-government prevents tragedy and breeds peace. But what about those denied self-government, or for that matter, selves? The closing speech offers one lesson; the preceding spectacle quite another. Bring Molosso into your home and Sango will follow. Molasses calls for blood. And slavery for revenge.

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<sup>22</sup> For an account of Genoese involvement in the European-run sugar industry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17-28. For the roots of American slavery in these earlier enterprises see Donald William Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 18-25. For England's use of slaves in New World sugar plantations see *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972, reprint 2000).

## Imitatio Sanctorum *through* Devotional Performance for Rich and Poor Girls in Seventeenth-Century Florence

by Jennifer Haraguchi

In the summer of 1655 the book of *Ricordi* (*Things to Remember*) of the lay conservatory for underprivileged girls known as Il Conventino records an unusual and noteworthy event: a dramatic reading on the life of Saint Ursula, written in verse by Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo and performed at Il Conventino by one of the affluent girls of another lay conservatory called La Quiete.<sup>1</sup> For the disadvantaged girls of Il Conventino this reading may have been the first theatrical performance they had ever seen. Even more remarkable, Montalvo staged this performance with the express purpose of inspiring her poor girls to memorize and perform similar readings themselves, as stated in the *Ricordi*:

Having come to visit us at our convent from La Quiete, our dear venerable mother told us that she had composed a few “lives of the female saints” in octaves in order to use them for devotional performances . . . [and she said,] “I will come back

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<sup>1</sup>Ursula, virgin and martyr, lived between the third and fourth centuries A.D. The daughter of a British king, she was famous for her beauty and devotion to Christ. Delaying her marriage to the son of a pagan king, she and eleven thousand virgins worshipped Christ aboard a ship for three years. They completed their journey in Cologne, which was being attacked by barbarians. The virgins all were brutally murdered, including Ursula when she refused to marry the leader of the barbarians. Her feast day is October 21; see the entry “Orsola” in *Il grande libro dei santi: dizionario enciclopedico*, ed. C. Leonardi, A. Riccardi, and Gabriella Zarri (Torino: Edizioni San Paolo, 1998), 1526-28. Montalvo founded two lay conservatories for girls in Florence: Il Conventino in 1626 for orphans, servants, and illegitimate girls, and La Quiete in 1650 for aristocratic young women in the hills northwest of the city. They were called conservatories, with the understanding that they would “conserve” (*conservare* in Italian) a young woman’s virtue and honor. They focused on the spiritual, intellectual, and moral formation of the girls through the domestic arts (*lavori*), prayer, and reading and reciting devotional works including Montalvo’s poetic compositions. Montalvo’s conservatories functioned much like convents yet they were among the first educational institutions in Europe that did not require profession of vows, thus allowing young women freedom to choose marriage, a religious vocation, or life in one of Montalvo’s conservatories with the possibility of becoming a teacher there. Their educational endeavors were sanctioned by the Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere, wife of Ferdinando II de’ Medici, and other Florentine nobles who provided them with substantial financial assistance. This paper builds on a chapter of my dissertation, *Educating Rich and Poor Girls in Seventeenth-Century Florence: Eleonora Ramirez di Montalvo and Her Writings*, that I presented at the Western Mediterranean Culture Workshop at the University of Chicago on November 14, 2008. I thank the participants of the workshop, in particular Professors Elissa Weaver and Armando Maggi for their insightful comments and suggestions. I also thank Zachary Cannon for reading an earlier draft.

another time to give you the rules and teach you how to perform these sacred plays.” And the following August 18 she appeared with sister Eleonora Cristina who played the part of Saint Ursula with great devotion. . . . Our dear lady mother left us by saying that another time she wanted to see and hear one of us in these sacred plays.<sup>2</sup>

Montalvo proved true to her word, as confirmed in a subsequent entry of the *Ricordi*. On October 21, 1656, Montalvo visited them for another devotional performance, this time a poetic reading of the life of Saint Margaret.<sup>3</sup> This dramatic monologue was performed, it seems, by one of their own:

Having . . . come to our convent, [Montalvo] was delighted to attend the “Play of Saint Margaret Virgin and Martyr,” performed by sister Chiara Maria, [and] having seen and heard it, she confirmed to us . . . that, without a doubt, we could keep on performing any time we wanted.<sup>4</sup>

These performative readings at Il Conventino on the lives of the saints are extraordinary events because they reveal Montalvo’s uncommon attitude of intellectual encouragement toward disadvantaged girls.<sup>5</sup> While many middle- and upper-class young women of this period were introduced in Florentine convents to reading, singing, and religious drama, nearly all underprivileged girls were

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<sup>2</sup>“*Visitandoci la Nostra Veneranda Madre, venuta dalla Quiete al nostro Convento, ci disse haver composto alcune Vite di Sante in ottava rima per fare rappresentazioni devote in forma di quelle . . . [e disse,] Ritorno da voi ad altro tempo per darvi regola e insegnarvi il modo di queste Sacre rappresentazioni.*” “*La testimonianza di suor Chiara Maria nel Libro di Ricordi e Appartenenze dell’Oratorio e Convento dell’Incarnazione,*” cc. 14-15, in *Florentina beatificationis et canonizationis venerabilis servae dei Eleonorae Ramirez Montalvo viduae Landi fundatricis ancillarum SS. mae Trinitatis et divinae incarnationis († 1659), Positio ex officio compilata super introductione causae et super virtutibus* (hereafter *La Positio*); Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1984, 271-72. The text I consulted belongs to Archivio della Quiete. I have copied citations exactly as they appear in *La Positio*; all English translations are mine. I thank Francesca Puggioni for her assistance with some of the more difficult passages. The passage cited above comes from Il Conventino’s book of *Ricordi* which belongs to a genre of record books that was required of all religious houses in post-Tridentine Italy. Books of *Ricordi*, from the Italian *ricordare*, to remember, contained a miscellany of information: in addition to the names of new postulants and bills to pay, bookkeepers recorded special events that they thought were important to remember; see Elissa Weaver, “The Convent Muses: The Secular Writing of Italian Nuns, 1450-1650,” *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, eds. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (London: England, 1999), 132-33.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret, a virgin and martyr from Antioch, lived at the end of the third century A.D. She was revered above all by women in childbirth. Her feast day is July 20 in the Latin world and July 17 for the Greeks; see A. Cappelli, *Cronologia, cronografia e calendario perpetuo dal principio dell’era cristiana ai nostri giorni*, updated sixth edition (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1988) and *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, (Città del Vaticano: Ente per l’Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, 1952), 66.

<sup>4</sup>“*Essendo . . . venuta al nostro Convento [Montalvo] si compiacque assistere alla Rappresentazione di S. Margherita V. e M. esercitata dalla sorella Chiara Maria, quale vista e sentita, ci ratificò . . . che senza scrupolo seguitassimo ogni volta che a noi piacesse.*” “*La testimonianza di suor Chiara Maria nel Libro di Ricordi e Appartenenze dell’Oratorio e Convento dell’Incarnazione,*” cc. 14-15, in *La Positio*, 272. It appears that sister Chiara Maria is both the writer of the *Ricordi* (according to Fausta Casolini, the scholar who compiled documentary material for Montalvo’s beatification proceedings and who saw the original manuscript; see her remarks in *La Positio*, 271) and the performer of the dramatic reading of Saint Margaret, although I have not been able to confirm this.

<sup>5</sup>These readings were also unusual in another respect: Montalvo’s *Costituzioni* for Il Conventino of 1645 prohibited theatrical performances. Montalvo changed her mind later, however, adding a clause to her *Costituzioni* for La Quiete of 1656-57 stating that theatrical performances would be allowed, but only as long as the girls did not dress as men, they were not distracted from their duties, and the content of the play was not profane.

performing menial labor in institutions of public assistance or in convents as servants to elite nuns.<sup>6</sup> In a radical move for the time the poor girls of Montalvo's Il Conventino, on the other hand, were taught to read, sing, memorize and, much to their delight, recite dramatic verse for religious performances.

Montalvo composed sixteen dramatic monologues in octaves on the lives of female saints for the young women of the two lay conservatories she founded.<sup>7</sup> As we understand from her pedagogical writings and comments made by the individuals who knew her, Montalvo hoped to inspire her young women, both rich and poor, by reciting these monologues to imitate the examples of such righteous women as Saint Margaret and Saint Ursula who spurned the advances of men, renounced riches, and took joy in suffering for Christ's sake. More importantly Montalvo's dramatic lives of the saints served as instructional aids to help her young women improve their one-hour practice three times daily of *orazione mentale*, mental prayer or meditation.<sup>8</sup> They supplemented Jesuit teachings on meditation that were prevalent in her conservatories, such as those of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, with vivid and succinct material on which to meditate; provided an example of the appropriate relationship and interaction between female saints and their devotees as had been outlined recently by the Council of Trent; and offered an increased understanding of self-annihilation, or shedding one's identity, an essential component of *orazione mentale*.<sup>9</sup>

As explained by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, whose *Exercitia spiritualia* Montalvo took as a guide for implementing *orazione mentale* in her conservatories, in meditation or contemplation one frees the mind of distracting images and thoughts in order to imagine persons, words, and actions that

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<sup>6</sup>Nicholas Terpstra points to the work that girls performed for the textile industry in the workshops of Florentine conservatories in his essay "In Loco Parentis: Confraternities and Abandoned Children in Florence and Bologna," in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 120-21. See also Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24-26, on the work that servants performed in convents.

<sup>7</sup>The sixteen female saints—early Christian virgin martyrs and saints from the canonical and apocryphal Gospels—for whom Montalvo wrote individual biographies in octaves are Margarita, Orsola, Lucia, Caterina, Emerenziana, Agnese, Cecilia, Dorotea, Barbara, Agata, Tecla, Apollonia, Anna, Cristina, Maria Maddalena, and Susanna. Montalvo also wrote poetic biographies of the Virgin Mary and the archangels Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael. These biographies are found in three compilations of Montalvo's works copied by Bartolomeo Guidi a little over a decade after Montalvo's death: *Copie di tutti gli scritti della Venerabile, estratti dalli originali*, 1671-1673; A1, n. 14, Archivio della Quietè (hereafter AQ); *Libro dell'opere dell'Illustrissima Signora Eleonora Montalvi*, 1672, C III, AQ; *Tutte l'opere del Illustrissima Signora Eleonora Montalvi gran serva di Dio*, 15, AQ.

<sup>8</sup>"Let them practice mental prayer together for three hours every day, in honor of the Holy Trinity, in three distinct times, or in other words, at dawn, around noontime, and in the evening." "Faccino ogni giorno unitamente tre hore d'orazione mentale, in honore della Santissima Trinità, in tre tempi distinti, cioè la mattina all'Alba, circa il mezzo giorno, e la sera." Montalvo, *Costituzioni*, 1645, A VII, n. 32, AQ, 6. The *Costituzioni* of 1656-1657 give the same directive. Books of regulations or *Costituzioni* were required of all early modern religious organizations to establish order, unite the religious community, and help its members achieve inner perfection.

<sup>9</sup>The Capuchin nun and mystic Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727) writes in her diary of the importance of self-annihilation when performing *orazione mentale*. See *Un tesoro nascosto ossia diario di S. Veronica Giuliani religiosa clarissa cappuccina in Città di Castello scritto da lei medesima*, vol. I-III, ed. P. Pietro Pizizicaria (Città di Castello: Monastero delle Cappuccine, 1971).

stimulate reflections and emotions leading to greater union with God.<sup>10</sup> In the *Exercitia spiritualia* the first step of meditation is imagining a physical space as if the person doing the imagining were actually there, such as the places where Christ was present or preached—a temple or mountain, synagogue or village—or the house in which Mary spoke to the angel. Montalvo’s hagiographies provide memorable details of the lives of the saints that would have helped her young women in this first step of meditation to visualize the physical places of the saints’ experiences. In the *Vita di Sant’Orsola*, for example, Montalvo makes frequent reference in her poetic narrative to the sea, beaches, and ships of Saint Ursula’s three-year journey with the eleven thousand virgins, providing concrete images that her young women could draw on when they imagined themselves taking part in Saint Ursula’s devotional voyage. Montalvo’s poetry juxtaposes images of water and images of land, creating a distinct impression in the mind to facilitate meditation. For instance, in the following passage Saint Ursula encourages her traveling companions to be grateful for specific features of the landscape they see from their ship, but not because land is a welcome sight to them after having been at sea for so long. For Saint Ursula the “holy land” of Cologne takes on greater significance as the place where they will secure their martyrdom:

[H]aving turned to my dear companions:  
 “Say hello,” I said, “to the hill, the plane.  
 Bless the valleys and the mountains,  
 And thank the supreme Creator.  
 To this most fortunate countryside,  
 Our arrival has not been in vain.

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<sup>10</sup>According to the *Regole per le Montalve*, an early eighteenth-century document which outlines rules to be observed at La Quiete, Saint Ignatius is the source for Montalvo’s concept of *orazione mentale*: “Mental and vocal prayer: . . . The third time is also an hour and one spends it doing matins and lauds to the most blessed Virgin, with certain vocal prayers, but everyone says them privately by themselves, and in the last fifteen minutes one performs an examination of conscience, according to the instruction of Saint Ignatius, following also his method of mental prayer.” “*Orazione mentale e vocale*: . . . *Il Terzo tempo anch’esso è di un’ora e si spende col Mattutino e laudi della Beatissima Vergine coll’Orazioni vocali particolari, ma ognuna le dice privatamente da sé, e nell’ultimo quarto si fa l’esame di coscienza, secondo l’Instruzione di Sant’Ignazio, tenendo il modo del medesimo nell’Orazione mentale*”; *Regole per le Montalve*, Florence: Biblioteca Riccardiana. The practice of *orazione mentale* had its roots in the religious reform movement of *devotio moderna* which originated in the Netherlands in the late fourteenth century. *Devotio moderna* emphasized inner devotion and encouraged followers to share in the Passion of Christ through vicarious experience. Its greatest proponent was Geert Groote (1340-1384). *Devotio moderna* spread throughout Europe by way of the writings of Thomas à Kempis and Giovanni Mombaer (in Latin, *Mauburnus*). In Italy *devotio moderna* was embraced by the spiritual writers of the Lateran Council of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The school of Saint Ignatius of Loyola practiced and promoted the concept of *devotio moderna*. See C. Egger, “Devozione moderna,” *Dizionario degli Istituti della Perfezione*, (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1974-2003), 455-63 and Otto Gründler, “Devotio Moderna,” *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 176-93. “By the term Spiritual Exercises we mean every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities such as will be mentioned later. For just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul.” *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 121. The meditations of Saint Ignatius take two forms: affective mental prayer consisting of devout affections, and discursive meditation, multiple acts of reasoning; see *Ignatius of Loyola*, 63. A full analysis of Saint Ignatius’ concept of meditation is beyond the scope of this study.



Here, for as much as my thought perceives,  
We will be offered up in sacrifice to God.”<sup>11</sup>

In meditating on the life of Saint Ursula Montalvo’s young women perhaps would have imagined themselves on a ship with land in sight. Conjuring up images in their minds of a hill, plain, valleys, mountains, and countryside, they would have been reminded of the virgins’ difficult choice to willingly accept the torture that awaited them at the end of their voyage.

Other images of place, such as those that set the scene in the *Vita di Santa Margarita*, would have been easier for Montalvo’s young women to imagine, since the saint experienced poverty and piety in a humble setting much like their own:

So I was with peace and devotion,  
Keeping a solitary and strict life  
And with fastings and mortification  
I was dependent on my beloved nursemaid.  
We lived in a little house,  
To us, more delightful than large palaces.  
We were removed from worldly pleasures  
But filled with virtues high and sublime.<sup>12</sup>

Montalvo’s young women would have identified directly with Saint Margaret because her “solitary and strict life” of “fastings and mortification” also formed an integral part of their own experience as members of Montalvo’s communities.<sup>13</sup>

In writing plays on the lives of female saints Montalvo followed a tradition of dramatists who since the fifteenth century had composed religious plays called *sacre rappresentazioni* on the lives of virgin martyrs.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the secular playwrights of her day who transformed *sacre rappresentazioni* into more fashionable theatrical forms often called *tragedie sacre* to comply with the three neo-Aristotelian unities, Montalvo and other religious writers of her time adhered to the medieval theatrical tradition

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<sup>11</sup> “[V]oltata alle mie care compagne, / Salutate, dicevo, il colle, il piano. / Benedite le valli e le montagne, / E ringraziate il Creator sovrano. / A queste felicissime campagne, / L’arrivo nostro non è stato invano. / Qui per quanto ravvisa il pensier mio, / Saremo offerte in sacrificio a Dio.” “Vita di Sant’Orsola,” octave 10, *Libro dell’opere dell’Illustrissima Signora Eleonora Montalvi*, 1672, C III, AQ, 137v. I have modernized the punctuation and accents in the original citations of Montalvo’s hagiographies.

<sup>12</sup> “Così stavo con pace e devozione, / Vita facendo solitaria e stretta / E con digiuni e mortificazione / All’amata nutrice ero soggetta. / Abitavamo in piccola mansione, / A noi di gran palazzini più diletta. / Eramo prive di delizie humane / Ma di virtù ripiene alte e sovrane.” “Vita di Santa Margarita,” octave 9, *Libro dell’opere*, AQ, 94v.

<sup>13</sup> Montalvo’s young women fasted and mortified themselves regularly, as attested by Montalvo’s *Costituzioni* and accounts written by the women who resided in Montalvo’s conservatories. See Montalvo, *Costituzioni* of 1645 (A VII, n. 32, AQ); Montalvo, *Costituzioni* of 1656-7, A VII, n. 39, AQ; *Annali*, AQ; *Regole delle Ancille della Santissima Vergine dette Ancille del Verbo Incarnato, e comunemente chiamate le Montalve, prescritte dalla Venerabil Serva di Dio D. Leonora Ramirez Montalvo*, 33, AQ.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter three, “Plays and Playwrights: The Earliest Examples,” in Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

of one-act plays that was not concerned with portraying time and space realistically.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, while secular dramatists were abandoning verse for prose Montalvo embraced the fluidity and musicality of *ottava rima* (rhyming octaves), which made her saints' lives easier to memorize, recite, and then recall later for devotional purposes.

Montalvo's dramatic hagiographies, however, stand apart from *sacre rappresentazioni* in eliminating the announcing angel and employing only one protagonist.<sup>16</sup> The young woman who plays the part of the female saint introduces herself and recites the essential points of her life in the concise format of a dramatic monologue of about twenty octaves in length.<sup>17</sup> All of the elements of a female saint's life—accusations against her faith, entreaties to renounce it, torture, miracles, and martyrdom—would have taken only about fifteen minutes to recite. In her *Instruction for Teachers* Montalvo writes about the importance of brevity in meditation so that the student's imagination is not strained.<sup>18</sup> By condensing material to simple and brief poetic monologues Montalvo was following the advice of the seventeenth-century Jesuit priest Fabio Ambrosio Spinola who recommends a preparatory phase of *orazione mentale* to reduce what one is to imagine to a manageable size:

in order to have the material ready for meditating, you should simplify in your mind that mystery that you're considering, and this very brief epilogue of points without any other additions is called the first prelude.<sup>19</sup>

Montalvo's poetic monologues of the saints served as such a "first prelude," preparing her young women with abbreviated material for easy memorization that they could quickly recall later when they practiced *orazione mentale*.

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<sup>15</sup>For more on secular vs. religious drama in Counter-Reformation Italy, see chapter eight, "The Virgin Martyr and the *Tragedia Sacra*," in Louise Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and chapter four, "Spiritual Comedies in the Convents," in Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre*, 128-69.

<sup>16</sup>For more on the role of the announcing angel in *sacre rappresentazioni*, see Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano, libri tre* (Roma: Bardi Editore, 1971), 379-91.

<sup>17</sup>Most of Montalvo's hagiographies are about twenty octaves in length. Four considerably longer exceptions include the *Life of Saint Anna*, forty-one octaves; the *Life of Saint Catherine*, sixty-four octaves; the *Life of Mary Magdalene*, seventy-nine octaves; and the longest, the *Life of the Virgin Mary*, 530 octaves.

<sup>18</sup>"[I]n the meditation that everyone performs together, put your trust in that order and way that Father Ambrosio Spinola of the Company of Jesus teaches, or something similar to it, advising them moreover that they are not to overstrain the imagination, that they should affix themselves to the fruit that they can obtain from it." "[N]ella meditazione che si fa in comune, rimettetevi a quell'ordine e modo che insegna il Padre Ambrosio Spinola della Compagnia di Giesù o cosa simile avvisandole di più che non affaticino troppo l'immaginazione, s'appicchino al frutto che possono cavarne." Montalvo, *Istruzione alle maestre*, AQ, 7v-8r.

<sup>19</sup>"[A]ccioche nel meditare s'habbia pronta la materia, brevemente si riduce a mente quel misterio, che s'è preso a considerare, e questo brevissimo epilogo delli punti senz'altro discorso, si nomina primo Preludio." *Delle meditationi sopra la vita di Giesu Signor Nostro, per ciascun giorno. Distese dal Padre Fabio Ambrosio Spinola della Compagnia di Giesu*, in Genova: per Benedetto Guasco, MDCLII (Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze). Montalvo directly refers to Spinola in her *Istruzione alle maestre*, cited in the previous footnote. In addition to the *Meditazioni*, Spinola also published biographies of a fellow Jesuit (and relative?) Carlo Spinola and Madre Maria Vittoria, the founder of the "ordine dell'Annuntiata," as well as a work titled *Christo appassionato e la Vergine addolorata*.

In addition to representing physical spaces and concise elements that facilitated meditation Montalvo's poetic hagiographies also portray strikingly graphic details of the persecutions and torture that saints endured in defense of their faith. Montalvo's young women would have been able to draw on these penetrating depictions when they meditated on the life of a female saint. For example, the performer who recites the *Vita di Santa Margarita* (*Life of Saint Margaret*) provides her audience with vivid elements of the saint's persecution and martyrdom which are intended to remain strongly impressed in one's imagination:

[N]ude in the midst of those people,  
With my great pain, the [tyrant] had me flogged  
Cruelly with iron sticks  
So that I remained all transformed,  
Bruised and black and bathed in blood.

Above the rack he had me raised  
And stretched out at each juncture . . .

So that even he could not look at  
That very painful appearance of mine:  
From head to foot my flesh was all open,  
And my entrails and bones exposed.<sup>20</sup>

By focusing on the difficulty with which a cruel tyrant looks upon Saint Margaret's eviscerated body Montalvo's poetry would have incited her young women to think, in their own vicarious positions as sympathetic witnesses, of how horrible it would have been to watch the torture that Saint Margaret endured.

In creating poetic images to make the most impact on the young women in the audience when they meditated on the lives of the saints, Montalvo practiced good poetic imitation which, according to Aristotle, consists in "put[ting] things before [one's] eyes, as [one] then sees the events most vividly as if [one] were actually present. . .".<sup>21</sup> In seeking to make "events . . . vividly . . . present" in her poetry Montalvo enhances her young women's inner devotional worship. Montalvo's short verse dramas provide memorable images on which to meditate and they also serve as guides for

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<sup>20</sup> "[N]uda in mezzo a quella gente, / Con mia gran pena mi fece frustare / Con bacchette di ferro crudelmente / Sì che io rimasi tutta trasformata, / Livid'e nera e di sangue bagnata. / Sopra l'equileo mi fece innalzare / E stirare in ciascuna congiuntura [. . .] Sì che egli stesso non potia guardare / Quella sì dolorosa mia figura: / Dal capo al piede eran le carne aperte / E le viscere e l'ossa discoperte." "Vita di Santa Margarita," octaves 15-16, *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 95v-96r. The meaning of *equileo* derives from the Latin *equuleus*, a diminutive of *equus*, meaning *giovane cavallo* or *cavalletto*: an instrument of torture, "the rack." See "Eculeo," *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, ed. Salvatore Battaglia (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1968), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, "Poetics," *Classical Literary Criticism*, eds. D.A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 72. While Montalvo had studied some secular literature—she was introduced to chivalric literature as a young woman in the convent of San Jacopo in Via Ghibellina in Florence (much to the chagrin of her confessors)—she probably did not know Aristotle's *Poetics*. Nonetheless, Aristotle's theory on poetic imitation helps us better comprehend how Montalvo understood the effects of poetry.

understanding how faithful Christians should communicate with the saints as their intercessors with Christ, as the Council of Trent had recently underscored.<sup>22</sup> We find this model of communication in Montalvo's hagiographies when the performer encourages a dialogue between herself and her audience: the performer bids the audience farewell, asks that they pray to her (the saint) for help, and specifically mentions the names of one or two young women present and identifies their personal needs. Observing this model in action, Montalvo's young women would have been better able to comprehend the second component to meditation, which according to Saint Ignatius' *Exercitia spiritualia* is to imagine that one is speaking to Christ as a friend speaks to another, conversing about whatever comes to mind or asking favors of Mary and the saints. In the *Vita di Sant'Orsola* for example the performer who plays the part of Saint Ursula urges her audience of young women to speak openly to her, the saint, about their needs: "If you truly desire some favor of me, / Do ask without fearing anything."<sup>23</sup> She concludes her recitation with these lines: "I say goodbye to you, handmaidens of the Lord, / and to you, Giovanna, in particular, / Hold special love for me, / And I will faithfully reciprocate [my love] to you."<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, the performer who plays Saint Lucy concludes the hagiography by addressing a few select individuals present at the performance. She makes the connection between the saint and certain devotees even more significant by having her character, Saint Lucy, refer to the "house" of which she, the performer, is a part:

I came to you kindly  
 To say goodbye to the whole company;  
 And among the others, I dearly regard  
 You, my beloved Mary, the second:  
 I hold you in protection, and likewise  
 The girls who are in my house;  
 I bless you with ardent zeal.  
 Rest in peace; I'm going off to heaven.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>See the twenty-fifth session (December 4, 1563) of the Council of Trent: "The holy council commands all bishops and others who hold the office of teaching . . . that . . . they above all instruct the faithful diligently in matters relating to intercession and invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the legitimate use of images, teaching them that the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men, that it is good and beneficial suppliantly to invoke them and to have recourse to their prayers, assistance and support in order to obtain favors from God through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, transl. Rev. H. J. Schroeder (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1941), 215-16.

<sup>23</sup>"*Se bramate da me qualche favore, / Chiedete pur senza temer niente.*" "Vita di Sant'Orsola," octave 18, *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 139r.

<sup>24</sup>"*Io vi saluto Ancille del Signore, / e voi Giovanna particolarmente, / Che mi portate speciale amore, / Et io vi corrispondo fedelment.e*" "Vita di Sant'Orsola," octave 18, *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 139r.

<sup>25</sup>"*Son venuta da voi cortesemente / A salutar tutta la compagnia; / E tra l'altre risguardo caramente / Voi mia diletta seconda Maria: / Vi tengo in protezione, e similmente / Le figliuole, che sono in casa mia; / Vi benedico con ardente zelo. / Restate in pace; io me ne vado in cielo.*" "Vita di Santa Lucia," octave 22, *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 102r. The "house" refers to Montalvo's creation of the *eremo* (hermitage), a microcommunity within the conservatory composed of three to seven persons: a teacher (*discreta*), a young woman (*giovane*), and one or more little girls (*fanciullina*). Montalvo believed that the women at La Quiete had better educational experiences and more freedom when they were part of a familial environment that included women of varying ages.

The performer who represents Saint Lucy also speaks directly to another audience member and underscores the important mediating relationship that she, Saint Lucy, has between one specific audience member and Christ:

Leonora, I talk about you affectionately to God,  
And I want to ask some favor for you  
From Jesus Christ, my beloved spouse.  
Go ahead and ask something out of my love [for you].  
You will understand from the result,  
That I am your mediator with the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

By simulating a direct encounter with an actress impersonating a saint Montalvo offers a concrete image of a tangible and responsive person with whom her young women could envision conversing when they needed a model for communicating with the saints. In this way Montalvo's hagiographies powerfully emphasize the role of the performer and her relationship to the audience. In the *Ricordi* of Il Conventino it is reported that Montalvo explained to her young women the importance of her devotional plays and their performances:

it pleases our divine spouse Jesus that you practice these simple rhymes of mine in order to effectively impress his love in your hearts and in order to imitate those holy virgins whose clothing you wear and whose identity you represent.<sup>27</sup>

In this statement and in the stage directions to the hagiographies Montalvo reveals her pedagogical intentions: a young woman learns best how to imitate the lives of the saints when she actually envisions herself as a saint who makes an appearance to her devotees. When a young woman puts on the "saint's clothes"; carries props that identify herself in the role of the saint, such as a vase of precious ointment in the *Life of Saint Mary Magdalene*; and recites the opening lines of Montalvo's compositions, "I am Ursula" and "I am Margaret," she figuratively becomes that saint, "sent from heaven" to tell the story of her sufferings for Christ.<sup>28</sup> In this way the performer embodies the saint, leaving her own self behind in the moment of performance.

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<sup>26</sup>"Leonora, a Dio vi dico con affetto / E vi voglio impetrar qual che favore / Da Giesù Cristo mio sposo diletto. / Chiedete pur qualcosa per mio amore, / Che bene scorgerete dall'effetto, / Che vi son mediatrice col Signore." "Vita di Santa Lucia," octave 23, *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 102r.

<sup>27</sup>"queste mie [rime] che sono semplici si contenta Giesù Nostro Sposo Divino che l'esercitate per imprimer bene ne vostri quori l'Amor suo, e per imitare quelle sante Vergini, delle quali vestite l'abito e rappresentate nella persona." "La testimonianza di suor Chiara Maria nel Libro di Ricordi e Appartenenze dell'Oratorio e Convento dell'Incarnazione," cc. 14-15, in *La Positio*, 271.

<sup>28</sup>The phrase *in abito da santa* (or *abito di cittadina del cielo*) appears often in the directions to Montalvo's hagiographies. Stage props are noted in the life of Mary Magdalene, who holds an anointing vase: "Questo vaso d'unguento prezioso / Mostra ch'io son Maria Maddalena, / Ch'i piedi el capo al sacrosanto sposo / Unsi più volte, mentre stava a cena." "This vase of precious ointment / Shows that I am Mary Magdalene / Who, the feet and the head of the sacrosanct bridegroom, / Anointed many times while he was at dinner." "Vita di Santa Maria Maddalena," *Libro dell'opere*, AQ, 157r. The phrase *venuta dal cielo* also frequently appears in the directions to the hagiographies.

The performer's embodiment, taking on the identity of the saint, becomes both a mode of poetic *mimesis*, "becoming someone else,"<sup>29</sup> and an illustration of another important step in the meditative process. When the performer "becomes" the saint she represents she demonstrates what it means to self-annihilate or shed one's identity when practicing *orazione mentale*. We perhaps best see how self-annihilation informs the practice of *orazione mentale* in the diary of the mystic Veronica Giuliani. Comprising thousands of pages handwritten between 1693 and 1712, the diary provides a unique glimpse into convent life and the devotional practices expected of early modern women.<sup>30</sup> Giuliani was born in Mercatello in the Marche region in 1660, the year after Montalvo died. While Giuliani and Montalvo would not have known each other, their spiritual advisers were both Jesuits and they both followed the teachings of Saint Ignatius on meditation. When Giuliani writes of her experiences with *orazione mentale* she describes how she is "outside of [her]self." For Giuliani *orazione mentale* is a school where she learns how to leave behind her own vision of the world in order to understand what specific actions she must perform to get closer to Christ.<sup>31</sup> Giuliani writes that she must "cast [her]self off and forget everything," only experiencing the thoughts and desires of God, "without [her] own will, and only with the will of God," when she practices *orazione mentale*.<sup>32</sup> At one point Giuliani explains that she must shed not only her own thoughts but her very perception of things in order to improve the way she performs *orazione mentale*. Through *orazione mentale* she should be learning to see only as God sees:

The Lord made me understand in what way I should have gone [to pray]: with such a casting off that I did not have any other thought except of God; and [I should] have gone [to pray] in order to understand and to learn to do his most holy will; and to have understood well what my collaboration must be to it and with it. In order to

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<sup>29</sup>"[O]ne can represent the same objects in the same media (i) sometimes in narration and sometimes becoming someone else, as Homer does." Aristotle, "Poetics," 53.

<sup>30</sup>*Un tesoro nascosto ossia diario di S. Veronica Giuliani religiosa clarissa cappuccina in Città di Castello scritto da lei medesima*, vol. I-III, ed. P. Pietro Pizizicaria (Città di Castello: Monastero delle Cappuccine, 1971). At seventeen years of age and against her father's wishes Giuliani entered the Capuchin convent of Città di Castello. She immediately attracted the attention of her confessors—for climbing a pear tree in the garden to preach repentance and for her extreme fasting practices—who demanded that she keep a detailed record of her mystical experiences. See Monique Courbat, "Veronica Giuliani: scrittura e riscrittura," *Annali d'Italianistica: Women Mystic Writers*, ed. Dino S. Cervigni, vol. 13, 1995, 333-49. For additional biographical information and suggested readings on Giuliani see Armando Maggi's entry on her in the University of Chicago's database on Italian women writers: <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/IWW/>.

<sup>31</sup>"And when I perform a little mental prayer, in thinking of the passion and the suffering that the Lord engaged in for my well being, and with such love and charity, these two points keep me outside of myself and make me fathom the great debt that I have to pay diligently for everything that God makes me learn during the time of the prayer. I discover therein a school where I learn every virtue." "E quando faccio un poco di orazione mentale, nel pensare alla passione e patimenti che ha fatto il Signore per mia salute e con che amore e carità, questi due punti mi tengono fuori di me e mi fanno penetrare il grande obbligo che ho di corrispondere con ogni diligenza a quanto Iddio mi fa apprendere nel tempo di essa. Ivi trovo una scuola ove imparo ogni virtù." *Un tesoro nascosto*, vol. II, 534.

<sup>32</sup>"If I put myself to mental prayer, first I feel that God makes me understand that I must cast myself off and forget everything, and that I must not have any other thought except of God, and [that I must be] mindful and intent on meditating the mysteries of the most holy Passion in order to learn holy virtues from it. Therein I must exist with humility, without my own will, and only with the will of God." "Se io mi metto all'orazione mentale, prima sento che Iddio mi fa capire che io devo spogliarmi di me e scordarmi di tutto; e che devo non aver altro pensiero, che di Dio; ed attenta ed intenta a meditare i misteri della S.S.ma Passione per imparare da Esso le sante virtù. Ivi devo stare con umiltà, senza volontà e solo che vi sia la volontà di Dio." *Un tesoro nascosto*, vol. III, 403-04.

learn this point well, I should have been continually at the school of mental prayer, completely losing my own sight and using only the most pure eye of divine love.<sup>33</sup>

Giuliani's choice of words explaining how one should remove all trace of oneself in practicing *orazione mentale* can also be applied to the actions of the performer who is encouraged by Montalvo to wear the clothing of a saint and take on the saint's identity. Giuliani's technique of "losing herself" when praying, I submit, is analogous to the act of losing oneself when playing the part of a saint in the performance of Montalvo's poetic hagiographies; in both instances, the loss of self frees the mind to see as God and the saints see and provides the focus to ask for and do only those things that God wants.

Performance of Montalvo's hagiographies provided the young women of the audience a better understanding of what to imagine as they meditated and how and to whom to pray. However, the performer, if she played the part well, derived the most benefit. By losing herself entirely in the role of the female saint the performer gained a memorable impression of what it actually means to be a saint who seeks only God's will for herself. More important, the performer who effectively "cast herself off" arrived albeit temporarily at a mode of thinking and speaking higher than her own, one that allowed her imagination to experience direct contact with God. This type of intimate contact with deity remained crucial to Montalvo, who identified it as "a quiet and special time . . . to withdraw one on one with God by way of pure contemplation and intimate union."<sup>34</sup> To enter into such personal union with God became, for Montalvo, "the highest of all spiritual affairs" and the culminating point of all their tribulations, prayers, and meditations.<sup>35</sup> The performer fortunate enough to play the part of a female saint in Montalvo's hagiographies enjoyed an opportunity to understand in the moment of performance how to achieve that type of communion with God.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>"Mi fece capire (il Signore) in che modo vi dovevo andare: con uno spogliamento tale, da non avere altro pensiero che Dio; e andare per intendere ed imparare a fare la sua santissima volontà; e per capire bene come deve essere la mia cooperazione ad essa e con essa. Per imparare bene questo punto, dovevo continuamente stare alla scuola dell'orazione mentale, perdendo affatto la vista propria, e servendomi solo dell'occhio purissimo del Divino Amore." *Un tesoro nascosto*, vol. II, 841-42.

<sup>34</sup>"[U]n tempo quieto e determinato . . . per ritirarsi solo a solo con Dio per mezzo di pura contemplazione et intima unione." Montalvo, *Istruzione alle maestre*, AQ, 8v.

<sup>35</sup>"[I]l sommo di tutto il negozio spirituale." Montalvo, *Istruzione alle maestre*, AQ, 8v-9r.

<sup>36</sup>It was believed that Montalvo chose her performers at least on one occasion in accordance with heavenly will. Sister Teresa Cioli of Il Conventino reports how she was selected by Montalvo to play the part of Saint Emerenciana: "When she wrote the Life of Saint Emerenciana, the Lady Mother did not know which sister she wanted for the devout Saint Emerenciana. She [the Saint] appeared to her dressed in white, or, in other words, in a gown made of flowers, and said, 'I want Teresa for my devotee.'" "*Quando la compose la vita di Santa Emertiana [sic] la Sig.ra Madre nu sapera quale sorella lei volessi per devota Santa Emerentiana. Gli apparve vestita di bianco cioè una veste fatta a fiori e disse voglio la Teresia per mia devota.*" "Relazione della Sorella Teresa Cioli per conto de miracoli della Sig.ra Eleonora Montalvi quale tra delle prime figlie et ha visto il tutto," in Bartolomeo Guidi, *Leonora Montalvo*, Reg. Rel. 144 (Florence: Archivio della Provincia Toscana dei Padri Scolopi di San Giovannino), 739.

# *Economies of Reading*

## Introduction

By Sarah Waurechen

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines economy as: “The way in which something is managed; the management of resources; household management,” alluding not only to the process of material exchange and regulation, but also to the role of power and authority in a system negotiating both physical things and more intangible commodities.<sup>1</sup> The term therefore bears implications not always obvious to a modern capitalist society that likes to think of economics as something scientific, quantifiable, and fundamentally monetary. This panel, “Economies of Reading,” emphasized the different ways people of the Renaissance obtained, negotiated, and challenged authority over resources: material, cultural, or religious. The pluralized term highlights the very different forms of exchange, management, and negotiation that might take place and interrogates similarities and differences among various systems.

That said, monetary considerations must never be ignored when analyzing texts, especially printed material. Jürgen Habermas, whose work describing the “bourgeois public sphere” has prompted heated debates about the role of print in both contemporary and premodern society, the nature of “public” dialogue, and when and if we can talk about any of this as a public sphere at all, emphasizes this reality. Thus in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* he argues that “the liberal public sphere took shape in the specific historical circumstances of a developing market economy.”<sup>2</sup> Many problems have since been identified in the Habermasian notion of a rational-critical public sphere born in the eighteenth century, but despite this it has proved difficult to ignore the notion that the printed exchanges that so fascinated Habermas were fundamentally tied to the market. David Zaret, C. John Sommerville, Alexandra Halasz, and others all have emphasized that during the Renaissance printed material became a commodity to be bought and sold and that this commodification could thus democratize or restrict arguments contained therein.<sup>3</sup> What format did a text take? How much did it cost? What other means of access to the discussion were available? How much might the author have been motivated by profit, ideology, or other factors? The means

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<sup>1</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), xi.

<sup>3</sup>David Zaret, *The Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of print: Pamphlets and the public sphere in early modern England*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



of distributing a text, then, and its role in a “marketplace of print,” remain fundamental to understanding the purpose of its argument.

Thus each of the four panelists in this session addressed the material object of the text, its dialogue with other available texts, and its status as a commodity as well as the arguments put forth in the texts themselves. Eleanor Pettus presented a statistical analysis of the production of Latin grammars in England during the sixteenth century, noting that a three-decade gap in production beginning in 1533 might be read as post-Reformation crown hostility to the Latin tongue. However, closer analysis revealed crown patronage of William Lily’s *Octo Partibus* in a possible attempt to support the language. According to Pettus, even this crown intervention could not prevent a shift in the Renaissance educational curriculum, de-emphasizing Latin and undermining commonly held assumptions that Renaissance learning elevated it. The new grammars produced post-1530s, she claims, were of a lower caliber and aimed at teaching practical as opposed to academic Latin. Pettus’ arguments raise questions about long-term changes in pedagogical approaches, particularly to classical learning, but her paper also raises methodological questions. What was the role of foreign print production within the domestic market? How and for how long did a book continue to circulate after its initial purchase? And how accurate can statistics be for the sixteenth century?

Rickie-Ann Legleitner focused instead on a particular text. The play *Arden of Faversham* (c.1590), written by an unknown author and based on a real-life murder recounted by the chronicler Ralph Holinshed, appeared in various murder pamphlets as well. According to Legleitner the popularity of the story warrants a closer look at what the author hoped to communicate in the play. She discovered that the text holds up two competing models of marriage for comparison and criticism: companionate and patrilineal. Legleitner argues that by examining how the play’s author manipulated this already-successful story we can discern a contemporary criticism of these two moral economies. The lesson: an equal partnering based on love could lead to blindness caused by lust and instability, due to the vagaries of emotion; while privileging male bonds could lead to greed, moral depravity, and deception. Legleitner’s skilful interrogation of the text reminds scholars to examine the nuances of texts not belonging to the canon of “high literature,” particularly if they represent variations on a popular theme. One question perhaps not asked frequently enough is “Why tell the story *again*?” especially in a competitive market.

Christopher J. Lane examined the education of laymen with regard to their choice of vocation in seventeenth-century France. Drawing on Charles Gobinet’s *Instruction de la jeunesse en la piété chrétienne*, Lane argues that secular vocations were emphasized in Catholic as well as Protestant societies during the Renaissance. In France, at least, some theologians argued that inequality of life-states was less important than a considered and proper choice of the state that best suited the individual. Competing forces had to be balanced, as vocation was given by God as well as chosen by the individual and discerned both with help and on one’s own. Lane’s paper addressed various texts and sermons that might educate people about choosing their place in a broader social, economic, and religious economy, an education necessary before formal training and apprenticeship could begin

within a specific vocation. Thus Lane demonstrates once again the relationship between text, authority, and participation in broader systems.

Finally, Rachel McGregor's paper, presented here, examines author self-fashioning in educational treatises in sixteenth-century England. According to McGregor, the notion that pedagogues moved from a rhetoric of gift exchange to a capitalist argument that they should be paid for their product is spurious. By examining several educational treatises, she demonstrates that all authors had to maneuver within the market economy *and* the moral economy and that different justifications for the sale of their God-given knowledge corresponded to different modes of garnering authority rather than any linear progression. These methods competed throughout the century and beyond and often had more to do with captivating a particular audience than with the alleged emergence of capitalism. McGregor's paper therefore represents all of the critical issues discussed by her panel. She engages not only systems of exchange and authority but also the text as both commodity and message. Her analysis also raises interesting questions which overlap with those raised by other panelists. How are systems of self-representation affected and overlapped by those operating in other countries? How effectively did new texts compete with educational treatises already on the market? And how were they received? Thus, like any good panel this one—and McGregor's paper in particular—has raised more questions than it has answered.

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## “Exchanging Values”: Negotiating Pedagogical Authority and the Transmission of Knowledge in Sixteenth-Century English Pedagogical Literature

by Rachel McGregor

Since the time of the ancient Greeks reward for learning has remained an ideologically charged subject, and anxieties regarding the sale of wisdom have a long history in western culture. The sixteenth century holds special significance for scholars of English exchange practices, and this is equally true for the study of the exchange of learning. For contemporary pedagogues the emerging print market provided new opportunities for dissemination of their teachings; yet publication also risked breaching ancient injunctions against the sale of knowledge. This study investigates the way two tropes, giving and working, were used to avoid accusations of prostituting wisdom in some of the seminal educational works of the later sixteenth century. In a famous thesis that has informed numerous studies of the early modern period Marcel Mauss argues that capitalist societies evolve from older gift-based formations. While we do witness a shift from notions of gifts to commodities in the prefatory matter of the educational works discussed here, this study rejects the objective categories of gift and commodity employed by Mauss and his ideas regarding societal development. Instead, this investigation draws on more recent anthropological work to expose the subjective investments that govern our understanding of exchange.<sup>2</sup> Once we recognize that discourses of exchange do not attest to objective values and practices we can better appreciate the ideological agendas that representations of exchange are made to serve. For the educators in question, drawing on the associations of various symbolic modes of exchange affords specific opportunities for legitimization and authorization. In the texts examined here representations of exchange are deployed to demonstrate pedagogical worth and as a means to channel the reproduction of cultural values.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council that has enabled me to undertake my doctoral research. I am also very grateful to the University of Aberdeen’s Centre for Early Modern Studies for making it possible for me to present a version of this paper at the Newberry Library.

<sup>2</sup> Mauss sees gift exchange as a mode of exchange characteristic of “primitive” or “archaic” societies as opposed to commodity exchange which occurs at a later stage in a society’s evolution. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1954), 45. While studies of giving in the sixteenth-century by Natalie Zemon Davis and Barbara Sebek have endeavored to revise Mauss’s linear theory of societal development, they tend to retain the assumption that gift exchange predates commodity exchange. Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 9; Sebek, “Good Turns and the Art of Merchandizing: Conceptualizing Exchange in Early Modern England,” *Early Modern Culture: an Electronic Seminar* 2 (2002), <http://emc.eserver.org/1-2/sebek.html>.

Where anxieties are experienced today regarding the commercialization of education, they are generally read as the product of modern capitalist society. However, prohibitions against the sale of wisdom are part of a longstanding cultural tradition, stemming from classical philosophy and the bible and inscribed in canon law during the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Though it had persisted for many centuries, the problem of selling knowledge took on a new aspect in the early modern period with the emergence of the commercial book trade. This study explores how sixteenth-century educators dealt with this issue to take advantage of the didactic potential of print. To contextualize the strategies of these pedagogues, it is instructive to examine the transmission of both injunctions against the sale of learning and traditional responses to them in the period. In doing so, drawing on recent theoretical work allows us to appreciate the subjective assumptions informing them.

Classical prohibitions against the sale of wisdom gained currency in sixteenth-century England thanks to a number of vernacular collections of ancient maxims and parables. In Nicholas Udall’s translation of Erasmus’ *Apophthegmes* (1542), for example, English readers encounter Socrates’ abhorrence for the sophistic practice of taking payment for instruction, which he considers “a thing gotten by plaine sacrilege.”<sup>4</sup> The choice of phrase makes sense according to the classical conception of knowledge as the most divine of human possessions. William Baldwin’s *Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (1547) lists several variant forms of the ancient adage, “Of all the gyftes of god, wisdom is the chefast.”<sup>5</sup> The bible contains similar precepts. Proverbs 3:15, for instance, privileges learning over all other belongings: “It [wisdom] is more precious than pearls: and all things that thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her.”<sup>6</sup> We see the influence of these notions in the descriptions of knowledge employed by sixteenth-century educators. In *The Petie Schole*, for example, Francis Clement calls learning a “peerless jewel.”<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, to pay for learning is therefore to put a price on the priceless, which inevitably debases the most sacred of human possessions.

While allusions to precious gems that frequently appear in assertions of the inestimable value of learning suggest that its worth is intrinsic, recent work on the theory of exchange has shown the creation of value to be a cultural process.<sup>8</sup> In modern anthropological terms knowledge is presented in these statements as an enclaved commodity; that is, something considered to be so unique or individualized that nothing can match it in value to make exchange possible.<sup>9</sup> As Igor Kopytoff observes, the way things move in and out of commodity status over time or are viewed differently by different people at the same time reveals “a moral economy that stands between the objective economy of visible transactions.” Returning to the classical example, the different ideas of the sophists and Socrates regarding the commodity status of knowledge help illustrate this point. But

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<sup>3</sup> Gaines Post, Kimon Giocarinis, and Richard Kay, “The Medieval Heritage of a Humanistic Ideal: ‘Scientia donum dei est, unde vendi non potest,’” *Traditio* 11 (1955): 195-234.

<sup>4</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Apophthegmes*, trans. Nicholas Udall (London, 1542), E1v.

<sup>5</sup> William Baldwin, *Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1547), M8v.

<sup>6</sup> *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva, 1561), W2r. All subsequent references are to this version.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Clement, *The Petie Schole with an English Orthographie* (London, 1587), C5v.

<sup>8</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in Appadurai, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-63.

<sup>9</sup> Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Appadurai, 64.

even more importantly this example shows how dominant ideologies of value can be utilized to serve the interests of power. As James Fredal demonstrates, by charging the sophists with trafficking in knowledge Socrates and his defenders aim to delegitimize and marginalize their educational competitors.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to arguments asserting the inestimable value of learning, classical denunciations of the sale of wisdom contend that taking fees taints the special relationship between master and pupil by ignoring the learned man's social obligation to pass on knowledge freely. Xenophon's Socrates presents the error as tantamount to sexual immorality, calling those who offer education for money the "prostitutors of wisdom."<sup>11</sup> According to the bible man should imitate the generosity of the Almighty in the dissemination of knowledge. As Matthew 10.8 commands, "freely ye have received, freely give." The issue of how and why man should emulate the beneficence of their creator was, as Natalie Zemon Davis has shown, a critical issue during the religious reformations of the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Denouncing the economic understanding of salvation that they perceived in the old faith, reformers advocated a new ethic of gratuitous giving that was not grounded in the economic logic of reciprocity. This offered a model for conferring wisdom while accusations of simony leveled against the established clergy can only have bolstered anxieties about commerce in sacred things.

Injunctions to give nevertheless offered a potential solution for pedagogues in need of a livelihood. Educators could establish a gift economy with their pupils to prevent learning being sullied by a commercial transaction. This practice also had classical precedent. In *The Education of Children in Learning* (1588) William Kempe reports how Socrates was sustained by the gifts of pupils' parents, and presents a romanticized vision of the Socratic era in which men "without constraint of promise were sufficiently bound by naturall affection . . . to recompence their teacher."<sup>13</sup> According to sixteenth-century formulations, with "presentes of freendes the price or value of the thing that is sent is not to be considered, but the mynde rather of the sender."<sup>14</sup> The value of learning is therefore left intact in gift exchange because it is not measured against another tangible commodity. As in Kempe's text, gift exchange is also juxtaposed to commodity exchange in contemporary accounts through the absence of legal enforcement. Arthur Golding's translation of Seneca's *De beneficiis* says of benefits, for example, "thou stainest them, if thou make them a matter of law."<sup>15</sup> Free from contractual obligation, gift exchange has the potential to preserve the intimate and sanctified relationship of pedagogue and pupil. For both Seneca and Kempe, reciprocity constitutes a powerful force of social cohesion.

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<sup>10</sup> James Fredal, "Why Shouldn't the Sophists Charge Fees?" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2008), [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.882003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&resid=ri:lion&rft\\_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R04097918](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.882003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&resid=ri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R04097918).

<sup>11</sup> E. C. Marchant trans., *Xenophon: Memorabilia and Oeconomicus*, ed. E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: Heinemann, 1923), I.vi.13-14.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, "Gifts and the Gods," in *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 100-23.

<sup>13</sup> William Kempe, *The Education of Children in Learning* (London, 1588), C3r.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Taverner, *Flores aliquot sententiarum ex variis collecti scriptoribus: The flowers of sciences gathered out of sundry writers* (London, 1540), D2r.

<sup>15</sup> Seneca, *De beneficiis*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1578), I2v.

Yet recent academic work has called into question the amicable and spontaneous nature of gifts, on which the viability of gift exchange as an alternative to selling knowledge depends. Responding primarily to Mauss’s seminal *Essai sur le don*, theorists have pointed to the economic imperatives underlying gifts and the cultural mechanisms enforcing reciprocity to challenge distinctions between gift and commodity exchange. Recent historiography dealing with the early modern period has done much to substantiate their claims.<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this study Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas in *The Logic of Practice* in particular elucidate the subjective judgments that underpin the labeling of exchange practices and their ideological usefulness. Bourdieu sees the dichotomy between economic and non-economic practices as a fallacy that fails to understand the “science of ‘economic’ practices” as a “science capable of treating all practices.”<sup>17</sup> In other words all activities are fundamentally economic, whether they aim at material or symbolic rewards. Gifts therefore share the same objective nature as sales; however, they hold a different subjective “truth” that enables us to talk of them as separate things. It is from the individual and collective misrecognition of their objective truth, Bourdieu theorizes, that gifts derive much of their social efficacy. The “symbolic violence” of giving is often a more effective way to subjugate another individual than the overt violence of an explicit imposition of debt. Equally, exposing the economic intentions underlying gifts effectively annuls their special power. Bourdieu’s assertions are borne out by the attempts of Socrates and his supporters to undermine the sophists and, in an early modern context, by Protestant reformers’ attempts to derogate the old faith.<sup>18</sup>

The alternative solution available to educators who wished recompense for their teachings is more overtly economic than gift exchange, but it also involves subjective elements that can be exploited strategically. As well as the call to give, the gospel of Matthew offers another rationale for the recompense of pedagogues, 10.10: “The workman is worthie of his meat.” If pedagogues are paid for the effort that goes into teaching instead of for the knowledge that they impart, the value of wisdom is left beyond negotiation. Throughout the ages this principle had been used to resolve the issue of compensating teachers through the salaries and stipends conventionally assigned to them.<sup>19</sup> The issue of evaluating pedagogical labor, however, is far from straightforward and contemporary accounts show the influence of subjective individual and cultural values on assignments of worth to different types of teaching. In *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (1581) Richard Mulcaster, headmaster of the Merchant Taylors’ School, complains about the way salaries are determined:

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<sup>16</sup> See for example Appadurai, “Introduction” in *The Social Life of Things*; Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992). On early modern practices see Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harrington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Scott Cutler Shershow, “Work and the Gift: Notes Toward an Investigation,” in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Linda Woodbridge (Basingstoke, Hamps: Palgrave, 2003); Shershow, “Response to Barbara Sebek’s ‘Good Turns and the Art of Merchandizing,’” *Early Modern Culture: an Electronic Seminar 2* (2002), <http://emc.eserver.org/1-2/shershow.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 122.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to Davis, Peter Stallybrass explores the demonization of economic understandings of faith in “The Value of Culture and the Disavowal of Things,” in *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, ed. Henry S. Turner (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Post, 195-210.

What reason is it . . . to encrease wages, as the child waxeth in learning? . . . What reason caryeth it, when the labour is lesse, then to enlarge the allowance? the latter maister to reape the benefit of the formers labour, bycause the child makes more shew with him?<sup>20</sup>

Elementary teachers have the harder task, he argues, yet receive lesser pay. This situation can only be accounted for if there has been some assimilation between evaluations of labor and of knowledge. The phrase “more shew” suggests the cultural bias towards more advanced learning; it receives greater recognition and is therefore rewarded more highly. But the objective status of Mulcaster’s own view must be questioned too. The evaluation of intellectual labor is highly problematic; so while the writer claims to expose the unfairness of current wages, he is making an equally subjective judgment regarding the value of rudimentary instruction. In light of the desire to improve elementary education evident throughout this text and the *Elementarie* (1582), his analysis of pedagogical wages illustrates how seemingly objective accounts of exchange can be put to rhetorical use.

Recent theoretical work has left us better able to appreciate the subjective investments that govern exchange practices. No matter how deep-rooted in our culture, conventional injunctions against the sale of wisdom indicate cultural values, not the objective value of knowledge. The two solutions that typically have been employed to legitimately secure recompense for teachers also involve subjective work. Gift exchange remains a viable alternative to the purchase of education only if one ignores the economic and contractual features it shares with commodity exchange. Remuneration for pedagogical labor requires evaluation of intangible intellectual effort and invites subjective assumptions regarding the type of teaching that is most difficult or worthwhile. In all cases the representation of exchange can be deployed to rhetorical and ideological ends. This investigation deals with texts, compounding the importance of recognizing representational elements of exchange. Regardless of the discourse they adopt, each of the pedagogues treated here endeavored to reach his pupils through the commercial book market. The discourses they employ, then, represent different ways of styling their entrance into the same market. As the remainder of this discussion demonstrates, the tropes of giving and working afford writers different opportunities for both creating educational authority and protecting that authority once it has been disseminated via the printed text.

*The Schoolmaster* by Roger Ascham is one of the most famous didactic treatises from the period. Published posthumously in 1570, it enjoyed considerable commercial success, going through five editions in two decades.<sup>21</sup> The idea of the text as commercial product, however, is absent from its preface; rather Ascham’s treatise is enmeshed in a series of gift narratives, where the recipients vary from patrons to relatives to the English commonwealth. These references to giving obscure the economic function of the text, but at the same time they encourage material and symbolic rewards. What is more, each image of giving enables the writer to construct a particular sort of identity for himself and his educational program. Analysis of these instances of giving reveals not only Ascham’s

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children*, ed. William Barker (London: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 232.

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence V. Ryan, introduction to *The Schoolmaster*, by Roger Ascham (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), xii.

efforts to assert his cultural authority, but also the hierarchical tendencies of his project to educate the realm.

The economic imperatives of the initial references to giving that the reader encounters in *The Schoolmaster* remain the easiest to decode. The first piece of prefatory matter is a dedicatory epistle from Ascham's widow Margaret to William Cecil that marks the text immediately, despite her disinterested rhetoric, as a gift seeking return.<sup>22</sup> Appeals are made to Cecil in Ascham's own preface too. Here the text is also implicated in an earlier economic transaction with another patron, Richard Sackville, who had promised to pay for the writer's son to attend school in return for his educational advice.<sup>23</sup> In all these instances interaction with the patron is couched in terms of amicability familiar in much contemporary literature of patronage. With reference to Bourdieu's theory we can understand the Aschams' expressions of goodwill, which act to obscure the economic nature of their requests, as a means of encouraging recompense. The pedagogue's recurrent allusions to the paucity of his offering function in a similar way. In more than one instance Ascham suggests the "labors" and "pains" that have gone into the production of his treatise, yet he continually undercuts the labor value of his text. Though he has been "a busy builder" the fruit of his labor is disparaged as a "little treatise," a "poor schoolhouse," and a "small cottage."<sup>24</sup> Ascham aligns textual production with building, but his role in the construction of his treatise is less that of laborer than of patron. His account of writing therefore represents a further narrative of giving in which his schoolhouse becomes a well-meant but deficient act of educational philanthropy:

though it appear now . . . poor for the stuff and rude for the workmanship, yet in going forward I found the site so good as I was loath to give it over, but the making so costly, outreaching my ability, as many times I wished that . . . my dear friends with full purses . . . had had the doing of it.<sup>25</sup>

Ascham's metaphorical representation of writing denies his text labor value and also undermines any idea of its intrinsic worth. Commodity value is denied in order to obscure the economic nature of the transaction.

Self-deprecating disclaimers of worth are hardly uncommon in literature seeking patronage during the period. Nevertheless, Ascham is able to use the conventions of giving to build a sense of his own cultural authority. The writer underplays the worth of his text by repudiating his intellectual solvency, but in his deferential and evasive rhetoric itself he employs a form of what Frank Whigham calls the "conspicuous expenditure of words."<sup>26</sup> The rhetorical sophistication of Ascham's renunciations of worth bear testament to his inner resources. In some instances, the writer's self-deprecating statements claim knowledge while seeming to reject it. Due to his own shortcomings, Ascham writes, he has had to rely on intellectual contributions from the writings of others, including

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<sup>22</sup> Ascham, 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> Ascham, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ascham, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Ascham, 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Whigham, "The Rhetoric of Elizabethan Suitors' Letters," *PMLA* 96, no. 5 (1981): 868.



Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and the contemporary educators Johannes Sturm and John Cheke to “patch up” his educational foundation as best as he can. Ascham uses older writing to supplement his own, but it is impossible to impart knowledge that one does not hold one’s self. As Davis, Derrida, and Scott-Warren point out, the ability to give is predicated on ownership of that which is given.<sup>27</sup> Through his act of giving, then, Ascham is stamping his own claim on the knowledge of others.

Ascham’s expenditure of his intellectual resources is also framed as an act of Christian piety. Statements that Ascham assigns to Sackville strongly suggest Protestant ideologies of giving, arguing that the pedagogue is obligated to write due to the ample gifts he has received at the Lord’s hands: “seeing God did so bless you . . . surely you should please God, benefit your country, and honest your name, if you would take the pains to impart to others what you have learned.”<sup>28</sup> In her dedication Margaret also presents the treatise as the fulfillment of Ascham’s Christian duty, “such good as my husband was able to do and leave to the commonweal.”<sup>29</sup> Here, the widow uses an image that Davis has connected to the reformed ideal of giving. Davis sees inheritance, which passes from generation to generation with recompense precluded, as a suitable analogy for the new spirit of the gift, which “wants to move through time, through history, never reversing its direction.”<sup>30</sup>

Margaret’s decision to style the treatise as a bequest certainly seems to aim at portraying her husband in a pious light. However, the functions of Ascham’s gift sit uneasily with the Protestant ethic of giving, and the ends to which the discourse of inheritance is applied cause us to reconsider its appropriateness as a corollary for the reformed ideal. After all, Ascham’s widow has appropriated the writer’s free gift to his country for patronage and commercial gain. Aside from this, it is clear from both her own and her husband’s assertions that they expect other forms of return for their beneficence. Margaret’s reference to her husband’s “good memory” and Ascham’s own allusion to the “honesting” or honoring of his name indicate the symbolic rewards he derives through his gift. Gratuitousness, the key characteristic of reformed giving, purportedly seeks no return. In doing so, however, it elicits reward in the form of symbolic capital; that is, of honor, status, and recognition.<sup>31</sup>

Not only is Ascham’s gratuitous act not entirely devoid of economic interest, it also breaches the reformed ideal of giving indiscriminately. The reformed model of giving was gratuitous but also free in the sense that it rejected notions of merit, to which reformers attributed the heresies of the old faith.<sup>32</sup> The image of Ascham’s text as a bequest to the commonwealth accords with the reformed model. However, the writer more frequently uses the discourse of inheritance to envisage a restricted channel of reception. To a large extent, Ascham’s pedagogical authority relies on a narrow line of descent for his knowledge. Using the image of giving the writer is able to imagine a select

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<sup>27</sup> Davis, “Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 (1983): 70-73; Derrida, 28; Scott-Warren, 12-15.

<sup>28</sup> Ascham, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ascham, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 118.

<sup>31</sup> As Bourdieu observes, gratuitousness is a type of “demonstrative expenditure” which represents “a kind of legitimizing self-affirmation through which power makes itself known and recognized.” *The Logic of Practice*, 131.

<sup>32</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 244-55; Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 119; Peter Marshall, *Reformation England: 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), 1-48.

group of recipients for his teachings, thus maintaining the status of the knowledge on which his own cultural authority relies. The first recipients Ascham chooses for his treatise are his two young sons. His belief that they will “come to sufficiency of living” through the learning in the treatise assumes the knowledge it contains will continue to be culturally privileged.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Ascham promises to teach a form of Latin distinct from the “common order in the common schools.”<sup>34</sup> Even in the most commercial features of the text the fantasy of contained distribution remains evident. The title page stipulates to the general reader, for example, that the text is “specially purposed for the private bringing-up of youth in gentlemen’s and noblemen’s houses.”<sup>35</sup> Later Ascham berates young gentle and noblemen for failing to pursue the education that is the mark of their status, for “he knoweth, that nobility without virtue and wisdom is blood indeed but blood, truly, without bones and sinews.”<sup>36</sup> In the writer’s eyes power is inherited only partially through lineage; the rest must be endowed by learning. Offered first to Sackville for his grandson, then to Cecil, Master of the Wards, then to noble and gentle charges themselves, Ascham’s act of giving seeks to ensure the reproduction of traditional hierarchies.

While the discourse of giving employed by Ascham persists well into the seventeenth century and beyond, in the closing decades of the sixteenth century a new rhetoric emerges in the prefaces of didactic literature that figures writing and teaching as work. It must be reiterated that the emergence of this new mode of representation does not correlate with a shift in exchange practices. Rather the discourse of labor used by William Bullokar, Edmund Coote, and William Kempe, among others, affords alternative prospects for the creation of authorial identity in line with their social pretensions and agendas.

Kempe’s bold assertion at the beginning of his *Education of Children in Learning* (1588) indicates his belief in the worth of pedagogical labor: “the education of Children in learning,” he proclaims, “is no phantasticall nor idle toy, but a verie profitable matter.”<sup>37</sup> This educator’s account of textual production makes a suggestive comparison to Ascham’s. The earlier writer constructs his authority as a passive recipient of ancient knowledge, whereas Kempe claims to be perfecting what has gone before him:

I confesse, that many learned men have already bestowed verie exquisite and commendable labours: yet for that we have endeavoured not only to fill up the emptie roome with such members as wanted, and to separate that which seemed superfluous but also to new cast the whole in another mould, and to bring it to another forme, breefe, and easie.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ascham, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ascham, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Ascham, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ascham, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Kempe, A3r.

<sup>38</sup> Kempe, A3r.

The authority of Kempe's treatise is not derived from early writers; it comes rather from his own efforts. His description is filled with the discourse of manual production. Like a craftsman he has wrought the accumulation of pedagogical wisdom into shape. In his *Pamphlet for Grammar* (1586) William Bullokar uses the same strategy of self-authorization. Playing on a different sense of labor he presents the act of writing as childbirth.<sup>39</sup> As Heidi Brayman Hackel notes, the metaphor of text as child is used relatively frequently by contemporary writers, usually emphasizing the vulnerability of the divulged text.<sup>40</sup> In Bullokar's case the image is used as a means of validating his pedagogical expertise. For each month of gestation he has gone through a year of study, suffering "many a pinching pang." For Bullokar God's gift is not knowledge but a predisposition towards a certain kind of labor: "Som hav on gift, som an, other," he claims, "and God appoointth, aech soyl / Too bring-forth diversly their fruit."<sup>41</sup> The grammarian's text represents the culmination of his own innate abilities.

In Edmund Coote's *English Schoole-maister* (1596), notions of labor coincide with a willing acknowledgement of the text as a commercial product. With a pun, the title page imagines the text as a shop front in which "the School-maister hangeth forth his table, to the view of all beholders, setting forth some of the chiefe commodities of his profession."<sup>42</sup> But Coote distances his sale from economic self-interest and takes pains to advertise the public benefits of his treatise. He presents the price of the text as economical to the point of self-sacrifice, including "such examples for fayre writing . . . that if thou shouldest buy the like of any other . . . they alone would cost thee much more money then I aske thee for my whole profession."<sup>43</sup> Affordability becomes a matter of social responsibility through Coote's claims that he will "ease the poorer sort, of much charge that they have been at in maintaining their children long at Schoole and in buying many Bookes."<sup>44</sup> We have to question, however, Coote's claims to be benefiting the poorer classes. The expense of books rendered them an unaffordable luxury for many; Coote's *Schoole-maister*, a quarto volume spanning some hundred pages, would have involved a reasonably substantial outlay. Yet by presenting his text as an economical purchase the pedagogue is able to fashion a beneficent persona. As this example illustrates, commercial discourses can be appropriated to demonstrate moral authority as easily as ideas of giving.

For Kempe also the discourse of labor is more than a way to evade the issue of selling knowledge and demonstrate pedagogical expertise. Like Ascham's discourse of giving it enables the writer to show his Christian piety. Kempe stresses the effort that has gone into accumulating his specialized knowledge and asserts at the end of his text that for some it "may yet seeme too hard, for it is so manifold, the parts so divers, and respect to divers persons."<sup>45</sup> His statement suggests not only his own learnedness but his religious devotion. Hard work, particularly when associated with

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<sup>39</sup> William Bullokar, *Pamphlet for Grammar* (London, 1586), A2r.

<sup>40</sup> Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 121.

<sup>41</sup> Bullokar, A2r.

<sup>42</sup> Edmund Coote, *The English Schoole-maister* (London, 1596), A1r.

<sup>43</sup> Coote, A2v.

<sup>44</sup> Coote, A2v.

<sup>45</sup> Kempe, H2v.

learning, is imbued in Kempe's text with Christian significance: "even so Salomon saith of knowledge, that God had given to the children of Adam great trauaile in searching out wisdom, to humble their vaine minds, and to exercise them." The pursuit of knowledge, which according to reformed doctrine can never be attained perfectly, keeps men from "sluggishnes the mother of all vice." In his preface Kempe characterizes the contemporary state of England as "secure," "licentious," and "iniquitous," evoking vices associated with mental and physical inoccupation.<sup>46</sup> As well as showing his own Christian humility Kempe's educational efforts qualify him as a spiritual redeemer of the realm.

If Kempe's project to promulgate learning is successful the special status he gleans as a learned man comes under threat. His preface underscores a tension between education as the task of all men "of what state or degree soever" and the proper responsibility of "a few of the learned sort, namely . . . Scholemaysters."<sup>47</sup> Dilution of cultural authority remains a problem that all three pedagogues face, as Ascham did before them. In Coote's case the problem is perhaps most pronounced since his treatise aims specifically at the lower classes, "such men and women of trades (as Taylors, Weauers, Shop-keepers, Seamsters, and such other) as haue vndertaken the charge of teaching others."<sup>48</sup> To solve this problem he demands different modes of reading for different classes of reader, where occupation determines the type of work that will be conducted on the text. He excuses the "learneder sort" from the task of reading his "Preface for direction to The Reader," trusting them to implement his methodology without guidance. For the "unskillful" tradesmen and women, Coote orders a far more meticulous mode of reading and calls for them to mark any places where they are doubtful of his meaning with a pen or pin, "until thou meetest with your Minister, or other learned scholer of whom thou maist enquire." Reluctant to hand over his professional wisdom indiscriminately, Coote endeavors to preserve its privileged status by demanding his "unskilled readers" to submit to the authority of a qualified substitute. Manual occupation is in his view the token of intellectual incapacity, and tradesmen and women are precluded from possessing the cultural authority of the educator. Although Coote seeks to educate the lower classes, learning does not elevate them in the social hierarchy he envisages, which is governed by occupation.

Perhaps as the result of the longstanding tendency to divorce education from commerce, the merchandizing strategies of sixteenth-century educators have received little scholarly attention. But precisely because of the deep-rooted desire to divide learning from business early printed pedagogical texts provide a rich field within which to explore the subjective investments that govern exchange. In the examples discussed here educators employ the tropes of giving and working as ways to negotiate their way into the market in the face of cultural hostility toward the commercialization of education. Because we are dealing with published texts these discourses embody modes of representation. However, if we apply this insight to all discourses of exchange, following recent anthropological theory, the ideological purposes these discourses serve become more apparent. More than ways of avoiding accusations of selling wisdom, notions of giving and

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<sup>46</sup> Kempe, A2r-A3r. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "secure" as "without care." *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>47</sup> Kempe, A3rv.

<sup>48</sup> Coote, A3r.

working represent strategies of authorization in these pedagogical texts. Through giving Ascham is able to demonstrate his intellectual sufficiency and create a pious identity in line with reformed ideals of gratuitousness. The discourse of labor provides Coote, Kempe, and Bullokar with a different claim to authority, but one that also fits with contemporary models of Christian humility. In each case we see how ideas of exchange may be deployed in the acquisition of power. The hierarchical programs of Ascham and Coote demonstrate furthermore how moralities of exchange can be used to protect one's status against competing claims to authority. Exchange relations, as we have seen, enforce social relations, with distribution of cultural resources rationalized according to their seemingly objective logic.

Having denied the correlation between subjective and objective modes of exchange, why the discourse of labor appears simultaneously in a number of pedagogical texts at the end of the sixteenth century remains to be considered. To conclude this investigation I suggest that the emergence of the discourse of labor is bound up with a growing sense among educators of belonging to a professional class. Coote, Kempe, and Bullokar are interested not only in proving their own status but in demonstrating the value of their occupation, which many of their contemporaries treated as a stop gap on the way to more prestigious careers.<sup>49</sup> Instrumental to the belief that pedagogy was a worthy profession in its own right was the changing sense of vocation. Prior to the Reformations the term had applied only to spiritual occupations, until the writings of Luther and Calvin promoted a broader understanding of divinely elected work.<sup>50</sup> As well as affecting the relationship of individuals to their labors, by the late 1580s this reinterpretation brought about a sense of professional identity among groups of workers. This was reflected by the new sense of "vocation" that arose at this time denoting occupational class.<sup>51</sup> We see the influence of changing ideas of vocation in each of the later prefaces treated here: in Bullokar's belief in a predisposition to labor; in Kempe's spiritual affirmation of hard work; and in Coote's proud proclamation of the commodities of his profession and his desire to distribute their benefits along occupational lines. But alongside changing concepts of vocation pedagogical writers themselves became responsible for elevating their craft. By revealing pedagogy as a systematized branch of knowledge in their publications, each of the writers examined here played an important role in establishing education as a legitimate and worthwhile profession.

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<sup>49</sup> John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 119.

<sup>50</sup> Max Weber provides an account of changing theological attitudes to labor and vocation in "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), 155-83. See also, Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the first instance of "vocation" referring collectively to all members of a profession in 1587.

## *Gender and Social Roles in Education*

### Introduction

By Kathleen Smith

The papers in the “Gender and Social Roles in Education” panel focused on the importance of such factors as gender, geographic location, social class, and religious affiliation in seeking to understand instructional programs and goals in medieval and early modern Europe. These presentations investigated topics such as constructions of gender roles (Polegato and Henrichs), marital relationships and preparatory training for women (Bilhartz and Henrichs), and traditional perspectives on the transmission of instructional knowledge (Kiser). The range of these subjects reflects the diversity of the educational environment: just as the recorded experience of women and men in the premodern European context resists arrangement into one single unified historical narrative, the pedagogic systems described in this panel challenge and expand the definition of “proper” education to include an awareness of the various situations in which it could take place and the many ways it could be structured.

Andrea Polegato’s “Sexuality and Education in Pietro Aretino’s Comedy *The Stable Master (Il Marescalco)*” examined one influential depiction of an educator in the Italian humanist context. Aretino’s play was the first to depict the character of the Pedant (*il Pedante*), a mocking parody of teachers and grammarians whose later prominence in works such as the *Commedia dell’Arte* demonstrated his continuing relevance. Polegato explored the ways in which this character is represented within the ongoing discussion about the construction of masculinity and the characteristics of suitable training for young men at the noble courts.

Jessica Bilhartz studied the upbringing of Henrietta Maria of France, wife of Charles I of Britain, in her paper “The Mis-Education of Henrietta Maria.” In Bilhartz’ argument Henrietta Maria received a substandard education for a noblewoman of her background and social context, particularly compared with her royal siblings and relatives. Educational deficiencies such as her lack of ability in Latin and English presented severe obstacles to her role as queen, particularly during and after the English Civil War.

Amanda Henrichs, in her paper “‘Equal Delight it is to Learn and Teach’: Paradise, Mutuality, and Education in Lucy Hutchinson,” explored representations of learning and gender roles in Lucy Hutchinson’s chronicle of the English Civil War, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. Henrichs argued that these depictions of an ideal marital relationship promoted the education of all women in order to prepare them for their role as a contributing if not equal partner in marriage, and Lucy

Hutchinson's own position as an intelligent and well-educated woman provided an important example.

Dauna Kiser's "Teaching the Vision: Female Mystics' Participation in Thirteenth-Century Education," presented here, discusses the role of written examples of mystic visions in preparing others to undertake similar journeys. Women such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Brabant, and Beatrice of Nazareth wrote extensively about their experiences from a perspective outside of the Church hierarchy and became tremendously influential in inspiring other mystics. Kiser here breaks down three separate aspects of visionary voyages described by these accounts—the actual descriptions of the journey, the "inevitable let-down" that followed it, and for some mystics the necessary preparatory steps—in order to highlight the pedagogic function of these accounts and to demonstrate their value as detailed instructional programs.

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*Teaching the Vision:  
Female Mystics' Participation  
in Thirteenth-Century Education*

By Dauna M. Kiser

Female visionaries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought to their readers vivid accounts of spiritual meetings with God regarding the religious life. They passed on moral lessons or doctrinal ideas acquired from various beings or personas during their visions. The imagery and message in their written accounts is the subject of much scholarship, as is the authority a female visionary gained within the Christian church even from outside the official hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> But the mystic and her written works provided the medieval reader with another valuable kind of knowledge—that of the practical aspects of a mystical experience. From clues in the work of Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Beatrice of Nazareth, and from the latter's biography, we can also discern some of the realities students would need to understand regarding the processes that occurred during a spiritual voyage. I suggest that during the thirteenth century a specific program of study existed in which promising students could learn advanced techniques for achieving a visionary state. While the specifics of such “coursework” involving the visionary experience may appear informal or unstructured in historical records, the training in these “schools” paralleled other types of educational programs that have been more closely studied by modern scholars. Knowledge gained by mystics through otherworldly revelations became as important in the greater medieval culture as it was in any monastic or secular school of the time, as evidenced by the increase in visionary literature during the thirteenth century.

The spiritual journey is one type of mystical event in which a person is said to be rapt into heaven or to divine realms. For this undertaking to be successful, the visionary passes through distinct phases which occur primarily in the same sequence during a vision, although those steps may be discussed in a different order in the accounts of each writer. Three major aspects of the journey stand out in their works. In the first aspect the students should recognize certain sensations during the journey—how it looks, feels, sounds, and so forth. Since many spiritual journeys were

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<sup>1</sup>For some examples see Carolyn Walker Bynum, “Women Mystics,” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroads, 1998), 267; Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, Introduction to *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, ed. Mulder-Bakker (Brepols: Turnhout, 2004), 1-19, esp. 3, 10; Allison Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2004.



spontaneous and unexpected, the information contained in a written text could help persons better understand what was happening to them even when no mentor was physically present. The second aspect of the journey pertains to its aftermath. This may seem less important next to the beauty and awesomeness of things seen and heard, but given the reaction by all three writers upon returning from their spiritual travels, it affected them enough that they wrote about it at length. The third aspect relates to techniques used in initiating a vision, and I will point out some of the methods the writers themselves employed or suggested in their writing.

The first aspect of the mystical experience a student should understand is the actual journey. At some point in their work, all three writers describe an event wherein the soul “goes” somewhere, away from the physical world. Whether spontaneous or initiated, once the event begins it proceeds in much the same way for all three. Mechthild is the most explicit on this issue: “Then the soul leaves the body, taking all her power, wisdom, love, and longing. Just the tiniest bit of her life force remains as in a sweet sleep.”<sup>2</sup> The physical body has no part in the activities that Mechthild experiences with God. To her the soul is separable from material form and her “conscious self” that does the experiencing is the soul that leaves the body behind.<sup>3</sup> The soul then engages with the divine, taking part in a variety of spiritual and intellectual activities. Hadewijch too relates how she is taken up into the spirit or taken somewhere away from worldly things. God removes her memory of the physical realm, and she goes to a place where earthly sensations do not affect her, at least for a while. Like Mechthild she is taken out of herself, although the initial direction her journey takes is different. She is often first drawn inward, then lifted up toward heaven where she sees, hears, and feels what is happening around her.<sup>4</sup> “God,” she writes, “withdrew my senses from every remembrance of alien things,” and she, the soul, goes to a place where earthly sensations do not affect her, at least for a while.<sup>5</sup> Like Mechthild she is taken out of herself, but she is often first drawn inward then lifted up into the spirit. She too is the “she” who is the soul is taken or carried away from her physical form and there sees, hears, and feels what is happening around her.<sup>6</sup> At the end of her Thirteenth Vision she sees the Virgin Mary, who tells her that she must leave her body to have fuller fruition. However, for the sake of others she, Hadewijch, will defer that departure, meaning she will not yet leave her physical body behind permanently and will at the present moment return.<sup>7</sup> Beatrice says much less about the manner in which the soul sees, hears, and feels *Minne* once she is with *Minne*, but near the end of her treatise she presents a description similar to that of Mechthild

<sup>2</sup>“So scheidet dú sele von dem lichamen mit aller ir maht, wisbeite, liebun und gerunge, sunder das minste teil irs lebendes belibet mit dem lichamen als in eime süssen schlaffe.” Book I, Chapter 2 in Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit, Nach der Eindsiedler Handschrift in kritischem Vergleich mit der gesamten Überlieferung*, ed. Hans Neumann, vol. 1 (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1990), 7; *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 40.

<sup>3</sup>Mechthild, Book II, Ch. 2 in *Das fließende Licht*, Neumann, 38; *Flowing Light*, Tobin, 70.

<sup>4</sup>“In enen dertiendaghe wasic binnen der messen op ghenomen inden gheeste vte mi selven.” Vision 12 in Joseph van Mierlo, ed., *Hadewijch, Visioenen*, vol. 1 (Antwerp: De Vlaamsche Boekenhalle, 1924), 125. Translations are my own with reference to Mother Columba Hart, trans., *Hadewijch, The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 293. See also Margot Schmidt and Helmut Riedlinger, eds., *Hadewijch, Das Buch der Visionen*, 2 vol. (Stuttgart: Bad Cannstatt, 1998).

<sup>5</sup>“Soe dat hi mi op nam alle mine sinne buten alle ghedinckenisse van vremder saken/ omme sijns te ghebrukene in enechiden.” Hadewijch, Vision 1, *Visioenen*, Van Mierlo, 10; *Hadewijch*, Hart, 263. Hadewijch writes similar passages at the beginnings of Visions 4, 5, and 8.

<sup>6</sup>“In enen dertiendaghe wasic binnen der messen op ghenomen inden gheeste vte mi selven.” Hadewijch, Vision 12, Van Mierlo, 125; Hart, 293.

<sup>7</sup>Hadewijch, Vision 13, Van Mierlo, 152-53; Hart, 301.

and Hadewijch. The soul is drawn by Love (*Minne*), she tells her readers, “above humanity, into love, and above human sense and reason and above all the works of the heart.”<sup>8</sup> For her the soul, “so gently and thoroughly sunken into Love,” has among other experiences “climbed with the spirit above time into eternity . . . where Love itself is without time, and she [the soul] is raised above all human modes of love . . . and [she] cannot regard neither saints, nor humans, nor angels, nor created things.”<sup>9</sup> These brief excerpts of a lengthy description make clear that she is aware that her “self” is taking part in activities that cannot take place within the limits of physicality.

For the student there is much to learn from these brief descriptions of the relationship between the soul and body. The most important knowledge is that most of the visionary experience seems to happen without the physical form. Whether the soul actually leaves or whether it only *seems* to leave is, in fact, beside the point. The individual having the vision feels as if the soul has left the body behind, so students can expect or can now understand that this is something they will also feel. The authors' descriptions of the actual process that takes place, whether being taken up or drawn inward, help students prepare for a similar array of sensations. Students afraid of letting go of their attachment to the flesh because they believe something disastrous will happen are assured that the “I” that is aware of sensation remains, and it is that “I” that travels to a communion with the divine. Students also learn that the soul continues to perceive a variety of sensory events, just as in the physical world. The senses in fact seem to be even more fully engaged. All three women report seeing, hearing, feeling, even tasting and smelling during a vision. So while the body will seem lifeless, the soul continues to be connected to it. The “I” of the soul does not get lost, and the material form is still there when the soul returns.

The second aspect of the visionary experience important for the student to expect are the aftereffects. The journey always ends at some point, a stage of the experience that all three authors indicate is disappointing for them. Mechthild tells the reader that she sees and hears various things each time she visits her lover in joy, but always after a time she must return to the body. Heaving a sigh, perhaps an animating intake of breath, she wakes. Back in her physical form, she becomes aware that it seems to take some time to regain movement. She presents the reader with a dialog between the soul and body that sometimes becomes an argument. The body complains it is left behind or worn out or powerless and indeed, says Mechthild, the Lord “brings me so many sweet strains with his strings \ that it stops all the impulses of my flesh.”<sup>10</sup> The “she” that has been gone was not stopped from participating in the event and so cannot be the body. In another recounting of a vision she begins to tell the reader what she saw, then pauses for moment:

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<sup>8</sup>“*Datsi es getrect bouen menschelicheit in minnen, ende bouen mensceliken sin ende redene, ende bouen alle die werke ons herten.*” Beatrijs van Nazareth, *Zeven Manieren van Minne*, eds. Leonce Reypens and Joseph van Mierlo, vol. 1 (Leuven: De Vlaamsche Boekenhalle, 1926), 31. An English translation can be found in *Medieval Womens' Visionary Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 200-206 at 205. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>9</sup>“*Hier in es <die salighe ziele> so moruleke gesonken in minne.... aldus es si geblommen met geeste boven den tijt in die ewelicheit <ende es ghoght boven die gijten van minnen in die ewelicheit> der minnen die es sonder tijt, 'ende si es herbenen bouen menscelike maniere in minnen, ende bouen hars selfs nature in begerten daer boven te wesen.... si begertene so seere datsi necan geachten noch heiligen noch menschen noch inge noch creaturen dan met gemeenre minnen in heme daer si al mede mint.*” Beatrijs, *Zeven Manieren*, Reypens-Van Mierlo, 31-32.

<sup>10</sup>“*Swenne min berre kumt, so kumich von mire selben, wan er bringet mir so mangan sussen seitenklang, der mire benimet allen mines fleisches wank.*” Mechthild, Book II, Ch. 2, Neumann, 38; Tobin, 70.

I saw a mountain—  
 That happened very briefly  
 Because the body cannot take it  
 That the soul is away even for an hour.<sup>11</sup>

This passage confirms that, to Mechthild, the “I” that saw the mountain, is also the “she” that leaves the body. It also suggests that the absence or experiences of the soul while with God might actually be detrimental to the physical body (aside from the obvious affects of asceticism and fasting many religious and semi-religious persons already engaged in). In fact, in Mechthild’s dialog, her physical self actively protests the absence of the soul. While the body has lost its appetite, physical sense, perception, and strength, the soul seems to flaunt its vibrancy and happiness. “Shut up,” the soul replies, “what do I care about your complaints?”<sup>12</sup> The soul persists in its desire and intentions to be again with the divine whenever possible, expressing disappointment that it needed to return at all from the joyous encounter in the heavenly realms. Mechthild’s soul even laments that it must return to the body and likens it to a prison, or to darkness, or to heaviness. Hadewijch, too, ends several of her visions with disappointment that she has returned once more to her pain; a reference, perhaps, to either physical or emotional illness, which she does not specify. Most of the time she merely states that she returns with pain and woe, although once she was sent back to suffer a “new severe pain,” where she says, “I shall remain until the day when I am recalled to the experience [out of her body] from which I then turned away.”<sup>13</sup> For her the duration of the vision is far too short, and she sometimes writes that she tried to extend the experience as long as possible by lying still for a while and remembering it.<sup>14</sup> “Hereafter as I came back to myself,” she says, “where I found myself pitiable and dejected, I reflected on this union.”<sup>15</sup>

Beatrice explains the aftereffects of contact with God in detail:

Here, now, her earth is a great strange land, and a strong prison and a burdensome torment [...] and here is nothing earthly that can soothe or satisfy her; and this is, for her, a great pain, that she must be so far [away from God] and seem [on earth] so alien.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup>“Einen berg han ich gesehen / das was vil scheire gescheben / wan enkein lichame mohte das getragen / das du sele ein stunde da were.” Mechthild, Book II, Ch. 20, Neumann, 54; Tobin, 85.

<sup>12</sup>“So spricht si: *Swig, morder, la din klagen sin! Ich wil mich iemer butten vor dir. Das min vient verwundet si, das wirret uns nut, ich frome mich sin.*” Mechthild, Book I, Ch. 2, Neumann, 8; Tobin, 41.

<sup>13</sup>“Doen quamic in mi selven alse ene nuwe harde sereghe / ende em mermeer wesen sal tote dien daghe dat ic daer weder in valle daer ic doe af keerde.” Hadewijch, Vision 8, Van Mierlo, 91; Hart, 284.

<sup>14</sup>This occurs at the end of both Visions Nine and Ten. See Van Mierlo, 98 and 105; Hart, 286 and 288.

<sup>15</sup>“Hier na alse ic te mi selven quam, daer ict aerm ende ellendeck vant, doe bedachtic mi diere enechheit daer ic met sinte augustijn in ghevalen was.” Hadewijch, Vision 11, Van Mierlo, 114; Hart, 290.

<sup>16</sup>“Hier omme es hare ertrike een groet ellende, ende .i. stare geuancnisse ende .i. sware quale. Die werelt uersmaetsi, erderike uerwasset hare ende datten ertrike bebort / dat/ encan bore noch gesuten noch genughen. Ende dat es hare .i. grote pine, datsi so verre moet wesen ende so uremde scinen.” Beatrijs, *Zeven Manieren*, Reypens-Van Mierlo, 32.

To Beatrice, the soul is now perpetually in a liminal state between an earthly life and one united to God; she no longer resides in either. Like Hadewijch and Mechthild she tries to retain the feeling she had during her meeting with God as much as possible. But although this may help for a time it is no substitute for the union itself. Life on earth becomes a torment because the soul having experienced the vision of or union with divine beings wants always to be away from the body. If this state truly causes the body to become immobile and unresponsive, the permanent departure of the soul would certainly result in bodily death. Indeed, Mechthild tells her readers directly that only when the physical body dies will the soul remain out of it in celestial realms.<sup>17</sup> But this permanent absence is precisely what the soul wants now and a struggle develops between the ever-departing soul and the clutching body. It seems the visionary cannot simply will material death but can only leave permanently upon mutual release. So the more experienced the visionary becomes the more she experiences this new type of suffering.

This second lesson for students is twofold. Those who had expected to reach the visionary state, gain the benefits, and return without consequences now know there is more to consider. On the one hand, not only is this state of mind difficult for some to reach but the effects of reaching it again and again seem to be negatively cumulative on the emotions and possibly the body. On the other hand, those afraid of letting go of consciousness or physical awareness once the experience begins are somewhat assured they will not lose either themselves or their body during the vision. In spite of the sadness that seems inherent in returning to the physical world, the material form *is* there to be returned to. Not all mystics wished to be permanently released from their bodies, especially if the vision became negative or frightening, as in a journey to hell. Second, students are aware they would need to give themselves time after an experience to recover, reflect, and possibly write down the event. This in itself means that they need to be in a position in life that would allow them to cease daily activities to accomplish this task. Whatever the expectations of the new visionary, understanding the aftereffects would be an important aspect of engaging in spiritual travel.

The third aspect offers assistance in preparing for a vision. For those students still interested in experiencing a mystical journey who need help in doing so, the authors here provide some methods to initiate the event.<sup>18</sup> Beatrice is an example of such an interested student; once she discovered from Ida of Nivelles that she was destined for that “particular grace” she asked more than once when her turn would come to be infused with it.<sup>19</sup> The advice Ida gave her, according to Beatrice’s biographer, was to trust and have patience. Fortunately for us her biographer does fill in details of techniques she employed. The works of Mechthild and Hadewijch, while giving advice to other persons on

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<sup>17</sup>Mechthild, Book I, Ch. 3, Neumann, 10; Tobin, 43.

<sup>18</sup>A great deal of medieval literature actually suggests ways to initiate a vision; some general techniques include focusing on images or biblical words, scourging one’s body until sensations of pain are overcome; depriving one’s body of food, water, or sleep to induce an altered state of mind; and other techniques. For examples of scholarship treating these types of religious practices see Margot Schmidt’s preface to *Flowing Light*, Tobin, xxxiii; McGinn, *Flowering*, 298-301; Debra L. Stoudt, “Holy Figures and the Mystical Experience in Medieval German Sermons” in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Louvain-la-Neuve: Brepols), 283-300; Wybren Scheepisma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries*, trans., David F. Johnson (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2004), 96-110.

<sup>19</sup>Book I, Chs. 52-56, in *Vita Beatricis, De Autobiografie Van de Z. Beatrijs van Tienen O. Cist., 1200-1268*, ed. L. Reypens (Antwerp: Ruusbroecgenootschap, 1964); Roger DeGanck, ed. and trans., *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications 1991), 65-71.

various matters, include meditative techniques for reaching spiritual awareness. Their own experiences also provide examples for others to learn from.

All three women emphasize that students must achieve a specific state of mind before they are prepared for a visionary experience. Techniques employed to reach this heightened state involve concentration, perhaps a sustained longing, and readiness for a meeting or union with God. In the midst of her poetry and dialog, Mechthild drops hints as to techniques the reader can utilize to achieve that proper mental state. She suggests themes for the reader to contemplate during the canonical hours, phrases that are specific to her school of thought. For Matins, she suggests repeating and contemplating the phrase, “Love in abundance, a sweet delight”; for Compline, “Love’s rest, a sweet joy.”<sup>20</sup> Altering the types of love for the time and prayer keep the meditation fresh: “Cheerful love leads the way, fearful love takes up the task, wise love has knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> In a similar way Hadewijch tells her readers that to begin an experience the heart must be moved or activated by love, which can happen by listening to specific passages from biblical texts or reading and meditating on them. Many of her spiritual travels too are prompted by passages or prayers she hears during Mass.<sup>22</sup> The *Life* of Beatrice presents the reader with step-by-step examples for a successful journey. Beatrice prepared herself through prayer and study for some months before she experienced her first vision. This preparation included “quieting herself from all outside noise” and “raising her heart” or concentrating her awareness inward. When she heard a familiar chant she kept the words and their meanings in her mind to meditate on slowly and carefully. She saw herself with Christ as he rose into the heavens, and once she could see herself there with her inner eyes it opened a way for another prayer to come into her mind. At this crucial point, the point at which concentration becomes difficult because thoughts constantly wander, she succeeded in maintaining her focus. Seized in a great ecstasy of mind she “leaped up” in spirit to join Christ, where she saw and heard wondrous things.<sup>23</sup> Because the event was not spontaneous—meaning that she had struggled to initiate it—Beatrice knew what to expect when it finally occurred. Duly rewarded for all her diligent preparation, she was also duly upset when a concerned nun woke her and prematurely ended her heavenly union.

Beatrice’s example demonstrates how constancy contributes not only to reaching a heightened awareness but also to sustaining it. Mechthild too allows her readers to learn from her mistakes, and she describes how she was sometimes lazy and did not pray when she was supposed to because “the weakness of her flesh” was preventing “spiritual pleasure,” meaning union with God. Struggling to avoid falling into depression, she fought to regain discipline over her wandering mind by singing a specific prayer. Her singing helped her focus enough to achieve the spiritual state she desired.<sup>24</sup> Hadewijch is also aware of the difficulty of maintaining focused concentration. In a letter to a young friend Hadewijch offers advice and tells her she gives up too easily. Bolstering her young friend’s

<sup>20</sup>“*Mettin: minnen vol, ein susse wol [...] Complet: minnen rüwen, ein susses vrowen*”; Mechthild, Book I, Ch. 30, Neumann, 23; Tobin, 54.

<sup>21</sup>“*Von siben hande liebün gottes / Dú rehte gottes minne het siben siben aneginne: / . . . die vorbtende minne enpfat die arbeit, / . . . dú wise minne bat bekantheit.*” Mechthild, Book II, Ch. 11, Neumann, 47; Tobin, 78.

<sup>22</sup>See the beginning of Visions Four, Seven, Nine, and Twelve for examples.

<sup>23</sup>*Vita Beatricis*, Book I, Ch. 51-56, in DeGanck, 61-71.

<sup>24</sup>Mechthild, Book II, Ch. 7, Neumann, 45; Tobin, 77.

efforts to follow Love, Hadewijch encourages her to maintain constancy in physical discipline and avoid becoming easily saddened.<sup>25</sup> Mental balance and inner peace will assist her in reaching both the visionary state and a heavenly union.

If the meditation is successful there will come a point at which the person suddenly realizes a mystical journey is about to happen. This moment is the most difficult aspect of the event for the visionary to describe, and she can only say the soul must be ready. Mechthild tells her readers that when she begins to enter into union with God there is a “greeting” from God, a sensation or an even greater heightening of inner awareness. The physical senses become fully engaged during this greeting, alerting the soul that an experience is forthcoming.<sup>26</sup> She calls this new kind of sensory engagement a “confirmation from God” and only when that happens, she says, does the soul begin to rise in flight.<sup>27</sup> The journey has commenced and the soul is winging its way on a revelatory voyage.

These three works provide instruction and examples for others to follow or to reference when struggling to initiate the visionary journey. While none of them is set down in textbook style or as an orderly step-by-step manual, they illustrate a sequence of events that follows a clear and verifiable path. Even the spontaneous vision, as quickly as it may occur, still proceeds in this sequence: heightened awareness, engagement of the inward senses, loss of bodily strength, a drawing or pulling away from the body, images, sights, sounds, and acquisition of knowledge, followed by the return to the body with its accompanying feeling of loss or heaviness. This practical aspect of the visionary experience is important to learn successfully—for there will be nothing to record, interpret, or contribute to religious discussion if the spiritual encounter never takes place. However, all students who come for training are at their own level and require individual instruction. In addition, no teacher can fully relate the experience well enough in words or writing for a student to be completely prepared for the reality of a mystical experience. Since it seems doubtful we will come across a medieval text called “Visions 101,” scholars will have to continue teasing out the pedagogy from visionary accounts that emphasize other topics. Nevertheless by approaching these visionary texts by women as instructional as well as descriptive, we increase our own ability to understand more fully the teaching and learning that took place in our educational history.

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<sup>25</sup>“*Ghi sijt te weec van berten ende te kinsch in al unen seden. Ghi sijt te saen droue ende onghe tempert in al v doen*”; Letter 16, Hadewijch, *Brieven*, ed. Joseph van Mierlo, vol. 1 (Antwerp: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1947), 133; Hart, 81.

<sup>26</sup>Mechthild, Book I, Ch. 44, Neumann, 27-29; Tobin, 58-59.

<sup>27</sup>Mechthild, Book III, Ch. 1, Neumann, 72-73; Tobin, 101.

## *Renovating Education*

### Introduction

By Andrew Donnelly

The papers in the fourth and final conference session, “Renovating Education,” examined four premodern attempts to reform education through infusion of specific Christian principles. In all of the instances presented here the melding of Christianity and pedagogy was intended to serve as a model for the public at large. Dana Barron examined the importance of *laude*, a musical genre associated with religion and education, in the programmatic campaign of moral reform instituted by Girolamo Savonarola in fifteenth-century Florence. Barron noted that the *laude* texts written by Savonarola were structurally similar to his sermons and carried the same message. *Laude* therefore reinforced the sermons and served as a valuable tool for communicating religious ideals to the laity. Though this link between *laude* and ultimately pedagogy was not new, Savonarola’s explicit use of this genre created a precedent used by future reformers, including John Calvin and Martin Luther.

The paper by Sonia Lawson Parrish also explored the theme of statecraft supported by education and religious reform. The Geneva Bible, which first appeared in the late sixteenth century, played a dual role in the eyes of its translators. Not only was it meant to provide the English with a spiritual education, it also “endeavored to promote republican political ideology,” as Parrish made evident through a thorough explication of the work’s introduction, diction, and explanatory annotations. The King James Bible eclipsed the popularity of the Geneva Bible as Puritanism waned and the English Republic ended, but its impact on English political thought endured.

Our final two panelists focused on the explicit connection between Christianity and education. Richard Oosterhoff examined the role mathematics played in the scholarly circles of sixteenth-century Paris. Such Renaissance thinkers as the mathematical theorist Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and his students Josse Clichtove and Charles Bovelles did not view mathematics as a solitary undertaking useful only for esoteric personal gain. Rather as Oosterhoff noted these authors, all strongly influenced by the principles of Boethian mathematics and the scholarship of French and Italian humanists, ultimately viewed the teaching and study of mathematics as endeavors that served the good of mankind because of their contemplative Christian nature. This sentiment was very similar to attitudes held in contemporary confraternities.

Ilya Winham’s paper, presented here, advocates a more nuanced view of Machiavelli’s discussion

of the relationship between Christianity and education. Initially this seems surprising, for Machiavelli is typically viewed as an opponent of Christianity who believed that the religion's tenets made princes weak. Winham instead argues that scholars who have postulated this—individuals he describes as proponents of the “civil religion approach”—have missed the thrust of Machiavelli's argument. The civil religion approach falsely pits Christianity against paganism and sees them as opposites, with the latter clearly favored by Machiavelli. However, Machiavelli did not promote this false dichotomy, and Winham encourages us instead to view Machiavelli's use of Christian and pagan examples in context as a part of his overall dialogue on the necessity of *educazione* in shaping men and the history they made.

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## *Machiavelli on Christian Education*

By Ilya Winham

On the subject of Christian education in Machiavelli's *Discourses* a tacit scholarly consensus concludes that it precludes political citizenship, or at least the kind that pursues worldly glory and dedication to the public good. This view is expressed by John Pocock, who writes in his *Machiavellian Moment* that Machiavelli "distrusted Christianity, or at least he divorced it from the political good, because it taught men to give themselves to ends other than the city's and to love their own souls more than the fatherland."<sup>1</sup> In the first section of this paper I describe in fuller detail the assumptions and basis of this view, which I call the "civil religion approach." In the second section I argue that this approach is built upon a superficial understanding of the relationship between politics and moral character. The few studies that have explored Machiavelli's understanding of how education shapes behavior demonstrate that the moral principles on which Machiavelli's political thought are founded represent not principles of conduct, whether normative or consequentialist, but principles of human psychology and character formation. In emphasizing that Machiavelli's various portraits of political conduct involve character I follow the lead of a number of scholars who account for Machiavelli's idea of a distinctly political *virtù* in terms of a kind of "virtue ethics" whose structure bears a strong resemblance to Aristotle's ancient approach to ethics.<sup>2</sup> My primary point is not to vindicate Christian education as good for the well-being of cities

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<sup>1</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 202. Cf. Vickie Sullivan, "In Defense of the City: Machiavelli's Bludgeoning of the Classical and Christian Traditions," in Norma Thompson, ed., *Instilling Ethics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 39-62.

<sup>2</sup> Machiavelli is approached by way of an Aristotelian ethical perspective in the following essays: Kenneth R. Minogue, "Theatricality and Politics: Machiavelli's Concept of Fantasia," in Bhikhu Parekh and R. N. Berki, eds., *The Morality of Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 148-62; Cary Nederman, "Machiavelli and Moral Character: Principality, Republic and the Psychology of *Virtù*," *History of Political Thought* 21:3 (2000), 349-64; Mark Philp, "Machiavelli and Political Virtue," chapter 2 in his *Political Conduct* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 37-54; Giovanni Giorgini, "The Place of the Tyrant in Machiavelli's Political Thought and the Literary Genre of *The Prince*," *History of Political Thought* 29:2 (Summer 2008), 230-56. To be sure the question of psychology in Machiavelli is strictly speaking anachronistic, for the term was not used until the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, I follow Dean Hammer and others who use the term as shorthand to describe how Machiavelli understands "the process of perception, decision, and action, processes that are traceable to the motions of the soul and are consistent with the earliest definitions of psychology." Hammer, "Livy, Machiavelli, and the Recovery of Felt Meanings," in his *Roman Political Thought and the Modern Theoretical Imagination* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 84-85.

but to complicate the assumptions of the civil religion approach by examining Machiavelli's reflections on human character and psychology.<sup>3</sup>

### The Civil Religion Approach

The steady production of scholarship on Machiavelli's reflections on religion, especially in his *Discourses*, has long been marked by the assumption that he analyzes and evaluates religion—ancient pagan and modern Christian religion—with a concern for its external, public, political dimension; that is, what it does or could do for political liberty and the well-being of the state.<sup>4</sup> Religion becomes what it does, and what it does depends essentially on its moral content. And the moral content of the Christian religion, according to many commentators, is not the foundation on which Machiavelli lays his political thought. Thus Machiavelli compares contemporary Christianity unfavorably to the ancient religion of the Romans on account of his concern with the political dimension of religion; that is, the worldly effects of religion on human action.

These assumptions underlie what I call the civil religion approach to Machiavelli's analysis of religion. Scholars who have approached Machiavelli in this way, such as Isaiah Berlin, J. Samuel Preus, John Pocock, Quentin Skinner, Mark Hulliung, Vickie Sullivan, Ronald Beiner, and Mark Silk, use Machiavelli's juxtaposition of the ancient religion with that of contemporary Christianity to elucidate that the morality of the latter lacks compatibility with citizenship and statecraft.<sup>5</sup> The textual basis for this approach is chiefly found in book II, chapter 2, of the *Discourses*, where Machiavelli, reflecting on history in the manner of an intellectual historian, offers a brief yet profound discussion of the divergent influences of the present and ancient religion on human behavior. His main charge against "our religion" is that it has made men keen to display great feats of suffering rather than great feats of strength. Perhaps recalling the fiery martyrdom of the

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<sup>3</sup> A few scholars have tried to make such a case. See Sebastian De Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Victor A. Santi, "Religion and Politics in Machiavelli," *Machiavelli Studies* 1 (1987), 17-24; Maurizio Viroli, *Il Dio di Machiavelli* (Editori Laterza, 2005). Suggesting that Christianity is compatible with good citizenship is not absurd. Francesco Guicciardini, Machiavelli's contemporary and friend, seemed to believe as much when he wrote in his *Ricordi*: "Provided a man does not disdain religion and good morals, is zealous for the welfare of his country, and does nothing to harm his neighbor, he is a perfectly good citizen." A problem, Guicciardini continued, arises in those monks whose "excessive goodness" is "not too much for a Christian but quite useless for the well being of the city." Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections (Ricordi)*, trans. Mario Domandi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), Series B, No. 179, 140.

<sup>4</sup> For bibliographies of this prodigious literature see Marcia L. Colish, "Republicanism, Religion, and Machiavelli's Savonarolan Moment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999), 597-616; Mary Dietz and Ilya Winham, "Machiavelli," in Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis, eds., *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 3 (Acumen, forthcoming 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in Henry Hardy, ed., *Against the Current* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 25-79; Preus, "Machiavelli's Functional Analysis of Religion: Context and Object," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (1979), 171-90; Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. Vol. 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 134-35; Skinner, "Machiavelli's Political Morality," *European Review* 6:3 (1998), 321-25; Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (2000), 72; Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), ch. 3, 6, 7; Sullivan, *Machiavelli's Three Romes* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Sullivan, "In Defense of the City"; Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion," *The Review of Politics* 55 (1993), 617-38; Silk, "Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72:4 (December 2004), 863-96.

Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola in 1498, Machiavelli writes that “if our religion does demand that you be strong, it is so that you will be able to bear suffering rather than carry out feats of strength.”<sup>6</sup> The ancient Romans, in contrast, were “fiercer in action.” “This is evident,” Machiavelli writes, “in many of their customs, beginning with the magnificence of their sacrifices in comparison to the humbleness of ours, whose ceremonies are subdued rather than magnificent and have no action that is fierce or bold.”<sup>7</sup> In this way Machiavelli elicits the different modes of actions cultivated by Christian and pagan education.

Not only does he contrast their different effects on the plane of action, he also determines that the reasons behind the differences stem from different and incompatible conceptions of the highest value or good, *il sommo bene*. Whereas the ancient religion placed the highest good in “worldly honor,” the present religion urges against bothering with the pursuit of worldly honor, inciting in humans no ardor for the world and worldly glory. “Our religion . . . places the highest value on humility, debasement, and disdain for worldly matters, while ancient religion placed the highest value on greatness of spirit, strength of body, and on everything that makes men strong.” Hence the present religion trains humans to discount or renounce the honor of this world as a thing meaningless in view of the “true path” to “paradise” which lies not in being able to “love and honor” one’s native land but in being able to “endure pain rather than avenge it.”<sup>8</sup>

According to the civil religion approach precisely this difference in moral content, which also epitomizes a difference in the ways of life that are held in high esteem, matters most to Machiavelli. Mark Silk summarized the main argument of the civil religion approach in his study of how the example of Numa has shaped the idea of civil religion in the West:

The problem, for Machiavelli, was that although the religion of Numa had served to undergird the Roman state, Christianity undermined the Italian one. Institutionally, the Catholic Church as a temporal power kept Italy from becoming united ([DL]1996: 38-39). Ideologically, Christianity “placed the highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human,” rather than (as ancient Roman religion had done) in the doing of great deeds. . . . [T]he burden of his argument is that “our religion” is fundamentally flawed as a civic institution.<sup>9</sup>

As the argument goes, the difference between Christianity and paganism ultimately meant to Machiavelli that Italy’s political regeneration would require deep religious reform: a new type of education that Christianity was not providing in its current form or simply could not provide. The civil religion approach concludes that Machiavelli saw Christianity as an obstacle to the rebirth of

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<sup>6</sup> Machiavelli, “Selections from *The Discourses*,” in *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. Peter Constantine (New York: Random House, 2007), II.2, 232 (hereafter cited in text as *EW*). Where Constantine’s translation is not available or where it is not precise enough I use Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, trans., *Discourses on Livy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), cited in text as *DL*. General references to the *Discourses* are to book and chapter numbers.

<sup>7</sup> *EW* II.2, 232.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Silk, “Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West,” 880.

ancient virtue and thus it must be reinterpreted, replaced, or removed from the scene altogether. In any case, a new type of education was needed, whether pagan or Christian or otherwise. Although Machiavelli wrote on the eve of the Reformation, he was concerned not to protect religion from politics but to create a mutually supportive relationship between the two—religion as part of the governmental apparatus—or failing that to ensure that modern republican politics were not obstructed by considerations of Christian morality—the “autonomy of politics.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, this approach treats Machiavelli’s discussion of religion as a reflection on the problem of how politics can be reconciled with morality. It finds a solution to this problem in Machiavelli’s discussion of the ancient pagan religion, for that religion appears to have had a moral content that served the purposes of the state; it had a political or social morality as opposed to the individual or otherworldly or transpolitical morality of Christianity. By juxtaposing the example of a pagan political morality with Machiavelli’s seeming scorn for the Christian religion, this approach encourages readers of Machiavelli’s *Discourses* to understand his diagnosis of the political problems of Florence and Italy primarily as the result of the Christian religion and its institutional embodiment in the Church of Rome.

For all the power of this interpretive framework to account for Machiavelli’s notoriously ambiguous and complex remarks on religion, Machiavelli’s alleged critique of Christianity for building a poor civic institution, rendering Italians weak and prey to foreign invaders rather than strong and ready to die for their country, has left many commentators scratching their heads. If political regeneration really presupposes religious reform, why did Machiavelli say so little about how to address the problem of Christianity? If a new type of education is most needed to create strong citizens, why does Machiavelli have, as Skinner notes, “little to say about the relationship between education and the promotion of *virtù*, and nothing at all about the specific training that might be expected to provide the best preparation for a life of citizenship”?<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as Paul Rahe argues, although Machiavelli does not try to reconcile his beliefs with Christianity, little evidence supports conjecture that Machiavelli thought Christianity’s replacement by paganism or its reformation according to *virtù* would ensure the type of political education he sought.<sup>12</sup> Given Machiavelli’s description of Christianity as a corrupting influence corrupted by cowardly men, it seems unlikely he believed that Christianity was compatible with virtuous citizenship, or that it was not entirely to blame for Italy’s political woes. Nevertheless, the hypothesis proposed by the civil religion approach—that Machiavelli wants religion to serve the *patria* and that his discussion of the religion of the Romans makes clear “the standard by which a real civil religion is to be judged”—needs to be reconsidered in view of the little weight Machiavelli places on religious-based education to produce *virtuoso* citizens.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For an interpretation of Machiavelli as an important figure in a “secular reformation” which divorced Christian ethics from the business of the state as opposed to the Augustinian “magisterial Reformation” of Luther and Calvin, see Graham Maddox, “The Secular Reformation and the Influence of Machiavelli,” *The Journal of Religion* 82:4 (October 2002), 539-62.

<sup>11</sup> Skinner, “Machiavelli on *virtù* and liberty,” in *Visions of Politics. Vol. 2: Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 171.

<sup>12</sup> Rahe, “Situating Machiavelli,” in James Hankins, ed., *Renaissance Civic Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 296.

<sup>13</sup> Beiner, “Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion,” 621.

Education remains important for Machiavelli's understanding of political *virtù*. But I suggest that the civil religion approach is more inspired by the example of Numa and the idea of a religious-based moral education uniquely suited to politics than Machiavelli is. Bewitched by the example of Numa and disposed to think of paganism and Christianity as rival and mutually incompatible moral systems between which Machiavelli wants his readers to make a radical choice, some scholars assume that Machiavelli plumped for pagan values and wished that Numa's accomplishment could be replicated in his own time by introducing a civil religion modeled on a paganism that might be not wholly unchristian but certainly different than the current version of Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

Proponents of the civil religion approach find it impossible to believe that Christianity can be interpreted so that it “might really foster *virtù*, love of liberty or any of those civil, this-worldly values that invigorated the ancient republics.”<sup>15</sup> The problem with “our religion” is that it teaches people not to love liberty, but to “tolerate tyranny,” as Preus put it.<sup>16</sup> If this represents a “false interpretation of our religion,” as Machiavelli suggests, it seems to be identical to the version of it brought back to the minds of Italians in the early thirteenth century by St. Francis and St. Dominic, who saved it from ruin by “their adherence to the example of Christ's life.”<sup>17</sup> Finding Machiavelli's account of Christianity decidedly unfriendly to his ideological purposes, some scholars are tempted to argue that he endorsed the ancient pagan religion. However, such scholars err in attributing to matters pertaining to politics a particular moral code of its own or substituting pagan ethics for politics.

This error can be traced to Isaiah Berlin's essay “The Originality of Machiavelli” and his conception of politics as social morality and political theory as ethics applied to society.<sup>18</sup> Both Berlin and proponents of the civil religion approach depict Machiavelli as a preacher of righteousness, albeit of pagan righteousness, and reduce politics and political action to the strict observance of (pagan) moral precepts. But the idea that the ancient Roman religion housed a pagan political morality rests on superficial if not outright fictional ideas about morality. As James Hankins observes, *pace* Berlin, “There are no ancient moralists—with the exception, perhaps, of Gorgias and Thrasymachus—who would condone the kind of behavior Machiavelli calls for in his two famous political treatises. The wicked no doubt prospered in the ancient as in the modern world, but there

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<sup>14</sup>This summarizes the thesis of Isaiah Berlin's highly influential essay, “The Originality of Machiavelli.”

<sup>15</sup>Preus, “Machiavelli's Functional Analysis of Religion,” 185.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>17</sup>*EW* II.2, 233; 232 and III.1, 257.

<sup>18</sup>“I think that political theory is simply ethics applied to society, to public issues, to relations of power, that and nothing else. Some people think that political theory is simply about the nature of power; I don't think that. I think that political theory is about the ends of life, about values, about the goals of social existence, about what men in society live by and should live by, about good and evil, right and wrong. Neutral analysis of the facts of public life is sociology or political science, not political theory or philosophy.” Berlin, “Machiavelli: Political Autonomy,” in Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (London: Peter Halban, 1992), 57-58.

was no pagan code of morality that sanctioned vice in the interests of political power.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed the very idea of a distinctly “political” morality could not be further from Machiavelli’s insight that no abstract rules exist, no moral principles or commands, no ideologies or permanent values, nothing except perhaps that most elusive of Machiavelli’s terms, *virtù*, by which alone the unity and happiness of a state can be secured. In the milieu proper to politics, as Merleau-Ponty memorably put it, “pure morality can be cruel and pure politics requires something like a morality,” and this applies to the so-called “pagan” morality as well.<sup>20</sup> We have good reason therefore to look beyond the civil religion approach and to examine Machiavelli’s understanding of education, moral character, and action.

### Looking Beyond the Civil Religion Approach: Education, Moral Character, and Action

Human conduct for Machiavelli is in part a matter of choice, in part a matter of one’s nature.<sup>21</sup> Human nature however is malleable and varies over time and from individual to individual, family to family, city to city, province to province. Although Machiavelli does not believe that humans are capable of gaining complete control over their nature, human nature is nevertheless amenable to formation through education (*educazione*).

The terms *educazione* and *religione* remain closely related in Machiavelli’s mind. In one instance in the *Discourses* they are used as synonyms: in the first preface, two versions of which are believed to be by Machiavelli himself, the longer autographed version speaks of “the weakness to which our present religion (*religione*) has brought the world,” while the other version substitutes *educazione* for *religione*.<sup>22</sup> In *Discourses* II.2 both terms are closely connected. Machiavelli notes “the difference between our upbringing (*educazione*) and that of ancient times . . . is caused by the difference between our religion (*religione*) and that of the ancients.”<sup>23</sup> Although religion is clearly a form of education, and a very important one, *educazione* is multiform. As Hanna Pitkin correctly notes, it “includes parental example and admonition, schooling, the discipline of law and public authority, military discipline, religion, and the whole way of life (*modo del vivere*) into which members of a community are initiated.”<sup>24</sup> For Machiavelli, to know how a person was brought up means to know how they

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<sup>19</sup>James Hankins, “Humanism and the origins of modern political thought,” in Jill Krave, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 136. For more general criticisms of the idea of a morality that can be identified with politics see Daniel R. Sabia Jr., “Machiavelli’s Soderini and the problem of necessity,” *Social Science Journal* 38:1 (2001), 53-67.

<sup>20</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “A Note on Machiavelli,” in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 211. For a development of Merleau-Ponty’s insight into the irredeemably strategic character of politics see Mary Dietz, “Working in Half-Truth: Habermas, Machiavelli, and the Milieu Proper to Politics,” in her *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 141-60.

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, *DL* III.9.

<sup>22</sup>On the two versions of the first preface see the translators’ note at *DL* I.Pr. 5, and Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 265-66.

<sup>23</sup>*EW* II.2, 232.

<sup>24</sup>Hanna Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 310. For a different and much narrower account of the use and meaning of the term *educazione* in Machiavelli’s works see Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, 266-67.

will conduct their affairs “in every part and with everyone.”<sup>25</sup> Education—one’s character—becomes manifest in how one conducts oneself under various circumstances.

In the *Discourses* Machiavelli presents two distinct types of *educazione*, one vain and weak, the other more virtuous and strong. The weaknesses of “men at present,” he writes, are “caused by their weak education and their slight knowledge of things, [which] makes them judge ancient judgments in part inhuman, in part impossible.” Weak education does not train and guide men by the examples of “ancient judgments.”<sup>26</sup> In particular, Machiavelli laments, “the princes of our times” do not take to heart the examples of “those who had to judge . . . [great things] in antiquity.”<sup>27</sup> Uninformed by the histories of great actions, “modern opinions” tend to be not merely “useless” but positively harmful. For princes and republics not to understand worldly things is akin to madness.<sup>28</sup> At the indifference and ignorance of most people regarding the most worthy activities that histories show us, Machiavelli expresses disbelief and grief.<sup>29</sup>

The solution to this ignorance that verges on madness, however, requires not reform of religion but what Machiavelli calls “a true understanding of history”: learning and drawing utility from the “variety of accidents” contained in history books, especially Livy’s early history of Rome.<sup>30</sup> Rather than ignoring Roman history and treating examples of ancient judgments as useless, false, unnecessary, and impossible to imitate, Machiavelli wants his contemporaries to immerse themselves in, learn from, and imitate ancient judgments. Although learning from judgments of ancient histories seems connected to rejecting Christianity, Machiavelli carefully stops short of this conclusion. He suggests that Christian education remains compatible with lessons derived from ancient histories, and he does not entirely blame it because the actions of antiquity are more admired than imitated and liberty is less loved today than in antiquity.<sup>31</sup> After all, Christianity “maintained the Latin language” to write its new orders. Were it not for the retention of Latin, persecutions by Christian officials against the Gentiles would have quickly and effectively consigned the record of their ways to oblivion.<sup>32</sup> And without Christianity’s retention of Latin Machiavelli could not have discoursed upon the works of such great Latin historians as Livy.

Of the two types of education, Christianity appears to fall under Machiavelli’s category of a “weak” one. Machiavelli represents Christianity as having placed “the highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human,” whereas the ancient religion placed it in “greatness of spirit, strength of body, and all other things capable of making men very strong.”<sup>33</sup> Consider the Christian virtue of humility. In *Discourses* II.14 Machiavelli argues that “Often Men Deceive Them-

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<sup>25</sup>EW II.2, 232.

<sup>26</sup>DL III.27, 275.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, cf. I.Pr.f.

<sup>28</sup>DL I.39, 83.

<sup>29</sup>DL I.Pr.f.

<sup>30</sup>DL I.Pr.f, 6.

<sup>31</sup>DL I.Pr.f. and II.2.

<sup>32</sup>DL II.5, 139.

<sup>33</sup>[I]l sommo bene nella umiltà, abiezione, e nel dispregio delle cose umane, grandezza dello animo, nella fortrezza del corpo, ed in tutte le altre cose atte a fare gli uomini fortissimi. DL II.2, 131.

selves Believing That through Humility [*umiltà*] They Will Conquer Pride [*superbia*].” When dealing with insolent men who “have conceived hatred for you,” Machiavelli explains, “humility not only does not help but hurts.”<sup>34</sup> To act meekly in the face of an adversary who wishes to do you harm only makes you appear “weak or cowardly,” as if you had “abandon[ed] yourself” to their wishes. A show of humility under such circumstances makes you look cowardly and thus will not help you win allies but will only encourage your adversary to attack. It is better to proceed “under arms” even if you are eventually conquered, for it is more honorable to be conquered “through force than through fear of force.”<sup>35</sup> If you are in charge of something of importance and goodness that is worth keeping you are foolish to put up a weak defense for the sake of humility or non-violence when conquering the pride and envy of others requires violence.

Piero Soderini, elected Gonfalonier for life in Florence in 1502, should have taken this lesson to heart. Having “proceeded in all his affairs with humanity and patience” as “he and his fatherland prospered,” he did not think he could do well by proceeding otherwise.<sup>36</sup> Faced with men who opposed his plans out of envy he “believed that with time, with goodness, with his fortune, with benefiting someone, he would eliminate this envy . . . he believed he could overcome as many as were opposed to him through envy, without scandal, violence, and tumult.”<sup>37</sup> In this belief he deceived himself. The times were such that he “needed to break with patience and humility, [but] he did not know how to do it”; “He did not know that one cannot wait for the time, goodness is not enough, fortune varies, and malignity does not find a gift that appeases it.”<sup>38</sup> While Machiavelli’s condemnation of Soderini for his excessive commitment to *umiltà* may also concern Soderini’s misreading of the value of political goods, Machiavelli does not suggest that an effective political morality must be pagan due to the limits of Christian virtues.<sup>39</sup> He makes the more modest point that, human affairs or political goods being what they are, in times of envy and opposition one must be prepared to break with the mode of humility to defend oneself or one’s orders just as the forceful armed prophet Moses did in order to advance his laws and orders.<sup>40</sup>

However, in other situations one acts competently by proceeding cautiously, with patience and humility, as Machiavelli observes in his “*Ghiribizzi*” letter of 1506 to Giovan Batista Soderini, the nephew of Piero Soderini:

Cruelty, deceit, and unscrupulousness do much to give standing to a new ruler in a land where kindness, loyalty, and scrupulousness have thrived for a long time, just as

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<sup>34</sup>DL II.14, 156.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>36</sup>DL III.9, 240.

<sup>37</sup>DL III.30, 280.

<sup>38</sup>DL III.9, 240; III.30, 280.

<sup>39</sup>For an analysis of Soderini along these lines see Paul R. Wright, “Machiavelli’s *City of God*: Civic Humanism and Augustinian Terror,” in John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth, eds., *Augustine and Politics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 305-06.

<sup>40</sup>DL III.30, 280.



kindness, loyalty, and scrupulousness give standing where cruelty, deceit, and unscrupulousness have reigned for a time.<sup>41</sup>

Machiavelli is impressed in this letter and elsewhere by the threefold problem of the inflexibility of human character:<sup>42</sup>

1. Each person acts according to his particular and relatively permanent and unchanging state of mind or character, which functions as his compass of navigation.
2. Each person's character is rooted in and can be altered by his *educazione*, among other factors.<sup>43</sup>
3. Since human affairs are always in motion, a person's mode of proceeding will sometimes suit the times and he will fare well as a result and sometimes not.

In short, "Times and events change often, both in general and in particular, and yet man's imagination and behavior do not change, and so it comes about that one man at one time has good fortune while another has bad."<sup>44</sup>

As Eugene Garver notes, this kind of reasoning betrays Machiavelli's "contemplative distanced view in which one can see times and tempers shifting, sometimes suiting each other and sometimes not."<sup>45</sup> From this distanced view Machiavelli sees that in the mode of humility, as in a more impetuous mode, "one errs" when "suitable limits are passed" and one finds oneself out of step with the times and consequently unable to "observe the true way."<sup>46</sup> The true way, if it is the way that suits the times, must remain variable. Despite Christianity's claim to show "the truth and the true way," Machiavelli suggests that the "true way" does not consist in Christian education.<sup>47</sup> Rather, it consists in adapting behavior to conform to the nature of the times, acting now with patience, now with impetuosity, turning with the course of events to effect one's purposes. In this sense, as Kenneth Minogue notes, "Machiavelli accords to the political practitioner a much greater freedom from moral restraint than any other significant theorist."<sup>48</sup> This freedom represents the famous gap that Machiavelli opens between traditional moral virtues on the one hand, and princely or political *virtù* on the other.

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<sup>41</sup>"To Giovan Batista Soderini," *EW*, 494.

<sup>42</sup>See *The Prince* 17-18, 25; *Discourses* III.8-9, 21-22; and the tercets on Fortune and Occasion.

<sup>43</sup>See Cary Nederman, "Machiavelli and Moral Character," 356-57.

<sup>44</sup>*EW*, 494.

<sup>45</sup>Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 107. For an analysis of Machiavelli's detached perspective "from above" addressed to analytical readers rather than actors, which allows him to treat contrary modes of proceeding equally and impartially, see Mikhael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241-49.

<sup>46</sup>*DL* III.9, 239. We find a similar idea in a marginal note to his 1506 letter to Giovan Batista Soderini: "When fortune has been worn out, the individual, the family, and the city come to ruin; everyone has his fortune founded on his mode of proceeding, and each one of them wears out, and when fortune is worn out, one must regain her with another mode." Quoted in Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, 250.

<sup>47</sup>*DL* II.2, 131; cf. John 8:32, 14:6.

<sup>48</sup>Minogue, "Theatricality and Politics," 159.

Possessing a moral character of any sort necessarily limits one's mode of proceeding. If one always conformed to changing times and circumstances, one would "always have good fortune," or rather, one's fortune would never change. But, Machiavelli writes, "because one cannot find such men, as man tends to be shortsighted and unable to control his nature, we see that changing Fortune controls men and keeps them under her yoke."<sup>49</sup> In this sense, humans cannot conquer fortune: "men can second fortune but not oppose it . . . they can weave its warp but not break it." And yet Machiavelli implores his readers not to "abandon themselves . . . in whatever fortune and in whatever travail they may find themselves," but "always to hope."<sup>50</sup> This hopefulness and emphasis on action, as Hanna Pitkin elaborates it, "is founded in no promise of guaranteed success or mastery, no alliance with providence or historical necessity. If anything, it is founded in challenge rather than promise."<sup>51</sup>

This challenge likely separates those with a weak education from those with a more virtuous one. Consider how Machiavelli understands the quality of abjectness of spirit. Like displays of humility and cowardice, abjectness may be at the same time a sign of a weak mode of life and itself a weak-spirited mode of action submissive to the vicissitudes of fortune and the "compassion" of others. Unlike humility, abjectness is a quality—a reaction, really—characteristic of those who have had a weak education and who find themselves in bad fortune. A "weak and vain" education makes humans exceedingly vain and obnoxious in good fortune, because they believe they owe their good luck "to the virtue they have never known." It makes them "cowardly and abject" in bad fortune, as they seek consolation by considering themselves victims of pure ill-fortune. Such persons use "good fortune badly," so when their luck changes they are so weak that they are utterly ruined by the slightest fear or force. As Machiavelli writes, "becoming insolent in good fortune and abject in bad arises from your mode of proceeding and from the education in which you are raised." Thus humans can be taught to bear their fortune. The alternative to a weak education is one that "by making you a better knower of the world . . . makes you rejoice less in the good and be less aggrieved with the bad," because you learn that the passing of time brings good as well as evil; fortune shifts in or out of your favor. "Great men" such as the great Roman general Camillus, Machiavelli explains, "are always the same in every fortune; and if it varies—now by exalting them, now by crushing them—they do not vary but always keep their spirit firm and joined with their mode of life so that one easily knows for each that fortune does not have power over them."<sup>52</sup>

Although Machiavelli maintains that becoming abject in bad fortune, as the Venetians did, arises from weak education, his moral turns out to be "that the foundation of all states is a good military, and that where this does not exist there can be neither good laws nor any other good thing." The Venetians' bad fortune did not arise from their weak education as much as their lack of a well-ordered and -trained army. Though their actions certainly betrayed their weak education, Machiavelli implies the Venetians could have acted otherwise, at least before they became demoralized after

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<sup>49</sup>*EW*, 494.

<sup>50</sup>*DL* II.29, 199. I have altered the translation slightly, substituting the more literal "abandon themselves" for "give up"; see the translators' note, *DL*, 199.

<sup>51</sup>Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 293.

<sup>52</sup>*DL* III.31, 281-83.

“four days, and after a half-defeat” from the king of France: “[I]f there had been any quality of virtue at Venice and in their [military] orders, they could easily have remade themselves and showed their face to fortune anew, and they could have been in time either to conquer, or to lose most gloriously, or to have a very honorable accord.” What they lacked then was knowledge of the art of war, how to organize a military to sustain their energy and courage in battle. It was because “their orders . . . were not good in things of war” that they lost “their state and spirit in a stroke.” The manner of their military orders and discipline did not accustom them to display courage and dignity in all circumstances, leading to demoralization. Solving this problem requires adopting Roman-style military organization and discipline emphasizing training “both in peace and in war,” not rejecting Christianity or adopting a civil religion.<sup>53</sup>

When we turn then to the opposite of weakness, cowardice, and abjectness of spirit—namely “greatness of spirit” (*grandezza dello animo*) as well as “strength of body”—we expect men who courageously take up arms to provide examples. We find characters credited with *grandezza dello animo* scattered throughout Machiavelli’s works. In the *Prince*, for instance, on Agathocles’ rise from an “abject” fortune to prince of Sicily by criminal means, Machiavelli concludes that if we consider his “virtue of spirit and body” and “the greatness of his spirit in enduring and overcoming adversities,” we should judge him equal to “any most excellent captain.” Unlike the Venetians who gave up after suffering only a half-defeat, Agathocles, when he “was defeated twice by the Carthaginians and in the end besieged, not only was he able to defend his city but also, leaving part of his men for defense against the siege, he attacked Africa with the others.”<sup>54</sup> In the *Discourses* Machiavelli tells us that those who take up arms against tyrants tend to be “in advance of others in generosity, greatness of spirit, riches, and nobility.”<sup>55</sup> And Camillus, of course, the great Roman captain of III.31, received high praise for “the solicitude, the prudence, the greatness of his spirit, the good order that he observed in employing himself and in commanding the armies.”<sup>56</sup>

Machiavelli’s identification of “captains of armies and princes of republics” who were “full of worldly glory” as exemplary of the sort of men who were “beatified” by the ancient religion contributed to his identification with that religion or with a “neo-pagan” morality and not with the humble and contemplative persons glorified by Christianity.<sup>57</sup> However, one cannot simply identify Machiavelli’s conception of politics with qualities instilled by the ancient religion. Such identification does not mesh with Machiavelli’s reflections on matters of virtue and vice, shame and honor, as motivations for action and causes of success or failure. By recognizing that Machiavelli sought to describe a political *virtù* and not just modes of action that bring power and that this ethic requires moral flexibility in playing upon and responding to the passions of a city—the character of the times—we free ourselves from seeing political *virtù* as a matter of practicing pagan virtues and avoiding vices or Christian virtues.

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<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 282-84.

<sup>54</sup>Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), ch. 8, 34-35.

<sup>55</sup>DL I.2.3, 12.

<sup>56</sup>DL III.24, 269.

<sup>57</sup>DL II.2, 131.

In sum, the civil religion approach assumes that politics consists of a mode of action whose morality draws on the ancient pagan religion as opposed to the servile morality of Christianity. But this assumption is not borne out by Machiavelli's *Discourses*. Only if we regard morality as a matter of licensing or prohibiting certain modes of conduct and political success as a matter of casting off the constraints of Christian morality does Machiavelli's analysis of Christian education fit into the civil religion framework. On closer inspection, however, Machiavelli's understanding of why human actions succeed or fail precludes classifying his thought as that of a moralist, pagan or Christian. If we take his "moral psychology" seriously, Machiavelli's comparison of ancient and modern examples, including ancient religion and modern religion, is not designed to establish the superiority of Roman examples to modern ones. Rather, Machiavelli contemplates how times and characters change, sometimes bringing good fortune to those who act a certain way and sometimes not, to understand why actions that succeeded in one situation might or might not succeed in a different one. Machiavelli's thought encompasses no decidedly political compass of navigation on earth, only persons and their particular compasses of navigation shaped by their *educazione*. Although their Christian education encouraged some of Italy's leaders to respond to adversaries with abjectness and humility, Machiavelli does not aim to exalt the ancient religion above the present one but to show the value and defects of each, while leaving little doubt that he and Florence have been hurt by good men of too little cunning and resolution to secure their positions of power and the common good of the state.

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# *Education: Forming and Deforming the Premodern Mind*

*The 27<sup>th</sup> Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies  
Graduate Student Conference*

**January 23, 2009  
Chicago, Illinois**

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Kerry Paul Boeye, *University of Chicago*

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Julia Finch, *University of Pittsburgh*

“Visual Narratives, Hybrid Literacies: Parents, Children, and Education in Late Medieval France”

Laura Kolb, *University of Chicago*

“‘Fury into Compassion’: The Lessons of Spectacle in Sir Ralph Freeman’s *Imperiale*”

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“‘Idle Toys and Toilsome Labors’:

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